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Shadows of Sound

Music, Pedagogy and Writing the Inaudible

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*A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of what is at stake in education as a site that privileges notions of development, efficiency, and progress. The stance taken is that educational critique has been absorbed into the performative mechanisms of a postmodern system that relies on differentiation and critique to enhance its own performance. When critique no longer functions as an antithesis to the existing order, it is necessary to explore possibilities of resistance to an ethos of efficient performance by other means. Rather than engage with a critical reading of education directly, this thesis utilises the writings of Jean-François Lyotard as the primary source of ‘data’ and inspiration. Beginning with an analysis of performativity as the quest for optimal performance, it delves into the dark subterranean layers mined in Lyotard’s later writings in search for a trace of what remains irreducible to all apparatuses of articulation, inscription, and archiving. In line with Lyotard, the role of art in bearing witness to the inaudible as artistic ‘matter’ in time and space is investigated, and this exploration is extended further to a study of the mute gesture that gives art and music its power and artistry. Through a close reading of Lyotard’s writings on art, the mysterious and enigmatic ‘presence’ that inhabits art and remains always elusive and ungraspable is investigated. The visual metaphor of shadows throughout the text is deliberate in its evocation of the artistic event as fleeting, temporal, and in some important ways, undefinable. The mute *affect* provoked by art, and the investigation into Lyotard’s fascination with a zone of *infancy* as a state of deprivation before language, are explored as potentially educative instances that honour the singularity of the event, and uphold the unfettered openness needed to witness it. The significance of Lyotard’s interpretation of music in this thesis, reaches beyond a merely acoustic phenomenon. It is argued the concept of a *mutic* ‘sounding’ within the gesture of musical sound, paired with the notion of timbre as the intransitive artistry of this gesture, opens an interesting space in which to consider a pedagogy that resonates beyond our known world, toward an inaudible space of the unknown. In sum, the writing calls for an attentive form of listening that reminds us that an education system grounded in knowledge and certainty, runs the risk of forgetting the condition for the possibility of this certainty, is the mute inarticulacy of the *inaudible*.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, for her endless gifts of books and music.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Voices of a Voice

Place à l'ombre! [Make room for the shadow!] (Voltaire in Manguel, n.d., p. 14)

Prologue: Verbiages

She

Everyone stands expectantly in the wings. The stage footlights project beams of white speckled dust in diagonals into the inky blackness of the audience. I'm hot and I swallow hard to attempt a smoothing of my scratchy throat. The wooden stage stretches silent and empty ahead of us, a single black music stand a striking angular contrast in the centre. I stare fixatedly on the spot I know I'll be standing in. They're nervous. I know they are, because they're standing so close to each other that most flanks of adolescent bodies are touching, gaining warmth and comfort from the close physical proximity afforded by the cramped space. They're whispering small wisps of conversation: "your mum here?", "yep, in the middle somewhere", "you see that tall boy in that other choir, man they were good" "not as good as us, ay Miss Locke". "Ssshhhhh" someone else helpfully offers. "We hold our own", I whisper, affecting a much steadier tone than I feel. Don't let them sense your nerves, I remind myself, there's no room for doubt now. The soft rippling simmer of audience muttering dissipates into warm, murky silence. I always find it strange that audiences often pre-empt the start of a performance, somehow chiming in on some grand music project by providing the opening silent phrase in anticipation of the first musical sound. The adjudicator's bell rings and I feel a rush of adrenalin pulse a soundless thud in my ears. "We're on. Shoulders back, head's up!" I enter the stage last. They know the protocol and each choir member meets my eyes on the way out and I awkwardly, because too close, pat each one on the shoulder. It's comfort for me as well as them. I want to make sure they know how much I care that they're travelling down this road with me, that I appreciate the hours of rehearsing that we have gone through together, intensely together, and that any harsh words spoken in frustration on my part, and lack of concentration exhibited through adolescent exuberance on their part, is forgotten. I bow, the audience applauds, time seethes. I turn, lock eyes, and raise my hands. My right hand signals the up-beat, my left hand signals the breath

and we're off, and for that moment I am no longer their teacher, and they are no longer my students, but we are involved in something that we share together in our humanity that in this case blends the potent mixture of youth, sound, artistry and grace. Here, together, we arrive at a place where musical time, shines. At the end of the performance when relief is palpable and beads of sweat glow on shiny foreheads, I wonder. How is this intensity, this mystical and magical moment of togetherness through art, relevant to ways of thinking, and to ways of thinking about, pedagogy?

*

He

These paintings would need a text that would honour the shortfall of sentences. That would bring out the mutism of words. In which one would detect the death-rattle that language covers, as Quignard says. The grey breath that sustains its tones and that it makes us forget. Colour is painted here, complaining. Even a poem, even the most naked poem, would still be too prepared, would give too much to be understood. It would make us believe in the shimmer of meaning. We'd need a prose that would, sounding hollow, be the equal of these chromatic Vanities. White, black, neutral groan here so low in the dazzling parade of pigments that the complaint of not being able to see is scarcely heard. We'd need a prose full of words in which one would discern one's disappointment at not being able to say anything, a little exhalation that closed lips let pass. We'd need to write like he paints: like one suckles. Go down and get your tongue under the delicious sensations. Get your tongue under the tongue of meanings. Groan because one cannot speak, infatuated by all the milk of meanings. Muttum, word (Lyotard, 1993e, para. 40).

*

S/He

He stands at the front of the room, pointer in one hand, the other hand casually resting in his trouser pocket. He affects an air of indifference and easy elegance, but there's a hard edge to the tone of his voice that jars with the visual image of his fashionably insouciant demeanour. One of his students catches a glimpse of silk mauve socks peeping under the tailored trousers and wonders if this touch of the dandy was still about when he stood outside factories speaking to workers and handing out pamphlets. However his eyes belie a steely

determination, and emit a fierce directness that demands attention. He wants the students to know why it is important to experience the ineffable in art, why at this university of all places they need to know that some questions will remain without answers, that some questions need to be inexhaustible, and that maybe there is merit in exploring the reproduction of this painting in order to demonstrate the power of what remains indeterminate. The pointer flies around the large reproduction, directing attention to the various lines of perspective, and he asks the students whether they can feel the pull that is affecting their gaze and drawing them toward the centre of the canvass. Then he tells them to look directly at the foreground and to try and see what disappears and what appears when they adjust their gaze. Looking at an image directly, he explains, obscures something important. When we affect a gaze that is diffracted, that looks slightly to the side, which shifts perspective and shuffles foreground and background, then a space is cleared where something unexplainable can emerge at the point where vision vanishes. But allowing what you see to de-compose, he continues, involves a form of listening that, perhaps, will let the artwork 'speak'. Consider the artwork as a form of writing, he coaxes, and remember, "Reading is understanding/hearing (entendre) and not seeing" (Lyotard in Schwab, 2000, p. 67).

*

In a section entitled 'Verbiages' in *Postmodern Fables* (1997f), Lyotard sets up a series of dialogues between the characters 'He' and 'She' that engage in a type of Socratic tussle to help illuminate paradoxes he identifies as part of the postmodern condition¹. In a typically self-deprecating manner, the title of the section alludes to empty chatter, to too many words, and could perhaps even be considered a mere frippery. The dialogue is structured as a small shred of a story, a fragment, in what Lyotard disarmingly calls a fable. The purpose of the fable, Lyotard tells us, is to draw out "an unpretentious, localized, and provisional bit of wisdom, soon to be forgotten", in which any direct answer or resolution to the question that forms the basis of the dialogue in the fable is deferred (Lyotard, 1997g, p. vii). "As they always are, of course" Lyotard chides (we should know better). The fable is to be read in the manner of a bedtime story, and to be engaged with in the wide-eyed openness of a child listening to scenes of magical, far-away lands. Lyotard will write many fables and essays over the course of his career, and will deploy a purposefully performative quality to the writing that will continue to make demands of his readers long after the first reading. The

¹ Chapter Two deals with 'the postmodern condition' in detail.

opening sequence to this prologue follows the methodological lead of Lyotard's formulation of the fable, providing three vignettes as small scraps of narrative that are intended to convey something of the fleeting character of this literary form. All three are highly contextual, although the tone of each differs (as do the 'authors', as will be explained). All three in their own way deal with what I consider to be a common pedagogical concern that draws heavily on art as a poetic, musical, and visual pedagogical 'stance'. This stance inflects both the act of writing *and* the temporal affect of the gesture of writing. This thesis is an attempt to emulate and, even more precariously, articulate this stance.

Each vignette introduces a 'voice' that will be important to how this thesis unfolds. The first voice is my own, and draws on my background as a high school and primary school music teacher in a scene that is part memory, part fiction, and part reality. The mingling of a past and present with the imaginary is incorporated into this written fragment to evoke a musical event that hovers at the edges of consciousness and the imagination. The second vignette emerges as a colourful and provocative voice that belongs to Lyotard. In the above epigraph it is an extreme voice that is befitting of the art-writing Lyotard undertakes throughout his career, but which is often tempered or overshadowed by the political writings that made him both famous and infamous. It is this artistic voice, articulating a 'beyond' of poetry through exploring the irreducible and inarticulate muteness of an 'other' voice that inhabits art (in this case painting) and drives this thesis. The third voice is a blended reshaping of my own, this time inflected with the 'tones' of Lyotard through a direct quotation. However, this blend of two voices occurs also through a re-crafting of Lyotard's words that are couched in my own 're-writing' of a scene I can't have experienced, but through writing, can imagine and live as a memory of my own. This particular scene is inspired from a passing written observation made by a student in one of Lyotard's classes at the University in Vincennes. 'Other' voices are involved, particularly in the references to physical attributes and personal style (see Bennington, 2008).

The element of repetition, as a return of words in a blended fusion of voices that I am alluding to above, brings into relief the intention of the title of this introductory chapter. 'Voices of a Voice' (1992d) is the English translation of a paper Lyotard entitled 'Voix' published in the as-yet untranslated *Lectures D'enfance* (1991f)². I will use many of

² According to the book review of this collection of essays by Bill Readings (1992), all but two of the essays are published elsewhere in English. 'Voices of a Voice' as 'Voix' is part of this collection, as are 'Prescription', and 'Survivor' that I draw on heavily in Chapters Five and Eight collected in the anthology *Toward the Postmodern* (Harvey & Roberts, 1999).

Lyotard's titles as sub-headings in full, and also worked into parts of chapter headings, throughout this thesis. In short, I will 'blend' Lyotard's voice with my own. This 'prologue to an introduction' highlights (and performs) a beginning as a type of 'stuttering' that problematises the notion of an 'original' or 'originary' voice. This sense of a stutter, of beginning anew, is suggestive of Lyotard's view "that there is nothing the presentation of which could be said to be 'premier'" (Lyotard, 1988c, p. 8). This thesis will incorporate many beginnings as a series of slightly differentiated and nuanced repetitions in its structure and theoretical analyses. This performative element will also bear on the issue of translation in this thesis, and the 'voices' involved in translating one language to an 'other' language (in this case from French to English).

Working with the unknown is what Lyotard is evoking in 'voices of a voice', which is intended to evoke a feeling of estrangement, "an intimist exoticism" (Lyotard, 1991, p. 186), that will be reworked throughout this thesis as a potentially deeply pedagogic occurrence. The approach I take will follow Lyotard's lead in which he urges us to learn a 'radical' approach to listening where voices within a voice emerge as a primordial 'hiss' given shape by the self through articulated language³. However, this mute 'death rattle', as referred to in the above epigraph, is heard only negatively as an affect that resonates but does not sound; a 'listening' by other means than strictly aural (if by aural we mean by cognition). This prologue is intended to pre-empt the differing strains of voice that will be weaved throughout the thesis, and the 'diffracted' position music will hold in directing what Lyotard will occasionally refer to as a "listening eye" (1991h, p. 179) toward a pedagogical space that resonates beyond what we already know, and which gestures toward the unknown. We will 'hear' this voice throughout the thesis, as the unknown, as *inaudible*, as "a voiceless voice ... a voice born of some 'core' where things don't get voiced" (Lyotard, 2001, p. 80).

*

Another beginning. Beginning anew.

*

³ Lyotard's approach differs from that of a constant deferral of meaning or origin often identified with a deconstructionist approach to language, the obvious example being Derrida's notion of 'différance' (Derrida, 1997).

Introduction: Writing in the Shadows

The soul is transferred to a quite different standpoint, so to speak, and from it sees all objects differently (Kant in Lyotard, 1991, p. 182).

This thesis is an exploration of the possibilities of what cannot be heard, seen, or known, as poetically elaborated in the later writings of Jean-François Lyotard. It is not explicitly *about* music, education, or art, although these three realms do cast the longest shadows over the ‘scapeland’⁴ the thesis will roam. This exploration is not to be read as a journey toward an end destination with a climactic and celebratory elaboration of a pedagogical method that emerges from an acquisition of knowledge gleaned from Lyotard. I instead investigate the ‘possibilities’ of a negative-accumulative state of pedagogy borne from discontinuity and deprivation in both its emergent and practical application. The impermeable surface of education policy and curriculum research specific to context and country will remain untouched. However, the text does sift through the (diffracted) traces and debris left by art, music, and education, and will attempt a de-composition of this familiar world of certainty, linearity, and progress in education, to one of “a quite different standpoint” as Kant muses in the above epigraph. Reading Lyotard can be a de-worlding experience in itself. This thesis continues Lyotard’s efforts to try to dissolve the stable and delineated outlines of words, sounds, and images so the blurred flurry of artistic matter moving in time and space can gesture toward a hidden and secret ‘world’ that is contingent upon, but altered from, the one we know. The possibility of an area or zone of indeterminacy that eludes any apparatus of inscription, that escapes all prescription and prediction, is the driving force behind this investigation. What follows is a response to conceptions of education that make claims that ignore this remainder, and which cauterises the feeling that the impossible is possible.

However, this thesis can be situated within a wider milieu of academic research that also draws on Lyotard to help critique an increasingly rampant drive toward certainty and instrumentalism in education, and the wider discursive formations that inform research in education. *Education and the Postmodern Condition* (Peters, 1995d) and *Lyotard: Just Education* (Dhillon & Standish, 2000) are the two collections of essays that contain a specifically Lyotardian critique of education that are significant in the critical formation of this thesis. Also of importance in the area of a Lyotardian critique of education have been the

⁴ Scapeland is a neologism that is used as the title in one of the essays in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Lyotard, 1991d). It is evocative of a more barren landscape that Lyotard uses to further the sense of desolation and deprivation needed to rid the self of the mind and to experience tactile qualities as affects. This is dealt with in more detail in Chapter Eight.

writings of Peters (1995a, 1995b, 2004), Marshall (1995, 1999, 2004), Masschelein (2004), Roberts (2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2007), Readings (1995, 1996), Pateman (2000), Smeyers and Masschelein (2000), Stone (1999), and Blake *et al* (1998). While this thesis does not engage with the discreet area of music education directly, both Lines (2003, 2005), and Mansfield (1995, 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003; Mansfield & Grierson, 2003) have cast significant ‘shadows’ over my use of Lyotard when writing on music and education. The first academic journal devoted to Lyotard and music edited by Bennett (2009a, 2009b) has also important. The point of difference of this thesis from these scholars who engage with Lyotard and education is the approach I take of an almost total immersion in Lyotard’s work, and the educative instances I encounter with and alongside Lyotard’s writing and approach to writing. Apart from education, this immersion in Lyotard has necessarily taken me to the areas of psychoanalysis, aesthetics, and politics and the anthologies and edited collections dedicated to the work of Lyotard in these areas in Readings (1991, 1993), Bennington (1988), Nouvet, Stahuljak, and Still (2007), Williams (1998), Crome and Williams (2006), Crome (2004), Harvey and Roberts (1999), Silverman (2002), Rojek and Turner (1998), Grebowicz (2007), Parret (2009b), Carroll (1987), and Benjamin (1989).

It was music, and my experience as a musician and music teacher that first inspired a rebellion. Musicians and artists live very easily with uncertainty; they expect it. They accept the need for continuity and sustained attention to a given task. Withdrawal, from society, from noise, from busyness in all areas, is expected (and yearned for). The mind, that curly beast of doubt, must be emptied. The body must be trained to get out (and keep out) of the way. However, something happens in music that is a little harder to articulate than the conditions needed for its emergence. Almost on the cusp of mysticism, I recognised in my own musical experiences, but particularly in the shared musical experiences with students as depicted in the open sequence, a feeling of the ‘beyond’ of music as heard sound. This feeling seemed to signal what music tries to reach for: a ‘something’ that is evanescent and ungraspable, familiar yet strangely new and exotic, unknown and somehow utterly *unknowable*. This area of indeterminacy fuelled a suspicion that my deeply educative experiences in music were perhaps not the educative goals of traditional notions of what it meant to be educated, and of what ‘learning’ entailed. The first seed of dissent was sown. However, the discovery of Lyotard and his thoughts on the inarticulate, the ineffable, the ‘mutic’, and the negative elaborations of the inhuman and the inaudible, ensured that what

was at first a small rebellion grew into a fully-fledged critique of the conditions of ‘existence’ of such unknowable worlds.

Lyotard’s notion of ‘performativity’ as optimal performance of a system enters into the argument at this point as primarily a tool to critique education. Written in 1979 and translated into English in 1984, the term performativity appeared in the now seminal essay, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984b). Described by Lyotard himself as an “occasional” text, the essay (published in book form) was famously commissioned by the *Conseil des Universités du Québec* to assess the impact technology was having, and would continue to have, on education. Lyotard’s observation was deceptively simple: the proliferation of computers produces in education and society the risk that the ‘language’ of the computer could come to dominate *all* languages – including that of the ‘language’ of the mind. Lyotard takes the position that this ‘language’ finds its expression only in the form of a binary equation consisting of inputs and outputs. This binary process eliminates the lesser term at every point with the result that the final outcome or ‘performance’ is the most efficient performance of the system (given the inputs). ‘System’ here can mean all number of things: education, society, institution, even musical performance, and the ‘goal’ is one of *development*. A climate of performativity that exemplifies “the already done, the already written, the already thought, that’s to say precisely commodities even in the philosophical world or literary world” is one that stifles possibilities for new forms of expression (Lyotard cited in Olson, 1995, p. 397). This is not simply a travesty for art and music; it also impacts on the ethical dimension to living in a just and tolerant society. Questioning the inaudible in music then, starts to resonate with bigger questions around ethics and justice in education in a post-industrial, technological and media-driven world.

However, I work with Lyotard’s position that there is an area or ‘zone’ that is unable to be ‘translated’ into a language that remains outside the logic of performativity, and because of this, resists any form of inscription. My use of the analogy of shadows as fleeting and intangible is in response to Lyotard’s quest to discover and constantly provoke a feeling of agitation that arises in and through art that can never be pinned down to precise meaning. Performativity, as a language of inputs and outputs, works in a temporality that is prescribed in advance, controlled, predicted and predictable. The ‘logic’ of performativity requires all ‘inputs’ as language to be inscribed, recorded, and accounted for. (I will offer a very graphic depiction of this drive toward inscription, as I explain in the layout of the thesis). My aim in

this thesis has been to follow Lyotard's lead, and to explore a radical alternative to a 'known' language (with a temporality that can be incorporated into the mechanisms of the system), to an 'unknown' *zone of affect* (with a temporal dimension that escapes all periodising tendencies). My fascination with music as an art of sound has led me to attempt a sketch of the outlines of a space that displaces a traditional educational critique through exploring the 'other within' sound. Critique itself, according to Lyotard, has been subsumed within the workings of a system that relies on differentiation to survive, and so the offering here explores alternative temporalities that do not seek to be communicable and understandable. Following Lyotard, I instead elaborate different formations of the *inaudible* throughout the thesis in the areas of aesthetics, politics and music, as what remains *incommunicable*, *unknown*, and *misunderstood*. The *inaudible* in this writing is elaborated as the means with which to provide a hesitation, a stutter to the constant flow of calculated time we take for granted as part of the educative process. As such, what follows is to be read as a challenge to ordinary ways of thinking about pedagogy, but also of music and art. The 'destination,' for Lyotard and in my use of Lyotard in this context, must therefore always be displaced and remain in the dark unknowable of shadows.

Outlining my Engagement with Lyotard

It has to be noted at this point that my discussion of Lyotard is not a usual reading, either in the realms of education critique, or in a straightforward philosophical context. In education, my deployment of a wide range of Lyotard's texts as the predominant source of research 'data' I call upon is a significant point of departure from other researchers, as has been outlined in the previous section. However, my educative slant on these works makes for another point of departure from the scholars who deal with Lyotard's work in areas separate from education research. Although not exclusively, I do use what can be termed the 'later' works by Lyotard that fit roughly in the timeframe from the mid-1980s onwards. As this reading has been undertaken within the English translations only, any attempt to differentiate between definitive stages within Lyotard's oeuvre is usually fraught with difficulties. As Crome and Williams (2006) point out, unlike various other significant philosophers of the twentieth-century, the English-speaking reception to Lyotard's work occurred mid-way through an extremely diverse and productive writing career, resulting in a slightly 'skewed' perspective of Lyotard's wider contribution to both philosophy and aesthetics. Two examples of this are the recent publications of translations of Lyotard's earliest published works *La*

Phénoménologie (Lyotard, 1991i, first published 1954), and his doctoral thesis *Discourse, Figure* (Lyotard, 2010, first published in 1971).

The English translation of *The Postmodern Condition* in 1984 (first published in French in 1979) was the Anglo-American ‘introduction’ to Lyotard and remains his most famous work. Most Lyotardian scholars, including Lyotard himself, acknowledge this text to be misleading in any interpretation as the ‘foundational’ or most emblematic piece of work of Lyotard’s oeuvre (see, for instance, an interview with Lyotard in van Reijen & Veerman, 1988). In fact, by 1984 Lyotard had already written and published in French several significant works, and had already established himself as a philosopher on a par with other notable continental philosophers of his generation (such as Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, and Cixous, to name a few). The muddled chronology that initiated Lyotard’s entry into English speaking discourse has in fact been maintained since, as *The Postmodern Condition*, until arguably very recently, eclipsed any academic engagement with alternative texts⁵. Importantly, this has also resulted in the anglophile academic audience remaining largely uninformed about, and lacking appreciation of, the thematic significance Lyotard placed on the critical resistance of the arts as elaborated in the many instances of writings dealing with artists, paintings, musicians, and literary texts, throughout his entire oeuvre.

The Postmodern Condition serves as both the entry point of the thesis with the focus on performativity in Chapter Two, and my own entry point to the works of Lyotard in general. I will follow the general thematic trajectory deployed by Lyotard himself and move closer to a more explicit engagement with aesthetics in the ensuing chapters. This trajectory will involve a deliberate distancing from *The Postmodern Condition*, especially in terms of style, but also in terms of thematic emphasis and methodological adjustment that Lyotard mobilises within a stance of what he terms as ‘rewriting’. The chapters after Chapter Two in this thesis can also be viewed as a rewriting and ‘working through’, or *durcharbeiten*, that is written in tandem alongside Lyotard’s own attempts at rewriting and “re-booting”⁶ the conception of the postmodern. Rather than a wholesale rejection of the notions of performativity and the paradoxical condition to the postmodern drive toward, and reification of, heterogeneity,

⁵ The series *Jean-François Lyotard: Ecrits sur l'art contemporain et les artistes: Writing on Contemporary Art and Artists* edited by Parret (Parret, 2009b) involving contributions from notable Lyotardian scholars, with release dates starting in 2009 and going on until 2013, is an example of how delayed the English speaking reception is to some very significant writings on art made by Lyotard.

⁶ I like this term given by Kent Still (Still, 2010) that I feel aptly describes what happened to Lyotard after the English reception to *The Postmodern Condition*.

Lyotard instead changes tack⁷. The works I have chosen to closely read in this thesis from Chapter Three onwards are the results of this ‘methodological’ adjustment, and depict the shift from an explicit critique to a more experimental stance of creating a work of art through an engagement with painting, music, and literature specifically. Rather than producing a polemic that could be subsumed within a system that incorporates critique into the ‘temporality’ of its own mechanisms, Lyotard offers instead a “dismembered temporality” (Lyotard, 1991k, p. 27) by deploying a kind of writing that is attuned to the pure event of the ‘now’, of the ‘instant’; what I will call a type of ‘art-writing’.

My engagement with Lyotard’s art-writing in this thesis has an impact directly on my methodological approach, as I too found myself wanting to contribute to the field of educational research something quite different from a straight critique. If critique itself derives from the ‘inside’ of the system to which education belongs, then I needed to find an alternative from the ‘outside’. Closely reading Lyotard’s ‘rewriting’ of not only his own creations, but also significant texts from such luminaries as Kant, Freud, Wittgenstein, and Adorno, has had an impact on the *motion* of my own writing. Lyotard’s fascination with the temporality of inscription, then, becomes a crucial methodological tool within the formation of this thesis, and particularly in the deliberately aesthetic approach I take to writing as a rewriting of Lyotard. Here again, music haunts this motion of (re)writing, as I begin to read Lyotard inside the analogy of music as I have experienced it myself as a pianist. I understand the paradoxical (dismembered) temporality of taking texts and turning the inscriptions into sonic shapes in the unfolding temporality of time. I also begin to understand the daunting task I have set myself by attempting to re-arrange Lyotard’s ‘thought-matter’ into my own, just as I scared myself witless trying to breathe musical life into monumental works crafted by musical giants such as Beethoven. Working with matter in time and space, whether it arises from the arrangement of words or sounds, as Lyotard reminds us, is the ultimate ethical task that ‘bears witness’ to something ungraspable as a ‘childhood’ of beginning. It is also the most terrifying. The main texts that play a large role in my own rewriting of Lyotard’s thought-matter in the form of this thesis are *Heidegger and ‘the jews’* (Lyotard, 1990), *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Lyotard, 1991d), *Postmodern Fables* (Lyotard, 1997f), *Toward the Postmodern* (Harvey & Roberts, 1999) ‘Anamnesis: Of the Visible’ (Lyotard,

⁷ I acknowledge also that Lyotard was merely honouring the request put to him, and this impacted on the ‘style’ of the text as a more formal report. Dispassionate writing aside, the education governing body in Quebec were still in for a surprise.

2004a), ‘Scriptures: Diffracted Traces’ (Lyotard, 2004b) and *Lesson of Darkness ... Like the Paintings of a Blind Man* (Lyotard, 1993e).

Translation in the Dark⁸: Rewriting (Lyotard’s) Gesture

Always a translation of darkness, out of, in, and into the dark (Bennington, 2010, para. 9).

Why, then, this work of reading and writing, if it were only a question of translating? Unless translation also already demands this work of giving voice to that which is first mute, and unless translation is a form of literary writing (Lyotard, 1997b, p. xii).

Lyotard was tremendously generous to his students, especially when supplying young and emergent scholars the opportunity to translate his work for English publication. Undoubtedly part of Lyotard’s motivation would have been purely pragmatic (graduate students can be soft touches when it comes to opportunities to impress their superior’s). Christopher Fynsk (2007, p. 126) humorously recalls Lyotard casually throwing a text he had written on Kafka his way (it is actually one used in this thesis entitled ‘Prescription’) and requesting it be translated as quickly as possible. This, despite the huge pressures and deadlines the young scholar was facing in his own degree programme and the fiendish task of understanding a typically obtuse and difficult work by Lyotard in French (leading Fynsk to respond cheekily in his head to Lyotard’s request to ‘translate this’ with “Yeah well, [Professor Lyotard] translate *this!*”). However the necessity to translate one language into another that Lyotard faced as a practical requirement to his growing fame outside France, plays a significant role in this thesis in the wider philosophical ‘task’ of reading Lyotard, and the pedagogical stance that ‘translating’ requires. In acknowledging David Carroll as the translator for the Irvine Wellek Library Lectures published as *Peregrinations* (1988c), lectures Lyotard actually wrote in English from the outset, Lyotard ponders the role of the translator. For him, the practical ‘function’ that Carroll performs is one of translating one idiom (Lyotard’s ‘English’) to an ‘other’ idiom acceptable to English speakers. “This is a tiresome and difficult task, a kind of ‘rewriting’ that makes him co-responsible for these texts”, Lyotard explains (1988a, xix). As an amusing counterpoint to this version, Carroll sardonically recalls the chaotic scenes at the University of California⁹, when Lyotard, surrounded by different English dictionaries, tried desperately (and usually unsuccessfully) to find proof of the existence of a word he thought was English,

⁸ The title given to Geoffrey Bennington’s unpublished manuscript ‘Translation in the Dark’ (Bennington, 2010).

⁹ Lyotard had a regular one-quarter appointment at the University of California, Irvine, from the mid-1980s where he taught (in English) a critical theory course. This was one of many universities outside of France that Lyotard would have some kind of involvement with on both a casual and permanent basis.

and which he claimed was perfect for his use. Often, however, the invented ‘word’ turned out to be a too-fruity neologism described by Carroll as usually an Anglicised version of a French, German, or Latin word that rendered Lyotard’s intended meaning indecipherable.

Indecipherability, however, plays a not insignificant role in the notion of translation as a form of rewriting that incorporates a necessary element of repetition. But what is being repeated? Clearly, Carroll was not being too much of a pedant by enforcing a modicum of decipherability on Lyotard’s ‘English’. Carroll describes how he owed it to the beauty and intricacy of what Lyotard was saying to ensure the non-French audience intended to be the recipients of this work were able to understand, at least a little, of what the speaker (Lyotard) was talking about. In this case, Carroll is siding with a fidelity to comprehension to ensure incorrect wording and poor syntax, at the very least, don’t obstruct meaning. However, things become more complicated when taking into account what the ‘about’ is referring to, and the inability and outright refusal made by Lyotard to ever consider ‘words’ adequate to the task of complete decipherability. In reference to the biblical story of the Tower of Babel¹⁰, Lyotard offers the proviso that different languages meet and come into contact with each other, but there can never be one common or core language with the privileged role of deciphering *all* languages. There can never be total and complete *transparency*, no ‘grand narrative’ capable of telling all stories, no metaphysics to explain all phenomena. “The Lord was wise to prevent the Tower” Lyotard adds (2009b, p. 44). Of course, for Lyotard translation isn’t an option; there is no other choice *but* to translate if ‘monism’ as terror and injustice is to be avoided. “This monism is still dangerous” Lyotard continues. “In our time, it is the monism of the cultural object that comes to take the singular place of works of art” (ibid). The role translation plays in ‘deepening the singularity’ of the work of art that Lyotard considers a necessity against this monism, and which is constantly under threat, is to transmit or ‘report’ the artistic gesture *as affect* that the work provokes. “Now, one can only report on or account for an affect by transmitting it, and not by objectifying it” Lyotard warns (2002b, p. 80). Here we can get closer to what is repeated, and the role translation plays as a form of repetition in which the gesture specific to a work of art is reworked and rewritten. As Geoffrey Bennington states:

¹⁰ From the Book of Genesis, this is the story of the unitary movement of the peoples building a tower as monument to a common language and understanding. God is supposed to have prevented the Tower from being built by scattering the different people and languages all over the land, ending the common language and thus ensuring a multitude of differing languages, customs and cultures.

Experimentation and invention in Lyotard's thought and practice are also always a repetition of necessary failure, an affirmation affirmed as always harbouring the darker secret of its impossibility (Bennington, 2010, para. 16).

Working from the unknown in language into the unknown of thought, is in fact an important pedagogical stance that Lyotard vigilantly defends and upholds throughout his writings. The role of translation is cast as an ethical act that attempts a rewriting of the gesture "*gestus*" of a way of being toward space and time. Here, the silent gesture is given an 'other' voice and is transcribed and translated into *words*, "and not just any words, but the strange words that philosophy uses in order to come into contact with what it does not know, with what it knows no better than does the artist or the art itself" Lyotard explains (2002b, p. 74). The necessary repetition of the gesture, as the affect transmitted in and through art, is the heightened responsibility of translation that preserves the uniqueness and singularity of the art-as-event. While acknowledging it is not possible to accord one philosophical 'approach' to Lyotard, it is a fair observation that this translation of the gesture as the irreducible remainder to works of art plays a significant role throughout his writing career. This is an approach to writing philosophy that "is committed to paying its debt to the gesture of color, volume, tone, and line, without the intention of peacefully *di-gesting* it within the organism of a system, or, worse still, within a 'worldview'" (ibid). What is required in the task of preventing assimilation, monism, and objectivity is an endless series of attempts to reinscribe, to rewrite, and to transmit again and again, the silent gesture that 'animates' and provokes a singular and unrepeatably affect. The role of the philosopher as translator of this affect into words requires a testimony to the irreducible inarticulateness of this affect. In a revealing excerpt Lyotard sums up his own methodological position:

At such times, the philosopher, like a desperate lover, attempts to give the work something he did not possess, namely, the words to carry on this gesture. And he attempts this even if it means changing the whole of what he thought he knew and was capable of signifying, just so as to be able to give the artist, whether dead or alive, the three words, or perhaps 300 pages, which would transcribe the absolute insignificance of the gesture that is the work of art (ibid).

The role of translation also figures highly in the practical and 'philosophical' formation of this thesis, as intimated in the previous section. As an English speaker and reader, I only get to hear Lyotard's voice 'deferred', through the voice of a translator and in the 'voice' and tone that I know and hear as English. The act of translation involves listening to a different voice that necessarily impacts on the more subtle nuances in the form of puns and word-plays, coupled with an ironic humour, that were all part of the idiosyncrasies of Lyotard's

writing style¹¹. However frustrating this has been on my part, I also maintain that part of what makes Lyotard so interesting, is that he is already in the act of translation when he is commenting and observing the artistic works that inform the very heart of what he is trying to say (irrespective of what ‘genre’ he is occupying at any given moment). By providing a commentary on art, Lyotard is attempting to translate the gesture, something that remains forever elusive to any definitive account or translation, which allows the space for others to continue with this job. Following this lead then, the issue of translation in this thesis works into the very fabric of the research I undertake, in that Lyotard’s commentary on art is one that attempts “to translate itself translating, to grasp its own event in the making” (Bennington, 2010, para. 10). Stylistically this will impact on the thesis as an expression of writing, and particularly in the close reading of Lyotard’s text that deal specifically with art, and the elusive and singular nature of the event.

The Differend and the Inhuman

Saying (the) nothing is not the same as saying nothing (Bennington, 2010, para. 11).

This thesis works *with* and *from* Lyotard’s writing, and throughout my writing I refer to the Lyotardian notions of the ‘differend’, and the ‘inhuman’. An attempt to account and describe these terms is problematic, because at the very core of Lyotard’s use of these terms lies a very strong resistance to description and meaning. One of the more problematic aspects of my engagement with Lyotard has been attempting to articulate what Lyotard constantly insists is radically inarticulate. Rather, articulating that there is ‘nothing’, that nullity, deprivation, distress, solitude, anxiety, and menace testify to a blank space and mute voice that is the ‘condition’ of your existence is the ‘work’ of art (and not analytical description). Lyotard tells us you are writing *against* the plenitude of words, you are seeing colour *against* the blackness or greyness of non-colour, you are listening to music *against* the ‘din’ of silence. The differend is the term used by Lyotard to refer to the incommensurable incompatibility of (or heterogeneity to) spoken or written language to articulate *in full* this ‘nothing’ because all poles of interlocution are wiped. I will link this ‘nothing’ that presences itself only as an affect in Chapter Three, and will incorporate the ‘monstrous’ un-form and un-knowable dimensions to this no-*thing* as a mysterious ‘presence’ in a discussion of pedagogy in Chapter Eight.

¹¹ Iain Hamilton Grant (Grant, 1993) offers an interesting insight into translating Lyotard’s long sentences, and unique rhythm and style in his ‘Translator’s Preface’ to *Libidinal Economy*.

However, the differend bears directly on my interpretation of the inaudible as a mute silence that is communicable through a passage different from the audible journey of sound, and this interpretation also differs from Lyotard's initial usage of 'silence' that constitutes the meaning of the differend in *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (Lyotard, 1998a). Famously, Lyotard describes the differend as "a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both parties" (Lyotard, 1988bp. xi). Silence is the 'sign' of a wrong inflicted, when no commensurable language can be found by either party that would express or articulate the injustice that has been suffered. This silence perpetuates the initial 'wrong' suffered by one party when another language is forced upon it with which to articulate this wrong. Silence here is awarded by Lyotard a specifically ethical dimension. However, I chart Lyotard's slightly altered usage of silence in my use of the 'inaudible' as not indicating simply a 'wrong' as such, but instead provoking a mute 'presence' that the differend *itself* instigates. This will become more prominent in my discussion of Lyotard's notion of infancy in Chapter Five of the feeling of the differend as the state of mute inarticulacy *before* being 'taken' by language. It also bears directly on my exploration of the feeling of the sublime as the mingled state that combines both pleasure and pain, as discussed in reference to Lyotard's use of this term in the context of non-representational, abstract art in Chapter Four.

Another important clarification to make in the reading of this thesis is Lyotard's notion of the inhuman, which again figures highly in the related cluster of concepts that impact on my use of the inaudible as some 'thing' that mutely, clandestinely, *inhabits* discourse. The inhuman is not simply defined as inhumane. Drawing on the famous aphorisms of Apollinaire and Adorno¹², Lyotard looks at art, and specifically artistic matter that emerges in the temporality of the art-event, as inhuman. The 'artistic', covered in this thesis as 'matter' that affects and excites, emerges from a radical exterior to the 'human' and is thus positioned by Lyotard as the only piece of resistance we can offer to a system that feeds on itself. In line with Lyotard, what it is that is artistic in a work of art (in the extended sense) emerges from somewhere exterior; matter is inhuman and cannot be 'digested' into the workings of the system. The 'other side' to this inhuman is the technologically derived logic of performativity, in which the need for the human mind and body becomes obsolete in favour of computerised, mechanistic, performances. I work with both these two 'inhumans', and from Chapter Three

¹² "More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman." And in 1969, Adorno again, more prudently: "Art remains loyal to humankind uniquely through its inhumanity in regard to it" (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 2).

onwards I explore Lyotard's multiple formulations and depictions of the inhuman as artistic presence that eludes the periodising tendencies of the political apparatus, and which enables a work of art to affect and excite, regardless of its cultural and historical context and emergence.

Chapter Overview: Writing the Inaudible

Such initiation initiates nothing, it just begins (Lyotard, 1997f, p. 90).

This section outlines the journey of thought I undertake to explore of the inaudible as the fleeting zone of indeterminacy that remains always ungraspable in terms of consciousness, cognition, and subjective 'will', yet paradoxically asserts a powerful affect that is inscribed on the self through feeling and sensorial inscription. The title *Shadows of Sound: Music, Pedagogy and Writing the Inaudible* indicates the strong link I make to an auditory exploration that acknowledges a darker and less definable space to emerge 'in shadows', in which the potentially powerful dimensions that escape audible, cognitive, and subjective sensibility can be explored. This thesis works with the analogy of music as a temporal art that unfolds in space and time, and positions the intangible and irreducible mute artistry that transforms sound into music as a richly pedagogical zone in need of further development in educational research. However the evocation of shadows allows for a broader scope of enquiry than the purely musical, and this thesis first traverses the terrain away from music, from which the differing contexts of the inaudible have been formulated in Lyotard's writings.

Chapters One and Two are introductory, with Chapter Two providing the methodological ground with an analysis of the totalising qualities in Lyotard's notion of performativity, which the rest of the thesis defines itself against.

Chapters Three to Seven are more experimental in both subject matter and execution, and provide kaleidoscopic, fragmented examples of the inaudible through a deep analysis and engagement with Lyotard's essays on politics, art, and music. Specifically, Chapter Three depicts the silent phrase affect as the immemorial dimension of indeterminacy at play within the political apparatus of modernity. Chapter Four elaborates the mute 'call' of art and painting when stripped down to elements of matter in time and space. In Chapter Five the inaudible covers the zone of infancy as a depiction of what lays outside capture and inscription. Chapter Six positions the inaudible as the powerful dimension to music that

moves and excites us, and Chapter Seven draws on Lyotard's plea to extend the inaudible as what is 'at stake' in music as the condition of its existence in contemporary (postmodern) settings.

Chapter Eight brings these disparate threads together, and sketches the tentative coordinates for a pedagogy that works with the inaudible in education. It is important to note that this last chapter is not drawing conclusions or offering any answers or definitive accounts of a pedagogical approach or method, and is instead to be received as a series of ponderings and open questions that could be applied to education. Following Lyotard's lead in the writing of fables and small narratives, each chapter is written with the intention to create anew a sense of beginning and re-articulation of the inaudible. Each chapter from Chapter Three onwards is to be read as a fragment that builds its own intensities in order to "capture the childhood of the event and inscribe what is uncapturable about it" (Lyotard, 1997f, p. 90). As such, each chapter can be read as an entity in itself that is theoretically independent from other chapters. However as mentioned previously, I do follow the broad trajectory taken by Lyotard from *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984b) following the art-writings that are situated at the 'beyond' of poetry and philosophy, toward an articulation of whatever the 'misery' or 'poverty' of philosophy dictates¹³.

Throughout the thesis, I pursue the inaudible as that which escapes capture, prescription, and inscription as 'archiving'. Chapter Two introduces the notion of performativity as the very antithesis of what remains elusive and mysterious through a drive to an all-encompassing climate of performance that follows the input-output equation of computers. While the focus is primarily on the impact performativity has on the conditions of creative and artistic performance, I also broaden my analysis by incorporating the work of Jon McKenzie and his extended use of performativity as the dominant measuring tool of social evaluation. How well something performs becomes crucial in *evaluating* the conditions of its existence in technological and human spheres of interaction. The destination must be known in advance, the destination must be final and total, and the destination must be turned into data to be 'used' when and where the 'system' sees fit. I juxtapose this analysis by drawing on Austin's linguistic field of enquiry, in which the performative function in language renders the *action* that accompanies what has been said as at least as important as the content, thus positioning

¹³ The posthumous set of essays collected as *Misère de la Philosophie* (Lyotard, 2000b) translates to either the misery or poverty of philosophy, encapsulating the negative 'lack' that Lyotard considered so important if the act of 'philosophising' was truly worth its name as philosophy. One of the major essays I engage with in Chapter Three, 'The Phrase-Affect', (Lyotard, 2006) is published in French in this collection.

itself as the most efficient form of ‘data’ transference in terms of meaning and pragmatic effect. Lyotard’s use of Wittgenstein’s ‘language games’, and the radical heterogeneity of singular phrase universes, is also covered in the chapter. Both Wittgenstein and Austin are mobilised in the critique of performativity in Chapter Two. Both theoretical perspectives contribute at this point in the thesis, and in Lyotard’s broader philosophical trajectory, as a theoretical precursor to a later exploration of the Kantian sublime and Freud’s notion of *Nachträglichkeit* as ‘deferred action’. Alongside Lyotard, both models will be engaged in the ensuing chapters to depict that what is unrepresentable can be gestured toward as a ‘representation’ via aesthetic modes of presentation.

As previously mentioned, Chapter Two differs stylistically by following Lyotard’s more formal and objective prose befitting a piece of commissioned educational research. However, the chapter’s close reading of aspects of *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984b) where the notion of performativity finds its most comprehensive articulation, also serves to introduce Lyotard’s primary concern to always attempt a clearing of space from which new thought has the potential to emerge. Performativity, as a ‘logic’ or ‘criteria’ for the exact repetition of the already-known, is one of Lyotard’s most caustic and direct expressions against the totalising tendencies of the postmodern condition and its endless drive to what he calls ‘complexification’. The survival of complexity for its own sake has ethical ramifications within postmodernity. There is no room for incommunicability and indeterminacy within the postmodern climate of performativity, and in the context of this thesis the chapter serves to outline the ethical inadequacies such a force has in formulating conceptions of education that don’t try and ‘tame’ difference. The chapter also introduces the crisis in the legitimating societal mechanisms Lyotard calls ‘grand narratives’, and singles out the grand narratives of emancipation and human progress as particularly porous and fragile examples of this crisis. These grand narratives are subject to intense incredulity in the postmodern condition, and just cannot be considered beyond reproof. Lyotard argues further this crisis is thanks largely to an increasingly technocratic and positivistic formulation of what it means to be human, and the resultant catastrophic attacks on humanity that mark the twentieth-century (and beyond). This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork of the thesis that prepares the stylistic shift to ‘resist’, with Lyotard, by other means than by a direct engagement with critique to something more artistic.

Chapter Three turns to an exploration of the inaudible in the context of there being different types of silences, of which the inaudible is one particular (and special) type. The discussion is

set in the context of Lyotard's engagement with what became known as the 'Heidegger Affair', and I base the chapter around the analysis of Lyotard's book written in response to this engagement entitled *Heidegger and "the jews"* (Lyotard, 1990). After the drive to certainty and mastery as expressed in my discussion of performativity in Chapter Two, this chapter looks instead into the inarticulacy of the inaudible affect via a Freudian-inflected, Lyotardian-constituted, notion of infancy *as remainder* that escapes cognition and meaning. As the title of the book suggests, Lyotard frames this piece of writing around the influential philosopher Martin Heidegger and the silence that Heidegger maintained in reference to his association with the Nazi Party. While Heidegger's silence could be seen as inhuman in application and implication, Lyotard introduces another type of silence (that will be explored as another type of inhuman in the following chapter). The inaudible in this chapter, through Lyotard's discussion of the broader implications of Heidegger's silence to Western thought, is a silence that is 'heard' as an affect that is emblematised in the provocative label of "the jews". The inaudible, given in this case this problematic and deliberately evasive label, offers a radically silent *otherness* that inhabits, but is excluded and 'forgotten' in the modern propensity toward rationality and certainty that structures the perimeters of Western configurations of thought.

Lyotard draws an analogy between Freud's notions of deferred action as an initial forgetting of affect in the conscious mind that manifests itself bodily, and the 'politics of forgetting' that ignores indeterminacy in Modernity. Moving from the anthropomorphic focus of Freud to the broader organism of developed societies in the phase of 'late capitalism', Lyotard insists on the powerful breach between consciousness and bodily affect. He then juxtaposes this argument with the crisis of the grand narratives of progress and freedom when viewed from the perspective of the crumbling and increasingly inhumane conditions of our (postmodern) existence. The 'para-experience' and 'name' Lyotard utilises to signal the turning point toward an increasing incredulity, is 'Auschwitz'. Using Heidegger's 'leaden' silence as the contextual backdrop, Lyotard foregrounds the *immemorial* dimension to what Western society tries to forget when espousing the story of its increasing progress by pointing out that *in the very act of forgetting* there remains a trace that ensures a 'complete' forgetting as eradication and annihilation, can never take place. Lyotard's rereading of Freud here radicalises the platform of the psychoanalytic mind as an apparatus that receives affects 'inscribed' as a shock. These shocks then further manifest themselves through involuntary psychical 'disorders' (of which the case of 'Emma' is the famous example utilised by Freud,

rewritten by Lyotard, and also covered in this chapter). Lyotard extends the structure of this apparatus to the mechanisms of modernity, and focuses on the ‘blindspot’ of Heidegger as one of the greatest interpreters of Western philosophy whose silence in regard to the attempted total annihilation of the real Jews, only testifies to the (mute) interminable presence of “the jews”.

Chapter Four signals a shift from the broader political critique that is covered in the previous two chapters, to a more overtly ‘artistic’ analysis that incorporates the notion of the inaudible in a discussion of the immaterial, ‘diffracted’ traces of artistic *matter*. This shift to art is a decisive turn in the structure of the thesis, and is to be read as a (metaphorical) hinge that pivots between looking ‘back’ at the critique of totality and certainty outlined in the previous two chapters, and looking ‘forward’ to Lyotard’s engagement with literature, painting, and music as realms that are susceptible to the openness of the event. The chapter begins with an exploration of the exhibition that Lyotard was co-curator for entitled *Les Immatériaux* (translated in English as ‘The Immaterials’). The metaphor of the hinge is again relevant, this time to portray an undecided sensibility “looking backwards to an origin that never was” as embodied by the Egyptian art that Lyotard chose, “as well as beyond, to a techno-scientific future always almost-here, that is, to a postmodernism always in need of experimentation and hence infinitely deferred” (Hudek, 2009, p. 5). I start with this exploration of *Les Immatériaux* because as an artistic exhibition, it depicts Lyotard’s extended meaning of the term ‘rewriting’. I also introduce the ‘elements’ that will be crucial to the artistic ‘retrieval’ as anamnesis that is Lyotard’s response to his wider concern to ‘bear witness’ to the unrepresentable. Lyotard ‘wrote’ the exhibition to allow a visceral experience through a literal matrix in time and space, of the altered ‘state’ of materiality that emerges through changes in technology. The concept of ‘matter’, as the once solid material, is exposed through technologies and the resulted computerised ‘data’ to have changed into something far less solid and tangible – to something *immaterial*.

Heidegger and “the jews” is returned to in the chapter, this time to outline the obligation to testify aesthetically to the immemorial. To honour this testimony, the chapter then turns to the art of Bracha Ettinger and Barnett Newman as two artists whose work Lyotard engaged with in his own writing. Through a commentary on both these artists, the importance of the aesthetic retrieval of a ‘forgotten’ presence through art, and the position of the avant-garde as exposing this presence, is explored. Through this commentary, the notion of the sublime is also introduced as a ‘hovering’ between pleasure and pain that both these artist’s depicted in

their work. Lyotard's focus in these commentaries is to explore the temporal dimension of the sublime that is provoked within these works as something that *seizes* the viewer. The avant-garde approach to art is one explored by Lyotard as exposing the 'matter' of painting as working within a space-time that provokes a feeling of unease. Through exposing the very matter of art that eschews traditional forms of representation, both Ettinger and Newman in this analysis, are testifying to the invisible in the visible, and are thus pointing to the indeterminacy of the unrepresentable through the presentations of their art.

Chapter Five takes the notion of the sublime as combining both pleasure and pain, and turns to a closer engagement with Lyotard's notion of infancy as the 'zone' of inarticulacy *before* language and understanding. The chapter analyses two essays that depict the 'instant' of the first 'touch' at/in the moment of aesthetic affect in 'Anima, Minima' (Lyotard, 1997a), and as radically *before* language in the case of the essay 'Prescription' (Lyotard, 1999c). The first half of the chapter deals with what Lyotard describes as the 'minimal soul' – the *anima minima* – that 'exists' only as prodded out of anaesthesia through an affectability of the soul by artistic sensation. The minimal soul is covered in the chapter as another formulation, this time taking the form of a fable, of the negative condition of art as that which reminds us that we are affected only through the threat of *not* feeling. The notion of infancy is placed in a 'zone' that is mute and 'taken' by language before being able to understand and speak, and Lyotard draws a direct line of congruence between this 'miserable' state and the radical 'before' of the affect that is propagated through art. The minimal soul is extended also, to that of the 'body' of *aisthesis*, as an entity that surpasses flesh and blood to wider conceptions of the body of art. The chapter extends this infancy to the broader notion of 'childhood' as articulated in the writings of George Orwell and Walter Benjamin. Lyotard draws upon these two writers to model a literary formulation of the fragmented sense of beginning and renewal that performs 'on' the minimal soul.

The second half of Chapter Five focuses on Lyotard's rewriting of Kafka's story *In the Penal Colony* (Kafka, 2005) in the essay 'Prescription' (Lyotard, 1999c). Written as the companion piece to *Heidegger and "the jews"*, the chapter outlines Lyotard's rewriting of the area of indeterminacy (previously referred to as "the jews") as that which 'escapes' prediction and prescription. The psychical apparatus of the mind is brought back to life in the form of Kafka's torture device that straps in the body of an accused man to prepare him for a ghastly punishment administered by needles that drain him of his life (and blood). Lyotard uses this nightmare scenario of incomprehensible punishment and torture for an equally

incomprehensible conception of ‘justice’ that offers a depiction of the violent domestication of the (infant) self when initiated into language. The chapter draws on the inhuman dimension of performativity that the machine depicts. It also demonstrates the always-guilty verdict of infancy as mute and inarticulate when subject to the rule of the ‘Law’, whether it is language or morals. Here, the infant body is always at fault, as depicted in the flow of healthy and evanescent blood as *sanguis*, that once expiated, turns into the dark murderous blood of *cruor*. Infancy, Lyotard reminds us in the chapter, can never be ‘caught’. It must always remain elusive and irreducible to capture because once caught, it is longer *present*. The chapter ends with questions pertaining to education (which could be positioned as ‘the law’) and the necessary inscription of knowledge that the educative process administers. The vital point that this chapter makes is the ‘forgetting’ in education of the conditions for which knowledge acquisition exists: the possibility of knowledge and entry into adulthood runs the risk in education of forgetting that *the condition to this possibility* is the mute inarticulacy of infancy.

Chapters Six and Seven elaborate this mute inarticulacy of the inaudible, this time in the realm of *music*. Both these music chapters explore the explicit link with music and the inaudible. The chapters vividly describe the connection Lyotard makes to the conditions of affectability in music as an audible art form that emerges from a threat of deafness, of not being able to hear. The chapters cover Lyotard’s exploration of the inaudible that gives music its power and artistry. Both these music chapters engage with what I consider to be Lyotard’s most important texts dealing with music, and both chapters elaborate a perspective of music as reaching far beyond a merely acoustic phenomenon. The concept of the inaudible, as a mutic ‘sounding’ within the gesture of musical sound, is closely explored. This produces the basis for a discussion of music as an interesting space in which to consider a pedagogy that listens and incorporates a musicality into its approach by acknowledging the inaudible in educative contexts. While Chapter Six focuses on broad themes in music, Chapter Seven narrows its focus and deals specifically with the significance of the avant-garde in music and the role of contemporary music in extending the inaudible.

Chapter Six explores Lyotard’s rewriting of his own notion of the postmodern, this time asserting a musical significance to the cultural shift that was emblematised in his articulation of a ‘postmodern condition’ in two sections I label ‘anti-histories’. The essay ‘Music and Postmodernity’ (Lyotard, 2009b) is the first anti-history which looks at the grand narrative of music as the dissolution of tonality, and Lyotard’s assertion that like all grand narratives, this

is no longer holds credibility. Rather than a musical ‘progress’ toward atonalism, Lyotard instead positions the inaudible as the dimension of music that needs attention. Rather than thinking of sound in the confines of the tonal rubric, the chapter covers Lyotard’s stance that composers now have the job of finding ways to let sound exceed itself. The analysis of this text is then juxtaposed with a more literary and artistic articulation of the inaudible in music, through a close reading of the fable ‘Music, Mute’ (Lyotard, 1997d) as the second anti-history. As in previous chapters, the inaudible is here anointed with a meaning that signals toward a ‘hearing’ of another kind. In this case, Lyotard coins the term ‘mute’ as the ‘sound’ of the gesture that is inscribed as a kind of audibility that is registered through a (sublime) feeling of loss. What music does, Lyotard tells us, is to remind us through sound the constant threat of there being no sound. This means music is a vehicle in which to ‘modalise’ our hidden fears of ‘deafness’ as deprivation, nullity, death, and annihilation. The inhuman ‘mute’ to music, through the sublime combination of pleasure and pain, reminds us of these very human qualities that constitute, negatively, our humanity.

Chapter Seven continues the musical analysis of the inaudible as the condition to musical sound, with a rewriting of two further musical texts by Lyotard. In this discussion, the focus is turned to the role of the avant-garde in music which strips back the layers of ‘narratological’ musical forms, to expose the ‘matter’ of music as a temporal, sonic, ‘explosion’ in space. The chapter explores the ‘lessons’ Lyotard considered to be important as a type of listening in music, and that (contemporary) music particularly, provokes. The analogy to the empty intentionality of Kleist’s puppets is made to demonstrate the bodily receptivity Lyotard considers important when engaging with music. The second half of the chapter then turns to a further theologically inspired exploration into the open receptivity of the ‘angels’ of sound, which is another model for how we should listen to music. Lyotard investigates the avant-garde composer Edgar Varèse, and his attempts at ‘extending the inaudible’ through new combinations of sounds and forms that are to be found in new technology. Extending the inaudible beyond the known conventions of form, melody, pitch and rhythm is what is at stake in music. The immaterial ‘matter’ of music timbre aids this exploration, and the chapter highlights the inaudible as a temporal instant or event that is found in music.

Chapter Eight is the final chapter in the thesis and shifts to an explicit engagement with the pedagogical implications that may be drawn from the explorations of the inaudible as a zone of indeterminacy in art, politics, music, and finally in this case, education. While I have

mentioned previously this chapter is not to be read as offering any definitive ‘answers’ or directives in which to follow a ‘pedagogy of the inaudible’, I do acknowledge the deeply pedagogical stance that Lyotard performs in his own artistic renderings of attempting to articulate that there is the inarticulate and unrepresentable. Links are made to the inaudible fissure in thought between the ‘known’ and the unknown, as the space that conditions the precipice between the ‘hard ground’ of knowledge and the giddy feeling of indeterminacy that stretches into the sublime zone of not knowing what comes next. Links are also made to the ‘monstrous’ character of the inaudible as the formless, inarticulate, mute, and incomprehensible instant of affect in which a ‘presence’ can emerge that leaves the mind with all its adornments of meaning and will, behind. Here, the inaudible is given the coordinates of a mute, inarticulacy as that which makes possible the articulated, certain, ethos of mastery that education as ‘progress’ is built. Learning to listen and to pay attention to the fragility and inaudible underside of what we know, impacts on whether or not the leap toward the unknowable may be taken.

CHAPTER TWO

Performativity and Performance

Introduction

Performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, namely, an onto-historical formation of power and knowledge (McKenzie, 2001, p. 176).

...the goal is no longer truth, but performativity – that is, the best possible input/output equation (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 46).

Though Lyotard was to modify the specifically linguistic methodological approach from which his concept ‘performativity’ sprang in subsequent writings, he would never part with the idea that in certain ways we are ruled by a normative criterion of performance, which both conditions, and is itself a condition of, modern society (Lyotard, 1992c, p. 10). Concomitant with the emergence of performativity was Lyotard’s highly controversial and provocative analysis and description of this condition as ‘postmodern’. Lyotard would later renounce this term, after much celebration and criticism, for a far less celebrated and even more complex notion of ‘rewriting’. This chapter, however, is interested in the ‘postmodern’ Lyotard of the late 1970s and 1980s, where the language-games of Wittgenstein and the question of judgement from Kant are prevalent, and where a re-engagement with Freud and Levinas are, in Lyotardian parlance, immanent. The chapter will examine the concept of performativity with a discussion of performance to lay the foundation in analysing the extent to which a criterion of performance in Lyotard’s broader critique could be seen to be inhibiting, obscuring and perhaps overriding a possible artistic dimension to education. Central to this exploration are the questions most urgent to this thesis: what implication does the need for ‘optimal performance’ as input and output ratios have for educational performance, and further, what effect does performativity, as a *logic of performance*, have on my evocation of the shadows of sound that are, I claim, immanent to music, and which could impact on conceptions of pedagogy.

Lyotard’s notion of performativity is the quest for efficiency – the very best input/output equation. Lyotard used this term with reference to the education system, although he (and many others after him) identified the way performativity can be applied to *any* system, including the wider social system in which we live. Performativity, as a kind of logic and in

relation to discursive effects, is a *normative* force on systems; inefficiency is not to be tolerated in efficient systems. This logic of performativity can also be applied to a further meaning of performance that is a continuation of the first set of meanings described here. Jon McKenzie's use of performance in the opening quote of this chapter describes it as a *formation of knowledge and power*, which has displaced discipline as the overriding condition of existence. Like performativity, performance in this context is normative. However, McKenzie identifies a paradox within the notion of performance, and insists that performance "can be read as *both* experimentation and normativity" (McKenzie, 2001a, p. ix). This paradox provides an interesting theoretical springboard in which to consider musical performance in a wider culture of global performance.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an account of performance that is drawn from Lyotard's notion of performativity as a form of externalisation and context control. The chapter mobilises McKenzie's ideas on normative and aesthetic performance to serve as a conceptual umbrella in which to analyse performativity and performance for the rest of this discussion. The chapter closely analyses the concept of performativity through an exploration of Lyotard's critique of the philosophical emphasis on the denotative function of language, and to the performative pragmatics of language games via his deployment of the ideas of Austin and Wittgenstein. Lyotard's own biographical details serve as an influencing dimension to his turn to a Kantian mode of ethics and judgement through an analysis of *The Postmodern Condition*. A discussion of the effects of performance within a capitalist world order, then, leads to an exploration of potential artistic renderings of performance as an event, as an ultimate form of resistance to a pervasive neoliberal thrust for conformity and transparency.

Performance Epistemologies

There are important conceptual directions that need to be explored in order to join together and utilise Lyotard's critique of performativity to that of musical performance. This involves an etymological consideration of the word 'performance', in relation to the linguistic notion of the 'performative', as the philosophical basis from which Lyotard would base his concept of performativity. According to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2002), performance can mean the execution or accomplishment of an action, or the extent to which an investment is profitable. It can also mean a ceremony or rite or even a display of anger or exaggerated behaviour. Artistically speaking, performance is also the *action* of performing a play, piece of music, or dance, that also has a theatrical element to it. Most interestingly for this discussion,

performance is not only an act involving an element of ornamentation, or completion; it is also an act involving *measurement* in which material and symbolic objects as well as certain tangible and intangible qualities of human beings are judged in accordance with their ‘performance’. Performance then, can have artistic, behavioural, technical and economic connotations and can therefore be applied to many different contexts. The culmination of these meanings exposes a highly paradoxical dimension to performance that involves both normative conditions of measurement (how well something performs, or not) and aesthetic conditions of, potentially, unbridled artistic expression and freedom. Jon McKenzie provides one interesting perspective that acknowledges the paradoxical dimension to performance in current contexts, and it is his analysis of performance that I will now examine how a climate of performativity in Lyotard’s sense can prosper.

Performance as Social Evaluation through McKenzie and Lyotard

In his book *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, Jon McKenzie offers an explanation of ‘performance’ as one that has become the dominant model of assessing and legitimising technological and human spheres of activity. McKenzie refers to performance as “an emergent stratum of power knowledge” (McKenzie, 2001a, p. 18), a multi-layered and dynamic site spanning “human labour and leisure activities and the behaviours of all industrially and electronically produced technologies” (McKenzie, 2001a, p. 12). McKenzie further specifies three spheres of influence that are being brought into close alignment: the economic (or organisational), the technical, and the cultural, that blend together in a formation of performative power. He goes on to explain:

Far from existing in disconnected spheres, these paradigms increasingly overlap and intersect: just as theatre takes place in institutional contexts constrained and enriched by technological and economic imperatives, the theatrical model has come to inform organisational theory and web design (McKenzie, 2001b, p. 7).

In such a climate, how well something performs, that is how efficient or how effective it is, is the dominant form of social evaluation. The measuring of what is right, good and true is aligned to fit within the performance stratum, dominating over, and often completely overriding, traditional philosophical traditions revolving around emancipation and freedom. McKenzie writes:

For better or for worse, I have come to think that we are entering an age of global performance. We can understand performance as a stratum of power/knowledge by extrapolating from Foucault’s well-known genealogy of

discipline. While disciplinary mechanisms produce unified subjects through a series of institutions (school, factory, prison, hospital), each with its own discrete archive of statements and practices, performative power blurs the borders of social institutions by connecting and sharing digital archives. Financial information, criminal records, medical files, and school transcripts once stored in separate metal file cabinets are now being uploaded to silicon databases and electronically networked (McKenzie, 2001b, p. 6).

‘Performance’, as theorised by McKenzie, can be seen as both “the living, embodied expression of cultural traditions and transformations” on the one hand, and as a new social attitude of evaluation on the other (McKenzie, 2001a, p. 8). ‘Efficacy’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘effectiveness’ span cultural, organisational and technological performance paradigms respectively, the application of which enable a culture of global performance to be sustained through the economic infrastructures of capitalism. McKenzie continues:

I theorise performance not only as transgressive cultural praxis but also as a global formation of power and knowledge, one that displaces the disciplinary power analysed by Michel Foucault. Its politics are post-colonial rather than colonial, its infrastructures electronic as well as industrial, its economies dominated by services more than manufacturing. Factory labour and tradeoff commodities have obviously not disappeared: instead they have been overcoded by “soft wares”, forms of immaterial production found in communications, finance, healthcare, and social work (McKenzie cited in Peters & Besley, 2004, p. 6).

While global performance potentially offers many advantages – the emergence of universal human rights and the establishment of the World Court are some examples cited by McKenzie - there are also adverse consequences. McKenzie explores Foucault’s analysis of discipline as the power matrix of the Enlightenment, in which ‘subjects’ are moulded and necessarily subjugated to fit into institutional models pertaining to wider social formations. In McKenzie’s corresponding analysis, performance is catapulted into the matrix of power in the current epoch of “post-Enlightenment, the information revolution, neoliberal capitalism, and postcolonialism” (McKenzie, 2001b, p. 6). While Foucault’s discipline objectifies the self through institutionalised processes of subjectification, global performance threatens to objectify and alienate human labour in ways that erode democratic practices in both commercial and personal realms. The ‘performance’, when equated with efficiency and effectiveness, serves as a process of separation between performative discourse and embodied performances. McKenzie further states that global performance *as a formation of power and knowledge* constitutes “an age marked by multiculturalism, multimedia and multinational corporations” (McKenzie, 2001b, p. 7).

Lyotard's 'performativity' through Austin's Performative and Wittgenstein's Language Games

The term performative has taken on a precise meaning in language theory since Austin ... the concept will reappear in association with the term performativity (in particular, of a system) in the new current sense of efficiency measured according to an input/output ratio. The two meanings are not far apart. Austin's performative realizes the optimal performance (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 88).

The term 'performative' arises from a philosophical treatment of performance with a specifically linguistic application. According to Linda Stone (1999), to consider language as performative is a uniquely twentieth century phenomenon, which was initially articulated in the published lectures of J. L. Austin (1976, originally published in 1962). Here the performative is a spoken or written utterance that affects an action. While Austin's findings emerged from the tradition of Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy, the wider western intellectual milieu of the first half of the twentieth century was characterised by an interrelated 'linguistic turn'. How language performs 'on' selves would become a main theme of this turn initiated by Austin, developed in the later Wittgenstein, given structuralist dimensions from Saussure, and creatively engaged in terms of the political and the constitution of selves and identity in twentieth century continental thought. Out of this body of theory has come the philosophical basis of the performative, finding articulation in poststructuralist critique as 'performativity' in both Lyotard and Judith Butler, among others.

The above quote, however, is the most explicit reference Lyotard makes to J L Austin's set of Harvard lectures on performatives published as *How to do Things with Words* (1976), and is included only as a footnote in the large appendix at the end of *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984b). Yet Austin's use of the performative is very clearly linked to Lyotard's notion of performativity, as Lyotard describes the two meanings to be "not far apart". Austin describes a performativity as neither strictly constative or denotative; it does not offer a judgement of truth, it is instead an utterance expressed in both words and in actions simultaneously in which the words effect the action of the speaker. The famous example, among others, Austin uses is the ubiquitous 'I do' of the wedding ceremony. Importantly for this discussion, the performative can also be defined as a general utterance that dictates the means by which the speaker *performs* a particular act. As Marshall (1999, p. 312) points out, "here the utterance is a part of doing an action and not a mere saying something". While Austin was aware that many "infelicities" could arise from his explanation and from the pragmatic qualities of the performative, he distanced himself from these and effectively

confined his analysis to what he termed ‘ordinary’ everyday use (Parker & Kosofsky, 1995). At the conclusion of his Harvard lectures, however, Austin stated he would leave the “real fun” of applying his general theory to philosophy for his readers (thereby perhaps hinting at the philosophical reach of these performative ‘infelicities’). Certainly Butler and Derrida would exploit these to the full, but Lyotard was also one of these readers; only his perspective would differ from his contemporaries in generally far less optimistic ways.

Performance and Technology

For Lyotard, the twentieth century propensity for technological growth and change, and the concurrent upsurge of what he termed the ‘rule’ of capital, radically altered the production and dissemination of knowledge in developed societies. Crucial to this rise in technology was the constant demand to maximise performance in all walks of life. Very soon, how well something performed in terms of profitability and overall usefulness became, in Lyotard’s critique, the measure of how valuable and truthful it was. With the rise of computerisation, Lyotard recognised the way in which technology shifted the paradigm of human existence, and the way technical devices (such as computers) existed, at first as an extension of the human body and mind, to complete tasks involving data input and output that were not contaminated with human emotion or labour. Technology in this light is regarded as an extremely efficient tool that yields the best ways and types of information, and performativity is the logic that technological performance follows. Lyotard elaborates further:

They [technical devices] follow a principle, and it is the principle of optimal performance: maximising output (the information or modifications obtained) and minimising input (the energy expended in the process) (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 44).

Performance, according to Lyotard, becomes something akin to a programmable phenomenon, in which information is seen in the form of computer inputs and outputs, and therefore must be transformed to a form of binary language to become computerised ‘data’. Knowledge that cannot be transformed in this way is therefore not counted as valid or worthwhile because of the inevitable lack of efficiency and profitability in its structure. Related to this, Lyotard also observed that “the miniaturization and commercialization of machines is already changing the way in which learning is acquired, classified, made available, and exploited” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 4). Lyotard constructed his argument about performativity from the computer, through to the societal constructs that supported the optimal performance of the economy.

Rather than intrinsic worth, human endeavours could be judged in terms of profitability, instrumentality, and crucially, speediness – just like the clever machines they built. Already under threat with the challenges to the traditional forms of legitimation, performativity, according to Lyotard, alters knowledge production in terms of the best efficiency and effectiveness of a system. What is more, the delivery of knowledge in the form of pedagogy, and the creation of new knowledge in the form of research, impacts directly and obviously on the education institutions that in turn contribute to the efficient performance of the economy. Truth, according to Lyotard, is no longer the goal; rather performativity is - “the best input/output equation” and as such knowledge is shifted from an internal ‘knower’ to an external market (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 46). On the exteriorisation of knowledge Lyotard continues:

Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its “use-value” (Lyotard, 1984b, pp. 4-5).

Performativity is a necessary element to this equation, because it provides the ‘proof’ that scientific discourse needs, and in further analysis Lyotard also noted that performativity ensures a correlation between research investment and research profit – the more institutions invested in, the bigger the profits. Continuing this line of critique, Lyotard also noted that the greater the investment into knowledge production also ensured a greater complexity of results, thus reorientating the research process. Big investments in expenditure would mean a greater propensity to answer complicated questions, and the more complicated the system, the greater the investment to achieve this. Institutional learning in this very performative climate is totally reorganised so as to reify an ethic of optimal performance (or best performance practice) that privilege types of knowledge that conform to rule regimes of proof and argumentation. Best performance also means best profit, and Lyotard explains further:

It is not hard to visualize learning circulating along the same lines as money, instead of for its “educational” value or political (administrative, diplomatic, military) importance; the pertinent distinction would no longer be between knowledge and ignorance, but rather, as is the case with money, between “payment knowledge” and “investment knowledge” – in other words, between units of knowledge exchanged in a daily maintenance framework (the reconstitution of the work force, “survival”) versus funds of knowledge dedicated to optimizing the performance of a project (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 6).

Knowledge, and the way it is turned into a commodity, becomes enframed around issues of information storage (as data), ownership (who owns access to the computers and the data

they contain) and legitimation (the ‘proof’ of this knowledge as being ‘right’ and scientifically correct and true). The consequences of this logic of performativity are profound, as knowledge that can’t be transformed into informational bytes is generally abandoned as “the pragmatics of scientific knowledge replaces traditional knowledge or knowledge based on revelation” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 44). Instrumental reason is elevated to a status that validates its legitimation through competence and utility, which in turn validate instrumentality. Lyotard notes: “It is self-legitimizing, in the same way a system organized around performance maximization seems to be” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 47). For Lyotard, performativity is coupled to the grand narratives of efficiency, reason and instrumentality that have come to mark modernity. Capitalism, globalisation and technology come to full fruition in neoliberal societies that value the logic of performativity as a justification for the way society is organised, leaving Lyotard to observe:

The true goal of the system, the reason it programs itself like a computer is the optimization of the global relationship between input and output: performativity (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 11).

While acknowledging, along with many of his contemporaries, the force of language on subjects and the constitutive dimension of language on selves, Lyotard’s version of performativity serves as a kind of hyper-realisation of Austin’s performative utterance that has expanded beyond a more anthropomorphic lens to one that spans the ‘pragmatics’ of the social bond in general. In his foreword to *The Postmodern Condition* Frederic Jameson acknowledges the turn to linguistics as a methodological perspective that is a “fact, (although a rather unexpected development)” (Jameson, 1984, p. x). Unexpected though it might have been to Jameson, in fact Austin anticipated many of the concerns and preoccupations of Lyotard’s fellow compatriots that centred around the effects of language, which in turn precipitated a wider type of crisis in traditional forms of philosophy. Lyotard would have keenly noted Austin’s prescient observation, that “we very often also use utterances in ways beyond the scope at least of traditional grammar” (Austin, 1976, p. 3). Further, Austin would have encouraged Lyotard even more with the next statement, that “many philosophical perplexities have arisen through a mistake – the mistake of taking as straightforward statements of fact utterances which are *either* (in interesting non-grammatical ways) nonsensical *or else* intended as something quite different” (ibid). Through Lyotard’s pen, optimal performance, absolute efficiency and performance maximisation become the *utterances* of a system dictated by a logic of performativity (and certainly beyond the scope of traditional grammar). Austin’s performative, noted Lyotard, also had another very

interesting quality in that “the distinctive feature of the ... ‘performative,’ is that the effect upon the referent coincides with the enunciation” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 9). In the case of this type of utterance, the specific effect is the *most efficient* rendering of a performance, in that the referent, addressee and sender are affected by the pragmatic ‘performative’ qualities simultaneously. This quality would be crucial to Lyotard’s formulation of performativity, as I shall demonstrate later in this chapter.

Wittgenstein’s Language Games

Lyotard’s interest in “emphasizing facts of language and in particular their pragmatic aspect” would lead him to surmise that “the observable social bond is composed of language ‘moves’” (Lyotard, 1984b, pp. 9-11). To get to the point where performativity is elevated beyond the mere force of language as illocutionary power to a wider cultural phenomenon, Lyotard goes further than Austin and it is here that the major engagement with Wittgenstein emerges. Central to this engagement is Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘language-games’ where all kinds of utterances, such as performatives, occur as differing and singular “modes of discourse” (Lyotard, 1984b, p.10). Drawing on the later Wittgenstein of the (posthumous) *Philosophical Investigations*, and significantly not the earlier essentialism (rejected by Wittgenstein in later life) of the *Tractatus*, Lyotard endorsed Wittgenstein’s embrace of language as garnering meaning through its specific use and context. Rather than deep, embedded ‘truths’ to the meaning of words, Wittgenstein instead viewed the singularity of the particular utterance as generating meaning through its occurrence within a wider ‘language-game’. For Wittgenstein then, language games are “forms of life”, with the basic assumption that the unit of reference is not the word but the sentence, and that meaning can only be understood by analysing the multiple contexts of use. Each game is singular with its own set of rules, thereby emphasising the potential each utterance has for endless diversity and difference, and in Lyotard’s words (1984b, p. 66), the “recognition of the heteromorphous nature” involved in language games. Lyotard takes time to clarify Wittgenstein’s approach to the analogy of the language game in the following:

What he means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put - in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces, in other words, the proper way to move them (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 10).

Mobilised within the language game is Lyotard's observation of the importance of the *move*, that each utterance is a move that follows the rules within a game, and that these games are radically incommensurable with other games. Lyotard further observes that the "rules do not carry with themselves their own legitimation" (ibid) but that there is instead a contract between the players "explicit or not... which is not to say that the players invent the rules" (ibid). It is precisely at this point that Peters (1995c) identifies Lyotard's "innovation" in the Wittgensteinian model of language-games. According to Peters, Lyotard, language-games are "based on the idea of conflict and struggle" and are not solely constituted in practice (Peters, 1995c, p. 324). Rather, Lyotard adds that "if there are no rules, there is no game" and, related to this, "every utterance should be thought of as a "move" in a game" (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 10). The specifically antagonistic element of the language-game allows Lyotard to align himself with Wittgenstein's insistence of there being no universal meta-language, and the related assertion of the groundlessness of meaning in language, aside from the context from which language emerges. There is no one essential, universal language to explain all languages; rather, there are instead endless arrays of different languages that operate through their own pragmatic context. Lyotard quotes directly from Wittgenstein who gives the analogy of language to an ancient city:

Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses (Wittgenstein in Lyotard, 1984b, p. 40).

Lyotard's appropriation of Wittgenstein's language-games enables two vital principles to emerge within his wider methodological framework, and which are also relevant to his formulation of performativity. The first principle is the polemical and combative thrust towards dissension that Lyotard considers the driving force of language-games, in that "to speak is to fight, in the sense of playing, and speech acts fall within the domain of a general agonistics" (1984b, p. 10). This combative and conflictual element is absolutely crucial to Lyotard's stance in both his methodological approach in this context, but also, as Gane (1998, p. 140) notes, in the "oppositional, indeed revolutionary, frame of analysis and practice" that is one of the significant unifying threads throughout a disparate oeuvre. The second principle stands as a result of the first, "that the observable social bond is composed of language 'moves' (Lyotard, 1984b, p.11). Though Lyotard would be forced shortly after this analysis to alter his stance on Wittgenstein's language-game model, he would retain the 'political' dimension of language as a model for understanding the nature of the social bond. However,

according to Peters and Marshall (1999, p. 126), Lyotard argued that “Wittgenstein’s legacy ... must be yet relieved of its debt to anthropomorphism – an anthropomorphism that is empirical in Wittgenstein and involves the notion of use”. For the social bond to be understood, Lyotard would intentionally oppose the humanist stance of ‘man’ as the centre and creator of his environment inherited from the Enlightenment, and impose an understanding of narrative pragmatics. On this Lyotard explains:

In these terms, people make use of language. They play at it. The fact that they do not know all the rules of the various games has no impact on this anthropological assumption. After Wittgenstein, the first task is that of overcoming this humanistic obstacle to the analysis of phrase regimes, to make philosophy inhuman. Humanity is not the user of language, nor even its guardian; there is no more one subject than there is one language (Lyotard, 1993l, p. 21).

Instead, the contours of this approach as outlined above, would be delineated by Wittgenstein (via Austin) and creatively appropriated by Lyotard into a nominal approach of ‘phrase regimes’. This epistemological approach to Lyotard’s notion of performativity is intended to allow a more graduated and shaded exegesis that draws on the unstable and conflictual nature of the social bond arising from language, *and* the importance of the pragmatic dimensions of utterances as inherited from Austin.

The Postmodern Condition: Ethics and Judgement through Kant and Wittgenstein

Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition* is primarily concerned with understanding how the “computerization of society” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 67) affects notions of ‘knowledge’ and ‘education’, having been commissioned specifically for this purpose by the *Conseil des Universités du Québec*. Lyotard outlined a systematic critique of the basic tenets and assumptions of the human condition in late capitalist societies, using the working hypothesis that “the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 3). First written in 1979, Peters asserts that the reaction to this little ‘report’ was “an instant cause célèbre” (Peters, 1995a, p. xxiii) and the publication of the English translation four years later was a continuation of this. So much so that Roberts (1998, p. 2) points out that now “no major work on postmodernism is ‘complete’ without reference to it”. Central to the report is Lyotard’s investigation into what he considered to be the demise of the classical or modern episteme of representation, alongside the dislocation of reason in scientific discourse in the

twentieth century and the resultant rise of technology as a formative power. Drawing from Wittgenstein and Kant specifically, Lyotard placed emphasis on the use of language as a framework for this analysis, whilst allowing the key motifs of 'ethics' and 'judgement' to emerge into prominence.

According to Georges Van Den Abbeele, the late 1970s in which *The Postmodern Condition* was written saw Lyotard extensively abandon Freud for Wittgenstein, "the expressiveness of repressed desire for the matrix of language games" motivated by Lyotard's increasing preoccupation with "questions of distributive justice and the politics of representation" (Van Den Abbeele, 2009, p. xi). If we are to believe Nietzsche's wry comment that a philosophy is always the biography of the philosopher (Young, 2003), then it is not surprising that Lyotard's 'turn' to Wittgenstein and Kant and the resultant emphasis on ethics and judgement (indeed, an ethics *of* judgement) also mirrors a decisive abandonment of previously held ardent beliefs in Lyotard's own biography. Lyotard's militant past as an academic/activist for the revisionist left-wing group and journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, his work as a teacher in Algeria during the Algerian revolution, and his experience at Nanterre as a professor during May/June 1968, contributed to a growing concern with what he considered to be a decline of politics into mere bureaucratic administration and economic management. Van Den Abbeele notes that the "party vanguardism and bureaucratic rule that would characterize Marxist-Leninism and Soviet communism" (Van Den Abbeele, 2009, p. xi) had become increasingly unpalatable for Lyotard, initiating a complete withdrawal from Marxism and a re-entry into academia by the late 1960's. The ineptitude of the French communist party (the FLN) to support the Algerian resistance to French rule, and the absolute failure to support or attempt to understand the students in Paris 1968, were two decisive rupturing points for Lyotard's alignment to Marxism, and instead served to heighten an already prospering suspicion at the insensitivities party politics displayed toward individual cases of injustice.

Marshall (1995) provides an interesting commentary on Lyotard's specific pedagogical stance to the 1968 student uprising, one that clearly cannot tolerate blanket bureaucracy and the accompanying blind positivism that such an event exposed. As Peters explains, Lyotard was at this stage signalling "a conscious shift away from the doctrinaire praxis philosophy which characterised the non-PCF Marxism tradition of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*" (Peters, 2004p. 47). What does become clear is that the predominantly Freudian/Nietzschean inspiration for Lyotard's earlier works (his doctoral thesis published as *Discourse, Figure, and Libidinal Economy*) by the time of the late 1970s, and the articulation of Lyotard's

formulation of the ‘postmodern condition’, is the focus on a more interrogative style around questions of distributive justice and the politics of representation. Peters explains that Freud and Nietzsche can be seen as the “former work [*Discourse, Figure*] attempts to develop a metaphysics of truth without negation; the latter [*Libidinal Economy*] attempts to substitute Freud’s economy of libidinal energy (and the notion of primary process) for Marxist political economy” (Peters, 2004, p. 47).

However, Wittgenstein’s analysis of language games and Kant’s explorations into questions of judgement allow Lyotard to creatively engage with a discursive framework that pries open an ethics of ‘phrasing’ that surpasses political dogma, ideological stasis, and a resultant level of terror that was clearly in evidence, according to Lyotard, in 1950s and 1960s formulations of Marxism. On Lyotard’s expansion of Wittgenstein’s language games into an ethics of judgement, Van Den Abbeele explains further:

In *Au juste* [known as ‘*Just Gaming*’ in English], published in 1979 and very much written under the tenseness of the left-wing terrorism that then wracked western Europe (Baader-Meinhof in Germany, the Red Brigades in Italy, along with their imitators and admirers) Lyotard attempts to develop an ethics of political and theoretical engagement based on the discursive distinction between descriptive and prescriptive utterances and on the logical, and indeed moral, falseness of deriving one from the other (Van Den Abbeele, 2009, p. xi).

It is precisely the discursive distinction between descriptive and prescriptive utterances exhibited in *Au Juste* (Lyotard, 1985a), a set of conversations recorded between Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, that serve as the broad methodological foundation of Lyotard’s distinction between narrative and scientific knowledge as distinct language games with their own set of rules in *The Postmodern Condition*. Here, the difference between prescriptive and descriptive statements aligns with the incommensurability between the cognitive and ethical, and the way these utterances separate questions of knowledge and judgement through their specific pragmatic qualities. In an interview with Willem van Reijen and Dick Veerman, Lyotard elaborates this point further in the following:

I can follow the line of Kantian thought, and also, to a very large extent, that of Wittgensteinian thought. Finding or trying to elaborate the rules which make the discourse of knowledge, for example, possible – rules which we know to be under a general regime where truth or falsehood is at stake – is not the same thing as trying to elaborate the rules of a discourse, for example ethics, whose regime is one where good or evil, justice or injustice are at stake; nor is it the same thing for the discourse of aesthetics whose field of play is defined by the question of beauty or ugliness (or at least, lack of beauty (Lyotard cited in van Reijen & Veerman, 1988, p. 278).

While this clearly leads to what Lyotard will call his “philosophy of phrases”, Lyotard’s appropriation of the Kantian “faculties” of judgement (understanding, reason and imagination) with Wittgenstein’s language pragmatics at this stage provide an interesting alternative to both the hegemony of capitalist utterances and Hegelian-Marxism that motivate the narrative impetus of *The Postmodern Condition*. In fact, the philosophical undercurrent throughout this book is articulated fully in Lyotard’s later concept of “dissensus” as unrepresentable cases of injustice known as the differend (Lyotard, 1998a)

Lyotard’s decisive break with Marxism is a crucial factor in understanding his interest in Kant and Wittgenstein within the context of *The Postmodern Condition*, as it involves the debunking of the Hegelian dialectic within radical Marxist dialectical materialism *and* the Hegelian metaphysics of emancipation and speculative unity. Essentially, this meant that Lyotard was attacking not only the essence of the Enlightenment carried into Modernity, but with it any form of society and politics according to any idea of reason. In the same interview with Willem van Reijen and Dick Veerman, Lyotard sums up this anti-Hegelian stance with the combative comments that “the essential philosophical task will be to refuse ... the complete aestheticization of the political”, and this entails “all attempts to moralize politics which were incarnated in Marxism” (Lyotard cited in van Reijen & Veerman, 1988, p. 300). Seyla Benhabib refers to this aspect of Lyotard’s argument as “the destruction of the episteme of representation” that involves the “recognition of the irreconcilability and incommensurability of language games, and the acceptance that only local and context-specific criteria of validity can be formulated” (Benhabib, 1984, p. 111). The universalising tendencies of modern philosophy and politics, the “opacity” of meaning, and the heterogeneous nature of language games that serve as the components of the social bond, are distilled in the writing of *The Postmodern Condition*, leading Lyotard to surmise this famous part of his polemic:

I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational working subject, or the creation of wealth (Lyotard, 1984b, p. xxiii).

Instead, Lyotard coins the term ‘postmodern’ to which he is indelibly linked, in response to what he considers to be the “incredulity toward metanarratives” and the “obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation” to this modernity (Lyotard, 1984b, p. xxiv). I now examine these claims in turn.

Grand narratives and Performativity: Crisis and Legitimation in the Postmodern Condition

But what is certain is that *The Postmodern Condition* is not a book of philosophy. It is rather a book that is marked by sociology, by a certain historicism and by epistemology. These were the subjects which were imposed on me by the task of providing a report on the actual state of the sciences in the advanced countries. The philosophical basis of the report could not be elaborated there; and, besides, I explained that in my small introduction to the book. I think the philosophical basis of *The Postmodern Condition* will be found, directly or indirectly in *Le Differend*. As to the latter book, I developed it at length, very slowly, starting on it immediately after the publication of *Economie Libidinale* (so it took me ten years), and resuming there the philosophical readings of the great tradition because these readings appeared to me to be indispensable. These readings only appear to a very limited extent in *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard cited in van Reijen & Veerman, 1988, pp. 277-278).

The above quote is an important indication of Lyotard's own position on the importance of the piece of writing that would earn him his fame, and the extent to which it has been 'mistaken' as the outline of his overall philosophical exegesis. Both these aspects caused him obvious irritation; for instance, in a late interview with Gary A. Olson Lyotard refers to *The Postmodern Condition* as "the worst book I ever wrote", and, "this horrible book" (Olson, 1995, p. 410). While it is tempting to ascribe a certain level of posturing to this position, it is also important in the context of this thesis to take into account that the style and (in relation to other political writings) the *relatively* non-combative and neutral stance are indeed unique to Lyotard's wider oeuvre on either side of this work. However, that said, I do believe that *The Postmodern Condition* is an important book in terms of laying out, in a very methodical and clinical fashion an argument against totality, universality, and mastery, that would surface throughout Lyotard's writing. It also proffers a thorough articulation of the recurring theme for a resistance against technocratic and overly rationalistic formulations of living in a post-cold war, and now thoroughly neoliberal, world order that is ruled by a logic of performativity. The way Lyotard executes these concerns is to study "the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies" and to describe this condition with the term "postmodern" (1984b, p. xxiii). Accordingly, Lyotard states:

Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age (Lyotard, 1984b, p. 3).

Lyotard immediately positions this hypothesis within the context of a "crisis of narratives" and cites the Western world's inability to believe, and *incredulity* toward, the episteme of

representation that the Moderns from Descartes onwards had bequeathed. The structural qualities of these epistemic representations present themselves, according to Lyotard in a narrative form, and they do this because of the human propensity for people to explain themselves within the realms of narrative knowledge. Narrative knowledge is in opposition to another form of knowledge that itself has come to prominence, thanks to the Enlightenment, and that form of knowledge takes the name of *science*. According to Lyotard, scientific knowledge is obliged to legitimate itself through a second order of discourse called philosophy, in order to prove that science is about providing ‘true’ representations between the Enlightenment consciousness and the Modern order of representations outside the self. Thus, science makes some rather large claims about truth and, by doing so, creates what Lyotard calls a ‘metadiscourse’ that relies on, and makes “explicit appeal to some grand narrative” in order “to legitimate the rules of its own game” (Lyotard, 1984b, p. xxiii). In *The Postmodern Explained*, Lyotard elaborates further on these grand narratives as:

the progressive emancipation of reason and freedom, the progressive or catastrophic emancipation of labour..., the enrichment of all through the progress of capitalist technoscience, and even... the salvation of creatures through the conversion of souls to the Christian narrative of martyred love” (Lyotard, 1992a, p. 29).

The problem we are confronted with now, says Lyotard, is that these grand narratives no longer hold the promise of infallible truth that had previously structured the modern belief system that revolved around the two great Hegelian narratives of emancipation and speculation. Any indication that humanity is working its way toward an ideal state of freedom and perfection, in a world of complete harmony and peace, that knows itself as a complete and unified form, has been totally and irrevocably shattered throughout the twentieth century (and beyond). Lyotard cites the examples of ‘Auschwitz’, Hungary 1956, Paris 1968 and many others to prove his point, and it is not hard to continue this list well into the twenty-first century. The faulty belief in progress, the rapid rise of technology, the spread of global capitalism, and the collapse of what Lyotard (1992c, p. 402) calls the “revolutionary alternative” ensure the decline in relevance of the Enlightenment idealist and humanist metanarratives. It is precisely these ‘truths’ and the dogmatic application to the master narrative apparatus of modernity that Lyotard is questioning, whilst highlighting the violent nature inherent to their application. Peters explains further:

Lyotard wants to question the dogmatic bases of these metanarratives, their “terroristic” and violent nature, which in asserting certain “Truths” from the

perspective of an authorised discourse, does so only by silencing or excluding statements from another (Peters, 2004, p. 51).

Instead, Lyotard formulates the response to this as ‘postmodern’ – as incredulity to the grand narratives, a distrust of the universalising tendencies of modernity, and the proven injustices that arise from them. Rather than grand narratives, Lyotard echoes Wittgenstein’s observation of the groundlessness of language and the way that the postmodern indeed splinters narratives into small particles of language “dispersed into a heterogeneity of language elements comprising incommensurable modes of discourse” (Peters, 2004, p. 51).

Performance Capitalism – Phrase Regimes in the Economic Genre

In the *Differend*, Lyotard understands capitalism as the giving of hegemony over all other phrase regimes to the economic genre of exchange. Capitalism as the rule of commodification and exchange becomes capitalism as the determinate rule of the economic genre over the linking of phrases. That is to say, in capitalism, all phrases are treated as if their linkage were *economic*, a matter of the exchange of values (Readings, 1991, p. 130).

In later works, Lyotard was to replace his use of ‘narrative’, to avoid contradicting his own critiques on the use of any one ‘metalanguage’ (also referred previously as ‘grand narratives’), with the more reflexive, and potentially far more disruptive, notions of ‘phrase regimes’ and ‘phrase linkages’. The justification for this will be elaborated in the next section, but for the moment it is necessary to consider Lyotard’s view that each ‘phrase’ demands a response, another ‘phrase’. What links these phrases, what determines the conditions (or rule, or regime) of the next phrase are at the heart of Lyotard’s analytics – an ethical response? Or, one that stays inside the frame of reference of the previous phrase, thereby legitimating more phrases linked by the same genre. Capitalism is, of course, *the* prime example of the latter example, as explained by Readings in the above quote where the ‘genre’ of the economic ensures that all phrases adhere to a capitalist frame of reference. The rules of the economic genre result in a ‘presumed commensurability’, where *everything* can be turned into a commodity to be exchanged. Readings elaborates further:

Modernism is the moment of capitalism in that the rule of the market is the rule of universal exchangeability; modernism’s project of universal history parallels capitalism’s drive towards a world market. And as Lyotard points out, the currency or universal language of the capitalist market is time (Readings, 1991, p. 129).

‘Time’ then, is crucial, and in the context of this chapter, ‘time’ has an active relevance to the notions of performance as previously discussed. In the case of capital, time is to be made

accountable, or, in the context of McKenzie, time is equated to *performance* that is also to be made accountable. The conditions for linking phrases is thus controlled to ensure that time is measured and performance is efficient, and that the rules of the economic genre dictate the conditions of any further phrasing. Time in capitalism is viewed as a value (for example as in the well-known adage, 'Time is money'). Explained further by Readings, this paradoxical element is capitalism's "simultaneous drive to 'gain time' whilst understanding time as value, the ambiguity of 'saving time'" (Readings, 1991, p. 130). What this means is that notions of 'performance' are embedded in the paradoxical uses of 'time'. Time becomes accelerated, as performance becomes more efficient to cope with the demands of the market through the quicker circulation of commodities. Furthermore, performance in this sense becomes central to the capitalist quest to save time, and by doing so, becomes central in the contradictory *erasure of time*.

Issues of time, performance and justice become embroiled in the economic rule of exchange that has inherent power inequalities within the capitalist structure. In *A Svelte Appendix to the Postmodern Question*, Lyotard warns "the problem that overshadows all others, including that of the contemporary state, is that of capital" (Lyotard, 1993i, p. 25). Though McKenzie does not specifically deal with capital as a singular force, his idea that 'difference' is now being put to normative ends through the rule of performance is particularly helpful when considering performativity as a cultural force. According to McKenzie, culture is at the forefront of contemporary globalisation. When taken into consideration with Lyotard's analysis that 'culture' involves primarily the capacity to question and experiment, or is dictated by capital, the *parallel ambiguities* inherent in a culture of performance involving difference put to normative ends (in the case of capital), or to democratic practices of questioning, are exposed. These ambiguities of performance are the ambiguities of postmodernity, and it is these normative and transgressive effects in embodied and discursive performances that enable forms of performance capitalism to be sustained.

According to Lyotard, "capitalist creation does not bend to rules, it invents them". Capitalist systems are infinitely malleable and endlessly renewable. They are built on the premise that the 'will' is never ending, and desire is infinite. Lyotard states:

In capitalism, infinity is posed as that which is not yet determined, as that which the will must indefinitely dominate and appropriate. It bears the names of cosmos, of energy. It gives rise to research and development. It has to be conquered, to be turned into the means to an end, and this end is the glory of the will, a glory that is itself infinite (Lyotard, 1993i, p. 25).

Just what “the will must indefinitely dominate and appropriate” (ibid) is, of course, endless, and just what it dominates often has performance as the evaluative tool to judge whether it is worthy of acquiring. Furthermore, Lyotard explains that the “infinity of the will” (Lyotard, 1993i, p. 27), or put another way, the infinite desire of commodification, has invaded language itself and is affecting the social bond. Lyotard explains:

The effects of the penetration of capitalism in to language are only beginning. Under the guise of an extension of markets and a new industrial strategy, the coming century is that of the investment of the desire for infinity, according to the criterion of optimum performance, in matters of language (ibid).

Capitalism based on performance still relies on difference. However, Lyotard recognised the way that the capitalism has penetrated language also means that this ‘difference’ is put to ‘monopolitical’ ends, selecting only what fits the criterion of optimal performance. The culture of performance is a culture that becomes entrenched in this form of evaluation. Lyotard further states in *For a Cultural Nonpolicy* that capitalism has its own ‘policy’ for culture, in that it “selects the activities of the mind according to criteria of good performance” (Lyotard, 1993b, p. 12). Though ‘difference’ as a sub-sector of performance abounds, *freedom* becomes an illusion as the law of the market “threatens to submerge the freedom of the mind” (ibid).

It is precisely because of the endless desire and infinity of the will that, as Readings suggests, there is no ‘pure other’ to capitalism. McKenzie’s assertion that culture now plays a crucial and ever more prominent role in global performative power further exposes the way ‘difference’ is actually an integral part of capitalism, and is itself falling under the logic of performativity. However, Lyotard also warns that this endless and infinite desire that both drives and dictates the condition of capital is based on an appetite for gluttony. Instead, Lyotard urges a sveltness – a slenderness – in which to direct this desire. The ‘overcapitalisation’ that he speaks of has spilled into technological and digital realms that he could not have predicted, but would scarcely surprise him. Cultural transference, and the ambiguities involved in performance, has emerged as a type of global performance that has allowed capitalism, and more ‘dangerous’ versions (described by Lyotard as ‘monopolitical monsters’) of neoliberalism to thrive. Forms of resistance to the hegemony of capital have occupied a central position in Lyotard’s work from the time he was a member of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. Lyotard contends that a resistance to the hegemony of the economic genre in the linking of phrases is to introduce a temporality, or an *unaccountable* time. This next section

deals with the temporality of what Lyotard calls the 'event' or 'figure'. It is here that performance as a transgressive medium as explained by McKenzie comes to the fore. I do however stay with Lyotard, as 'reading' the event is of central importance to Lyotard's larger project of an ethics and 'just' practice that resists totalising histories of cultural representation or totalising projects of culture.

The Turn to Temporality in Performance: The Event as Aesthetic Resistance

In *Discourse, Figure* (2010) Lyotard treats the figural as a disruptive element that is at the same time within and outside discourse in general. Or put another way, all meanings of performance have a 'doing' element inherent to them; it is just that one acknowledges the temporal, singularity of the unfolding of the event which is totally alien to the language or structure of understanding to which it occurs because it has never occurred in exactly the same way before. Performance as *discourse* has a predetermined phrase linking system, such as modernism, or capitalist systems, that controls the conditions of future phrasing. In capitalist systems, all events submit to the rule of capital by reducing that event or performance to the representation of value within a system of exchange. Similarly, performance as a criterion (described as performativity) is a performance to maximise efficiency – "the returning of performance to its 'truth'" (Readings, 1991, p. 77). Lyotard's investigation of 'figural' inserts a temporality into the event that cannot be reduced to representation of anything else precisely because of its radical singularity *as* an event. Lyotard draws attention to the status of the event as an act with a temporality, not with a hidden meaning that is in need of revealing. Performance then, has potentially very disruptive consequences. David Carroll explains this further in his book *Paraesthetics*:

The figural is disruptive of discursive systems and destructive of signification in general, a radical exteriority to discourse, what discourse is unable to say. In the figural realm, things happen that have never happened before and whose occurrence could not have been anticipated. Here meaning is not produced and communicated, but intensities are felt... It is the realm of movement, difference, reversal, transgression, and affirmation, that is to say, it is everything the discursive is not (Carroll, 1987, pp. 30-31).

The event, or performance, happens in excess of the referential frame to which it has emerged, and by doing so has disrupted that frame of reference. The event is the radically singular happening that cannot be represented within historical discourse without it losing its singularity of 'eventhood' by reducing it to a moment among moments. The postmodern

condition to which Lyotard refers seeks to do justice to the event. The disruption to the regime of phrases and to any grand narratives then becomes of utmost importance, and an ethical concern, because the 'performance' conveys what can't be put into words. Readings explains:

In Lyotard's account 'little narratives' resist the incorporation into such totalising histories of cultural representation or projects for culture. They do this because of the way in which the event of the performance (not simply the act of telling but the implicit pragmatics of narrative transmission) functions as a figure, so as to displace the scientific claims of narrative theory. For Lyotard 'narrative' is not a concept that allows us to unlock the meaning of culture. Rather it is the rhetorical figure that opens culture as a site of transformation and dispute (Readings, 1991, p. 63).

To understand performance as the site of cultural transformation, Lyotard appeals to the aesthetic as a site of invention that intersects artistic and political realms in order to displace the rule of 'truth', and as such becomes a field of resistance to grand narratives. According to David Carroll, "the aesthetic could be considered to constitute for Lyotard both the privileged space of all critical activity and the model for all unrestricted affirmation and radical socio-political transformation" (Carroll, 1987, p. 24). It is to the aesthetic, as a site of resistance to totalising theories, that I now turn in order to further explore the force of temporal performance as a radically singular event capable of displacing the assurance of truth and meaning in wider political, historical and theoretical issues.

If McKenzie is correct in his summation that performance is the overriding tool for social evaluation, then the relevance of Lyotard's claim to the temporality of the event as an act or performance comes to the fore. Aesthetics, or 'art', holds a pivotal strategic place in order to reformulate the criterion of performance that McKenzie warns through the critical openings or a critical distance that performance as 'art' provides. In this way, art performs a critical function that deals directly with the dynamic relation between the aesthetic and the political. When understood as an event that occurs in artistic realms, performance both confronts the positivist logic of the performativity criterion with its own limitations, and develops strategies for exceeding these limitations with a precise intention of displacing this type of performance as social evaluation in the same process. Performance as aesthetic resistance, or put another way, performance as an event, is treated by Lyotard as a space that according to Carroll "at the very least [is] not determined by what Lyotard would argue are the restrictions of meaning and norms governing discourse in general" (Carroll, 1987, p. 24).

Aesthetic resistance then, can be found in the performance as a figure or event and the site to which that performance belongs is *artistic*. According to Lyotard though, the understanding of performance as an event in terms of its temporal singularity evokes an art of *invention and experimentation*. As Readings points out, this is not to be confused with art that is termed ‘innovative’ (as the modernist avant-garde claimed), in which the innovation is a further refinement of the efficiency of the system, whereas “invention/experimentation changes the rules in the pragmatics of knowledge” (Readings, 1991, p. 73). This is directly analogous with performance as a normative discourse (with a performativity criterion that is solely concerned with the efficiency of the system), and performance as a radically singular and temporal event through, what I will now add, postmodern aesthetic experimentation and invention. In this understanding, performance evokes an art of invention, and as such is the site of resistance to grand narratives through its radical exteriority of the system from which it emerged.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored Lyotard’s criterion of performativity within the postmodern condition as belonging to a transparent, *shadowless* world where destinations are known and pre-programmable, and where the performances of our lives can be calculated within a set of binary algorithms that can predict and prescribe the desired outcomes. When extending this argument to McKenzie’s perspective of performance as a disciplining mode, the outlook for creative and new forms of thought looks very much under threat. This chapter has covered the terrain over which Lyotard’s notion of performativity dictates the ‘climate’ in which education breathes. The totalising propensity of the input/output equation leaves no space for shadows as areas of indeterminacy or doubt, when every performance must be clearly communicated and transparent to maintain efficiency. This chapter also depicts however, Lyotard’s insistence that there can be no universal language in which to phrase political conflicts and injustices, and as such, there can be no universal language in which to phrase education. From this point in the thesis, Lyotard’s stance of defending multiplicity against universalising and totalising forces will be investigated. However, this discussion of performativity is also important in that it outlines the coordinates of a critique that both the thesis, and Lyotard’s writing, will define itself against. The rest of the thesis instead searches for ways of resisting the binary and totalising language of performativity, and heads toward a discussion of education that also resists such universalising tendencies.

McKenzie's contribution to this discussion on performance in this chapter highlights the paradoxical nature of performance as consisting of both normative and artistic dimensions. While the ensuing exploration in the thesis will concentrate on what can be broadly termed the 'artistic', it is also important to point out the ambivalent nature of performance and the potential for *all* types of performance to be absorbed into a system that relies on differentiation to survive. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight, but in the context of this chapter the importance of a temporal dimension to aesthetic performance is the crucial tactic with which to disrupt pre-programmed conceptions of time. The search for 'performances' as temporal and ungraspable 'shadows' that resist absorption into the mechanisms of the system becomes the focus of the rest of the thesis, as an investigation into Lyotard's search to testify to the pure event of the *now*.

CHAPTER THREE

Toward the Inaudible: Lyotard's Freud¹⁴

Introduction

I do not like this haste. What it hurries, and crushes, is what after the fact I find
I have always tried, under diverse headings – work, figural, heterogeneity,
dissensus, event, thing – to reserve: the unharmonizable (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 5).

This chapter traces the notion of the inaudible as the space of rupture within Lyotard's analyses of the 'political', the (negative)-ontological, and the (negative)-aesthetical. The purpose of this chapter is to locate the concept of 'the inaudible' in Lyotard's oeuvre as a theoretical springboard to my own analysis in this thesis. Lyotard often deployed musical metaphors, such as in the above quote, to express the unrepresentable, the unarticulated and inarticulate dimensions to his continuous project of deconstructing discourse. By the time of his final set of writings in the late 1980s and 1990s the use of musical metaphors had shifted from a merely allegorical device to a more central mode of critique, exemplified in the title and narrative of *Soundproof Room* (2001). Here, the inaudible is inscribed within a 'soundproof room' where art "practices the incision of an inaudible presence into a well-heard presence" (Lyotard, 2001, p. 96). This 'presence' is afforded an audible set of coordinates that emerge from Lyotard's orientation toward a psychoanalytical focus on 'articulation' that stems from his re-engagement with Freud. This is a different Freud to that of *Libidinal Economy* and *Discourse, Figure* in which Lyotard utilises a Freudian 'energetics' that looks at power (*puissance*) in terms of desire and intensities. In the later texts Lyotard turns instead to a Freud whose writing on 'affect' within the rubric of 'original repression' as 'deferred action', is merged with Lyotard's Kantian notion of the 'sublime' as thought that exceeds conceptual articulation and representation. Lyotard's oft-repeated call to "lend an ear" to events, for an "internal ear" and to the ethico-political need to "listen" to the many silences that occur within and aside discourse, position the inaudible as an essential critical tool encompassing the affective force of both art and politics.

Lyotard was a young man of twenty-six in 1950 when he was sent to teach at a lycée in Constantine, Algeria. By the time of his return to France in the mid-60s the post-Marxist,

¹⁴ I have taken the title 'Lyotard's Freud' from Ann Tomiche's article of the same name (Tomiche, 1991) to emphasise the approach Lyotard takes to rewrite Freud's work. This is Lyotard's (radical) reading of Freud, which is why I have not referenced Freud directly.

post-radicalised, (fast approaching) middle-aged Lyotard was ripe for the psychoanalytical wave of theory hitting Europe led by Jacques Lacan, and Lyotard is known to have attended these seminal lectures¹⁵. Georges Van Den Abbeele (1991, p. 156) describes Lyotard's Algerian experience as a long lesson in *listening*, a "prolonged *écoute*" to what others seemed not to hear "behind the front of nationalism". This was particularly the case in Lyotard's conflicted position regarding the FLN¹⁶ by supporting it "in its struggle even while criticizing its organization" (ibid)¹⁷. Here Lyotard finds the seeds to sow in his theoretical trajectory, of which at this stage he is standing on the threshold, of one of the diverse names referred to in the opening quote naming the "unharmonizable". The lesson that Algeria showed Lyotard was that 'official' politics on any point of the political spectrum existed within a representational model of the already known and presentable. For while Lyotard saw it as the absolute right of the Algerian people to fight for independence from their French colonial oppressors, he also was aware of the extraordinarily complex and varied points of view from the Algerian people themselves as to why this was necessary. The FLN could fight for 'independence' as the known quantum, but it would be (and proved to be) ill equipped to represent the more complex and conflicted issues of the unknown in the form of peasants, the rising urban class, and the ideas of what independence would mean for these disparate groups in the wake of a burgeoning (if veiled) capitalism. Writing in 1963 about this struggle for independence Lyotard comments, "Capitalism did not reorganize a new society, but it did disorganize the old one" (Lyotard, 1993a, p. 326), and this disorganisation could not hope to be acquitted under the representational banner of the FLN¹⁸.

What Lyotard heard in the Algerian situation was that this type of representational politics did not take into account the unknown, unrepresentable silences of what he termed 'the political' as broader agency. Of course nations should have the right to choose how they are governed, Lyotard surmised, but this political formation must be distinct from the political agency of its citizens *as* citizens, thus the changing ground of what 'politics' *is* needed to be questioned. Abbeele describes this 'other' politics in Lyotard, as "the politics ... of what *cannot* be represented on the 'scene' of the political, of the wrong ... of 'the thing' that

¹⁵ In the Wellek Library Lectures given in May 1986, later published as *Peregrinations* (Lyotard, 1988c), Lyotard describes attending Lacan's lectures in the mid-1960s.

¹⁶ The National Liberation Front, formed in 1954, to obtain independence in Algeria from France.

¹⁷ The chapter entitled 'Performance and Performativity' goes into this period in more detail.

¹⁸ It is worth noting that Lyotard was certainly not the only French intellectual concerned with France's involvement with Algeria. In fact most French intellectuals of the 1960s were positioning themselves in some way toward the issues Algeria faced. For instance, Sartre and Camus had such disagreements about Algeria that they permanently fell out over this and ceased all professional and personal contact.

remains repressed or suppressed in *any* social or political arrangement” (Van Den Abbeele, 1991, pp. 155-156). Lyotard would return to France hungry for the theoretical co-ordinates that would map out his concerns about this repressed silence, the ambiguities and paradoxes that his experience in Algeria provided fresh in his mind. In an interview explaining why it was he started his philosophical writing and career in mid-life, traces of Lyotard’s experience in Algeria resonate in the comment:

And so I came late to writing, and much – “thank God” – had happened to help me make sense of what ought to be thought through (Lyotard, 1992c, p. 402).

What this formative moment in Lyotard’s personal narrative would also provide, aside from but implicated in the changing state of ‘the political’, was the differing forms of silence that representation *per se* would obviate (and this certainly fell under the purview of what needed to be “thought through”). For while ‘Algeria’ provided a compelling example of repressed silence within the framework of political events, it also produced an example of a *continuous* silence demonstrated through France’s ensuing refusal to acknowledge the situation at all. In fact, Abbeele notes that nearly thirty years later this silence still persists, depicted in the way that many French recall the Algerian war “with timidity and embarrassment, ‘les événements’ [the events]” (Van Den Abbeele, 1991, p. 148) thus avoiding issues of blame and responsibility. The name ‘Algeria’ would for Lyotard be the first name in depicting both these silences of omission and denial, but would be later elaborated upon in much more detail under various names such as ‘Auschwitz’ (in *The Differend*), and ‘the “jews”’; instances of Lyotard’s ‘diverse’ headings.

What this brief sketch of Lyotard’s involvement in Algeria depicts is that his re-reading of Freud in the works of the late 1980s and 1990s is a reading that derived from a political narrative steeped in ambiguity and keen analytical awareness for an ethical consideration of, and concern for, ‘voicing’ justice. Lyotard’s return to France after Algeria was also the moment he chose to change from being a militant activist (as a member, for most of the Algerian years, in the Marxist group *Socialisme ou Barbarie*) to an intellectual - to ‘resist’ by other means. This chapter now outlines Lyotard’s reading of Freud primarily in the text *Heidegger and the “jews”* (Lyotard, 1990)¹⁹. From Lyotard’s re-entry into academia in the mid-60s to the writing of this particular text, lies a significant and most celebrated body of work. This chapter does not deal with these texts explicitly as Lyotard’s formulation of ‘the

¹⁹ Hereafter, when referring to the book *Heidegger and “the jews”*, I will use the abbreviation *Heid*.

inaudible' occurs more explicitly in his final decade some fifteen years later. The chapter instead traces the inaudible within the ambit of Freud in Lyotard's later texts, and utilises *Heid.* as the overarching framework to depict the emergence of the inaudible through this renewed engagement with Freudian affect.

Regions of Silence: Heidegger and "the jews"

First published in 1988, Lyotard's extended essay *Heidegger and "the jews"* (published in book form and translated from French to English in 1990) provides one of the first sustained treatments of Freudian 'affect' in Lyotard's oeuvre. Here, the theoretical coordinates of the inaudible are mapped within the Freudian rubric of 'deferred action' (*Nachträglichkeit*) as the site of a *radical silence* that is unable to find articulation, but is paradoxically 'heard' nonetheless as an (unpresentable/inarticulate) affect. At stake for Lyotard is the ethical response to this silence as that which is in need of articulation but is denied the means, or a silence that is 'awarded' articulation and as such, is forgotten. Lyotard deploys Freud here in order to work through this paradox. This section outlines this psychoanalytical inspired re-appropriation of Freud's theory of affect in the context of Heidegger's silence concerning the *Shoah*. Once again Lyotard's biography exceeds the content of the text (leading Avital Ronell to ask the question when reviewing this particular book, "but what book ever takes place within its own site, letting itself be contained or bound by some simple determination?" (Ronell, 1989, p. 64)), and though an exhaustive history is not the aim here, an explanation of the title and the environment from which it emerged is both necessary and unavoidable in the context of this chapter. Another important consideration to take into account in the context of this chapter overall is that what follows is not a comparative analysis of Lyotard and Heidegger's thinking *as such*; rather, the aim is to trace, from a Lyotardian perspective that happens to critique Heidegger, the way that the concept of the inaudible emerges from Lyotard's wider critique of certain prevalent tenets of Western thought of which his book on Heidegger is but one (albeit quite significant) manifestation.

In a lecture given at a conference in 1989 in Freiburg²⁰, Lyotard situates *Heidegger and "the jews"* within the group of books that were published in response to a book by Victor Fariás that 'broke the news' to the European mainstream populace that the celebrated philosopher and highly influential theoretician Martin Heidegger, whom so many controversial (read:

²⁰ Published in Political Writings (Readings, 1993) as 'Heidegger and "the jews": A Conference in Vienna and Freiburg', originally appearing as *L'Europe, les Juifs et le livre* in the French daily newspaper *Libération*.

subversive) French philosophers drew on in their own work²¹, had been a member of the Nazi Party²². Often referred to in terms of ‘the affair’ by those who engaged with this controversy, the final years of the 1980s consisted of a “lively and sometimes violent debate” (according to Lyotard (1993d, p. 137)) amongst many French intellectuals who had often i) already generally known this, and ii) ignored this piece of personal narrative and continued to use much of Heidegger’s work whilst ignoring this dimension to his politics. Farias’ book (and revelations concerning Heidegger) provided little in the way of new material for those who were familiar with Heidegger’s thought and background (see for instance Pavel, 1988), but its emergence in the 1980s was indicative of a wider political process at play in France (and the West in general), that was not merely philosophically motivated. Rather, a wider conservative assault was orchestrated in the 1980s, of which the United States was a particularly vocal proponent, against perceived threats to academia, societal stability and compliance, and social and moral authenticity. These ‘threats’ seemed to generate from the emergence in the American academy of (postmodern) ‘French’ thought. It was no accident, given the conservative political climate in France and America especially, that Heidegger’s Nazi association became a sensation that placed first generation ‘poststructuralist’ thought squarely in the sights of a conservative backlash in the decade of the 1980s²³. Nietzsche, Heidegger’s publications of Nietzschean critique, the (commonly regarded confused and simplistic) references to Nietzsche in National Socialism, and the French reception amongst its intellectual Left to Nietzsche²⁴ (to which Lyotard would be grouped), prompted an astonishingly virulent form of conservative critique that reverberated far beyond the issue of France’s intellectual genealogy.

Picking up on this point, Ronell (1989) points out that the media’s response to this book in France alluded to a connivance between the French reception of Heidegger’s existential-ontological theory amongst its intellectuals, and the role France played in its compliance with

²¹ Painting with a very broad brush, Lyotard would belong to the ‘poststructuralist’ group of Continental thinkers consisting of, to name just a few, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Cixous. It was specifically Heidegger who initiated the French reception of Nietzsche that ignited the reaction against structuralism.

²² The infamous Rector’s Address at Freiberg in 1933 is the oft-quoted evidence and ‘high point’ of this.

²³ One of the seminal and most comprehensive accounts of the conservative assault in America on education is the essay by Ellen Messer-Davidow’s ‘Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education’ (Messer-Davidow, 1993). The journal that published this essay, *Social Text*, was itself victim to what can only be described as a conservative assault against it in the form of the ‘Sokal Affair’ in which a physics professor wrote a hoax article which was subsequently published. Describing the motivations for doing this, Sokal describes his frustration at various ‘cultural’ theorists’ use of scientific terms and jargon that he saw as needlessly pretentious and intellectually corrupt. He didn’t see the irony of this ethical stance as any obstacle to commit what could be seen as a terribly unethical act of intellectual terrorism.

²⁴ See for instance the pivotal text on Nietzsche by Gilles Deleuze in 1962 entitled *Nietzsche et la Philosophie* [Nietzsche and Philosophy].

the horrors of Nazism leading up to and during the Second World War²⁵. The momentum that continued to gather around the affair during this decade of the 1980s however was articulated with ever more ferocity amongst American neoconservatives who had watched (presumably with horror) the growing influence of French intellectualism in its academic institutions. A cornerstone that articulated this threat was the neoconservative Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987)²⁶. Here, Bloom laments the effects of Derrida's deconstructionist approach and the concurrent rise of 'minority' studies (such as Women's Studies, Feminist Studies, Comparative Literature Studies, Cultural Studies, etc) in American higher education²⁷. Nietzsche and Heidegger particularly come under attack as being responsible for the rejection of reason, cultural relativism and the moral and epistemological decline of *humanity*²⁸ (he kept his claims modest). Under the harsh light of the conservative gaze then, it is no wonder that Fariás' book provoked Lyotard (and many others) to respond to the affair, (in ways that could counter such brutally simplistic terms of engagement as outlined by Bloom perhaps). As pointed out by Carroll, the aim of Fariás' book was purely to discredit outright all of Heidegger's work by attempting to suggest that:

all of Heidegger's work is essentially Nazi, and thus that those who treat it seriously today, who consider Heidegger to be an important critical thinker, who read him in something other than a condemnatory mode – that is, who read him at all – are either naively or consciously perpetrating a very sophisticated and radical form of Nazism (Carroll, 1990, p. xvi).

This is a completely untenable position for Lyotard, even despite the fact he was often at pains to disassociate himself from any indebtedness to Heidegger in his own theoretical trajectory²⁹. The blanketed (dialectical) logic of "if a great thinker, then not a Nazi; if a Nazi,

²⁵ Ronell discusses the superficiality of the media as critiqued by Lyotard in the following: "Lyotard localizes the Heidegger affair as an affair of the media, underscoring, he suggests, the wholly impoverished encounter between art and politics. While the mediatic determination of *Shoah* as such is never submitted to critical discussion, the Heidegger story fades into an affair of the media, the single beneficiary, according to Lyotard, of philosophy's scandal" (Ronell 1989, p. 72).

²⁶ Bloom's book seemed to capture the zeitgeist (even though he would not have acknowledged such a 'postmodern' assertion) in that it remained as the number one bestseller list of the *New York Times* for four months.

²⁷ Derrida's entry into the (English speaking) American institution occurred with the delivery of his essay 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in October 1966 to the International Colloquium on Critical Languages and the Sciences of Man at John Hopkins University (see Peters & Burbules, 2004).

²⁸ In a humorous review of Bloom's book, Maxine Greene shrewdly notes the following: "For Bloom the obstacles appear to be feminism, rock music, relativism, the tradition of the Sixties, and German philosophy. He is drawn to making lists of thinkers who are good and thinkers who are bad, those who have brought enduring harm. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and most of the thinkers of the Enlightenment are good. Rousseau, Locke, Kant, and Hegel are problematic. Freud, Marx, and Weber (all influenced by Nietzsche) are unquestionably what Bloom calls "bad guys," along with Dewey and Heidegger. And then there is Woody Allen, whom Bloom mentions repeatedly, probably because he sees him as the archetypal nihilist" (Greene, 1988, p. 756).

²⁹ Something of Lyotard's disdain can be clearly read in the following anecdote of meeting Heidegger when he (Lyotard) was a young student shortly after the end of the war: "I remember a sly peasant in his *Hütte*, dressed in traditional costume, of sententious speech and shifty eye, apparently lacking in shame and anxiety, protected by his knowledge and flattered by his disciple. This picture was enough to prevent me from becoming a "Heideggerian." I take no pride in this. These were fugitive impressions, due no doubt to the prejudices of a young Parisian. I continued to read his work" (Lyotard, 1993, p.

then not a great thinker” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 52) was for Lyotard bereft of the nuanced critique that such a horrific error of judgement by such a great thinker warranted. It also, however, provided Lyotard with the opportunity to articulate his own theoretical critique on silence that the name ‘Heidegger’ exposed. It is worth quoting the ‘rules’ that Lyotard set himself in order to articulate this debate and the wider issue of the responsibility to thought, that must be taken into account:

1. One must admit the importance and the greatness of Heidegger’s thought.
2. One must admit the seriousness of the compromise with what Heidegger calls “the movement” (whose “internal truth and greatness” he affirmed even in 1953), and one must admit that his persistent silence on the genocide is not the product of a *lapsus* or a minor failure of memory.
3. One must maintain both assertions – that of the greatness of the thought and that of the objectionable nature of the “politics” – without concluding that if one is true then the other is false, according to the implication that if Heidegger is a great thinker, then he cannot have been a Nazi or, if he was a Nazi, then he cannot be a great thinker.
4. Dealing with this double assertion must not mean just noting the conflict, but finding its internal logic (Lyotard, 1993d, p. 138).

This internal logic is at the core of Lyotard’s critique. The second half of the heading “‘the jews’” provokes immediate confusion (and did so even amongst Lyotard’s own colleagues³⁰) and shall be dealt with first. As depicted in the introduction to this chapter, “the jews” is one of the “diverse names” Lyotard used to depict the “unharmonizable”. Here “the jews” is what Lyotard considers to be the realm of the unrepresentable, unforgettable, the radically ineffable and unutterable. For Lyotard the figure of “the jews” provide no recourse to direct presentation or articulation. This term is not to be taken as referring to the group of people who call themselves ‘Jews’, although the usage of it is a deliberately provocative ploy by Lyotard to evoke the different kinds of unrepresentable silence that surround the Holocaust (and is also deliberately evocative of Heidegger’s ‘silences’ in a not unrelated way, as will be discussed). However, the process that the evocation of the term “the jews” performs provides the precise effect that Lyotard needs in order to, paradoxically, articulate that there is always

137). It is tempting to read a psychoanalytical slant into Lyotard’s response to Heidegger taking into account that, for Lyotard, even though he changed his approach as to how to be politically active, there remains a certain uncompromising activism in his writings and with regard to Heidegger, a certain amount of impatience and disapproval that must be influenced by what Lyotard saw as Heidegger ‘hiding’ behind his knowledge. One suspects that no matter how ‘good’ Heidegger’s thought was to Lyotard, there would have always been a differend between two very different types of men; one the militant activist, the other the (seemingly) compliant state mouthpiece; one the travelling academic, the other the solitary homebody writing in his wooden hut in the Black Forest, that would have always stood in the way of Lyotard’s full appreciation of Heidegger’s thinking. The fact remains though that in my reading of Lyotard, Heidegger actually figures quite highly, even if it is often in terms of what Lyotard is defining his own work against (as is the case here).

³⁰ In his introduction to the English translation of *Heidegger and “the jews”* Carroll asserts that “there could be no notion of “the jews” without the Jews and a certain Jewish tradition and ethics” (p. xxvi) and that Lyotard falls short of providing a convincing analysis of this.

a remainder that is, and must remain, radically inarticulate. Lyotard clarifies his paradoxical use of “the jews” to denote the unrepresentable and inarticulate in the following way:

I use lower case to indicate I am not thinking of a nation. I make it plural to signify that it is neither a figure nor a political (Zionism), religious (Judaism), or philosophical (Jewish philosophy) subject that I put forward under this name. I use quotation marks to avoid confusing these “jews” with real Jews. What is most real about real Jews is that Europe, in any case, does not know what to do with them: Christians demand their conversion; monarchs expel them; republics assimilate them; Nazis exterminate them. “The jews” are the object of a dismissal with which Jews, in particular, are afflicted in reality (Lyotard, 1990, p. 3).

The first half of the title of Lyotard’s essay with the proper name ‘Heidegger’ refers to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). What this name symbolises, however, extends beyond the ‘man’, further, to the French reception of Heidegger’s thought in the twentieth-century, the fact that Heidegger was a member of the Nazi Party, and the fact that he never (bar one comment) retracted his involvement with National Socialism and instead maintained a resolute, “leadensome” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 89) silence regarding this involvement. The title ‘Heidegger and “the jews”’ then, provides Lyotard with the quintessential example of the different kinds of silences in the form of Heidegger’s own silence regarding the *Shoah*, and his tacit endorsement, *and forgetting of*, the silence that this catastrophe imposes as a wrong. The first dimension to these silences is presented as a silence in need of articulation (in Heidegger’s refusal to speak, to give voice, to engage, to link phrases with other phrases). The second dimension is the voice not granted, the denial of voicing, of the victims of the Holocaust and the forgotten presence this silence imposes on articulation itself.

The evocation of the forgotten, unrepresentable, and inaudible ‘presence’ that is assigned under the banner of “the jews” allows Lyotard to gesture towards the more complex side of his argument in allowing there to exist a ‘shadow’ as an unknown, ‘forgotten’ (because it is not there) quantity that occurs in excess of cognitive articulation that is cast by the object of the ‘real’ Jew(s). Here, Lyotard connects these notions of silence to that of the forgetting of a mute (inaudible) silence that can be ‘heard’ by other means (such as an affect). This line of enquiry, Lyotard urges, is important “in order to establish clearly the difference between a representational, reversible forgetting and a forgetting that thwarts all representation” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 5). In further clarifying “the jews” as a “representative without representation”, Lyotard elaborates:

To put it another way, the expression “the jews” refers to all those who, wherever they are, seek to remember and to bear witness to something that is constitutively forgotten, not only in each individual mind, but in the very thought of the West. And it refers to all those who assume this anamnesis and this witnessing as an obligation, a responsibility, or a debt, not only toward thought, but toward justice (Lyotard, 1993d, p. 141).

What Lyotard is establishing here is the wider context in which this critique of silence, under the name ‘Heidegger’, belongs. In this light it is the rupture that “the jews”, (or the unrepresentable, the inaudible, the radically inarticulate, or any other of the terms Lyotard utilises elsewhere), present to the hegemony of mastery that is *the* constitutive element to Western (Occidental) thought. To not forget this silence, in this case through a recovery (anamnesis) of memory, and to remember that there is an inaudible exhalation of breath in horror that accompanies this silence, is a never-ending obligation. The debt of there being a silence that is heard only through emotion and sensibility, is a debt that requires an un-payable and infinite donation in the form of constant re-articulation in the minds and hearts of individuals and the soul of collective western thought.

Although Lyotard’s book is ostensibly a critique of Heidegger’s silence, it is through the critique of the conditions that *allow* the manifestation of this silence, which leads Lyotard to question a certain kind of Western reason that initiates totality, universalism and (ontological) *deafness*. This polemic is also in tandem with and against the deconstructionist critique of Heidegger from many of his compatriots, as Ronell (1989) points out. The 1980 conference organised by Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy at Cerisy-la-Salle devoted to the work of Jacques Derrida³¹, shows Lyotard talking ‘around’ Heidegger when he entreats the need to “connect phrases after Auschwitz but without trying to obtain a speculative result” (Lyotard quoted in Ronell, 1989, p. 64). Lyotard at this stage is omitting to mention the proper name ‘Heidegger’, “although it is clear that ontology is at stake in the idea of phrasing” (ibid). By utilising Adorno’s label of ‘Auschwitz’ as the ‘ultimate’ sign *par excellence* of abject horror, “the para-experience or even ... a destruction of experience” (Lyotard, 1988b, p. 97) Lyotard delineates himself from his interlocutors in his refusal to speak of Heidegger (leaving Derrida to wonder if there are not in fact “several proper names

³¹ From 1980-1984 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy set up the ‘Centre for Philosophical Research on the Political’ (*Centre de Recherches Philosophiques sur la Politique*), which emerged from this conference on Derrida, whose express aim was to pursue questions of the political in a philosophical rather than empirical manner. Lyotard was a member of at least two of these conferences under these auspices – one in 1980 as stated, and the other in 1982 which held a colloquium devoted to Lyotard’s work up to that point.

... which are just as abhorrent as it [Auschwitz]" (Lyotard, 1989b, p. 386)³². However, Lyotard obviously considered by 1987/88 that the time to confront the Heidegger 'affair' directly had arrived, and much of the content of his book derives from the Cerisy conferences and the emergent differends that grew out of these. As Ronell observes in her review of *Heid.*:

Reviewing the scene of Cerisy, we find markings of certain symptomatic mentions that ought not to escape our screening devices. Lyotard's omission of Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe's probity, Derrida's precision of legality and context, Nancy's ability to generalize the project of Auschwitz will all reemerge in displaced but readable ways in Lyotard's *Heidegger et "les juifs"* where the missing Heidegger comes to name the *differend* that Lyotard will want to articulate with his interlocutors (Ronell, 1989, p. 65).

Having sat in on the jury of Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *doctorat d'état* in 1987 (in which Lacoue-Labarthe differentiates between Heidegger's silences on his relationship to National Socialism and his continuing silence regarding the extermination, with the latter silence being the more serious³³) Lyotard was ready to articulate the coordinates of his differend with his colleagues, and a differend with the strain of Occidental thought propagated by Heidegger (and by proxy, the Heideggerian influence to Continental theory)³⁴. The media maelstrom of the 'affair' provided Lyotard with the perfect opportunity to do this, but as one of the most eloquent interpreters of the Western philosophical tradition Lyotard wondered if Heidegger's silence was due to a refusal and deafness to obligation within modern reason itself. Could Western thought know itself so thoroughly that there could be no remainder (in the form of indecision and uncertainty)? It is at this point that Lyotard turns to Freud's work on the unconscious to explain the 'affect' as a region of silence as un-transcribable remainder.

³² This is actually Lyotard's transcription of the debate that followed the reading of his paper 'Discussions, or Phrasing after Auschwitz', and is published as a postscript of that paper in Benjamin (1989). This being the case, it is worth pointing out here that Derrida's 'voice' is through Lyotard's pen leading one to suspect that Lyotard to a certain point considers this critique to be part of his own articulation of the problem.

³³ Lacoue-Labarthe drew on the poetry of Paul Celan in his thesis (published in English as *Heidegger, Art, Politics*), particularly the poem named after Heidegger's hometown, which Celan wrote after visiting Heidegger's hut (hütte), called *Todtnauberg*. As a Romanian Jew whose parents died in the Holocaust, Celan considered the transformative beauty and insight of Heidegger's thought to (partially) redeem the evil of Heidegger 'the man's' politics. Celan in fact continued the deconstructionist approach that Heidegger initiated by subjecting language and words to an interrogation of how to write 'after' Auschwitz that involved a creative splintering of language. This is clearly part of Lyotard's approach in his own book, but Lyotard parts ways with Celan (via Lacoue-Labarthe) by judging Heidegger's silence in a much harsher light and as, indirectly, symptomatic of Heidegger's approach to Being (as leaving no remainder). Lyotard ends the Heidegger section on an enigmatic note that is clearly psychoanalytical in its inspiration, which gives some indication of how he differs in his view to Lacoue-Labarthe as to Celan's role: "'Celan' is neither the beginning nor the end of Heidegger; it is his lack: what is missing in him, what he misses, and whose lack he is lacking" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 94).

³⁴ A differend is Lyotard's eponymous concept concerning the incommensurable point of contact between two parties whose languages are heterogeneous to the each other, in which case the language taken to articulate the wrong (torte) suffered by the two parties immediately imposes silence on the other. This is defined against the concept of a litigation in which two parties articulate the same language in order to overcome the wrong. Lyotard explains in the first sentence of his book: "a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both parties" (Lyotard, 1988bp. xi).

Freudian Affect: Toward the Inaudible

I tried, about fifteen years ago, to drown the thesis of the unconscious under the flood of a general libidinal economy ... I was [then] led to that which, in *Le Différend*, is exposed (rather than conceptualised) under the name of phrase ... From such an angle I feel capable of approaching (as a philosopher) that which is the psychoanalyst's material ... I do not intend to "re-write" the unconscious, but to open a little breach in the metaphysics of forces. (46, 56) (Lyotard cited in Tomiche, 1991, p. 55).

This section outlines Lyotard's use of Freud's thinking on the notions of deferred action as *Nachtraglichkeit* (in French this term translates as *après coup*, which is deferred 'shock', but I will stay with the widely used 'action'). Lyotard's rewriting of Freud is of particular interest when considering his notion of the inaudible in the context of this thesis, and this section is intended to outline the role of the Freudian unconscious as the site of 'affectivity', and "excitation" (Lyotard, 2002a)³⁵. The above quote illuminates Lyotard's own progression in his use of Freud and it is the hint at what is "exposed" that is particularly of interest here. In *Heid*. Lyotard spends the first half of his argument drawing a direct analogy between the way "the jews" perform upon Western reason, and the way Freud's 'affect' plays upon the conscience. Within this analogy, both actions 'affect' in ways that are impossible to recognise or articulate because they are bereft of any means of presentation and articulation. In Lyotard's "the jews" the 'affect', "plays in the thought (in the psychic apparatus) of the (European) Occident this role of an immanent terror, not identified as such, unrepresentable, of an unconscious affect and of a medically incurable misery" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 21). To get to this point Lyotard appropriates the Freudian rubric of 'originary repression' to describe why articulation is simply not available. In an interview, Lyotard explained his use of this term in the following:

Originary repression is Freud's term ..., he invented it. Since the forgetting in question has nothing to do with an act of forgetting resulting from a secondary repression, it does not concern something that has taken place and that one does not remember. Rather it concerns the forgetting of something that has not taken place, but that inhabits the psyche nonetheless, without one knowing what it is. And in this sense I would stress a "differend" – something like an abyss – between the primary processes and their insertions in acts, between the circulating energy of this "x" and the synthesis of time, between, that is, energy and temporalization (Lyotard, 1999b, p. 4).

Under the label of *Nachtraglichkeit* Lyotard explains a constitutive element of primary repression through his analysis of deferred action in the following way:

³⁵ It is important to emphasise that Lyotard is incorporating Freud's theories in a *philosophical* sense and not from the strictly curative or clinical context of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Nachträglichkeit thus implies the following: (1) a double blow that is constitutively asymmetrical, and (2) a temporality that has nothing to do with what the phenomenology of consciousness (even that of Saint Augustine) can thematize. The *double blow* includes a first blow, the first excitation, which upsets the apparatus with such “force” that it is not registered. It is like a whistle that is inaudible to humans but not to dogs, or like infrared or ultraviolet light... This force is not set to work in the machine of the mind. It is deposited there. I imagine the effect of the shock, the unconscious affect, to be like a cloud of energy particles that are not subject to serial laws, that are not organized into sets that can be thought in terms of words or images, that do not experience any attraction at all... the discovery of an originary repressed leads Freud to assume that it cannot be represented (Lyotard, 1990, p. 15).

It is here that Lyotard awards the affect a ‘physics’ in the form of a (silent) force or energy that occurs in *excess* of the temporal frame (that is a variation on the silence that occurs in *The Differend* as a wrong or torte that enforces a denial of voice and right to articulate). Its starting point, according to Lyotard, is within:

the physical hypothesis of the mind, let’s imagine that an “excitation,” that is, a shattering of the system of forces constituted by the psychic apparatus, ... affects the system when the latter has nothing to process this excitation, neither when it enters, nor inside, nor when it exits ... An excitation which is not “introduced,” in the sense that it affects but does not enter (Lyotard in Tomiche, 1991).

The silence described above as an “excitation” signals a type of presence “more archaic and irreducible” to any mode of articulation. This presence for Lyotard is “the pure autonomy of the affect” that, he continues, “does not translate itself in either presentation or representation” (Lyotard, 2002a, p. 44). Therefore, he continues, “the silence surrounding the ‘unconscious affect’ does not affect the pragmatic realm (the transfer of a meaning to the listener); it affects the physics of the speaker. It is not that the latter cannot make himself understood; he himself does not hear anything” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 12). Of importance here is the temporal displacement that occurs in tandem with the affect and the way the temporal quality of the affect *as an occurrence or event* effaces any recognition of itself as a silence. It is lost, in that “we are confronted with a silence that does not make itself heard as silence” (ibid). This, for Lyotard, is Freud’s important contribution to thinking (“*la pensée*”, says Lyotard) as such, “since the accent is placed on the unintelligible as irreducibly present but irreducible to the synthesis of time” (Lyotard, 1999b, p. 5) just as the affect is silent in its condition as an event. Moreover, Lyotard takes this Freudian inspired analysis further by, in the essay ‘Emma’ (Lyotard, 2002a) presenting the unconscious affect in the constellation of a ‘phrase-affect’.

The unconscious as ‘phrase-affect’

Liotard turns to psychoanalysis because of what he describes as philosophy’s inability and ineptitude to deal with the fertile, unarticulated space of unbridled creativity that the unconscious unleashes. With the quality of silence, the unconscious can potentially shatter the hegemony of a Western philosophy of consciousness that hides “behind a web of evidence” as understanding and certainty, “that ensures its bright life”. In formulating his approach, Lyotard looks to Freud’s unconscious to understand the resistance that traditional forms of Western philosophy have towards silence. Instead of the ‘bright light’ of certainty, philosophy would be transferred to “a court of darkness that resists understanding and reason”. Such an approach is insufferable to such certainties so prized within Western reason and the “inconsistent, yet persevering anguish” that the ‘threat’ of silence poses within a Freudian rubric of unconscious affect, remains problematic in the canon of Western philosophy initiated by the Greeks (Lyotard, 2002a, p. 24). Silence, as inarticulateness in the Freudian sense, fundamentally clashes with the notion of articulation within traditional philosophic branches of linguistics and logic. In Lyotard’s Freudian reading silence can instead be awarded a type of articulation in a negative sense. This negative formulation of articulation Lyotard asserts “is much less than this [what is offered in philosophy]. What I call a phrase is, in the immediacy of its occurrence ... the presentation of a universe, however tiny and disabled (Lyotard, 2002a, p. 27). This phrase, though felt and sensed, remains silent and “impoverished” of meaning and signification upon its articulation.

The affect-phrase differs from Lyotard’s previous ‘philosophy of phrases’ that occur in *The Differend*, because of the nominal characteristics of the phrase-affect. As Bennington argues, the presentation of a universe Lyotard refers to is not the kind of universe (presented within the phrase-affect) that lends itself to a linking of other phrases, because it is inarticulate and is not “organised according to the four familiar poles in their two familiar axes of addressor-addressee and referent-meaning” (Bennington, 2000, p. 91). The affect-phrase deployed here consists of the nominal dimension of silence that negates the necessity for the traditional polarities of addressee, addressor, and referent. Instead the phrase is ‘silent’ in its state of *pure occurrence*, signalled only as an affect that is addressed to no one, refers to nothing, and is empty of meaning and as such is unable to present a universe because of these radically *un*-linkable qualities. Tomiche offers an insight into why these qualities are important to Lyotard’s analysis of silence:

The phrase thus interests Lyotard insofar as it is a pure occurrence, “before” representation, signification, and the subject: it is what merely “happens,” the *presentation of the universe*, before the question can even be raised of what has happened, before the question of the *universe presented* can be raised (Tomiche, 1994, p. 44).

It is important to emphasise here that Lyotard’s term ‘phrase’ does not translate easily into the English language, as what Lyotard is evoking is more than grammar and linguistics³⁶. Both a word and a sentence could be termed as a phrase, but so too could non-linguistic units that exceed signification and expression (such as gestures, silences, and signals. In *The Differend*, Lyotard infamously considers even the tail wag of a cat to be fall under the premise of a phrase!). In working ‘with’ Freud though, Lyotard is interested in the way the phrase-affect remains silent when it presents itself, but loses its quality of silence upon its re-presentation through signification. In *The Differend*, the silence the affect-phrase ‘presents’ provided Lyotard with quite a challenge. The unique property of silence and non-referential meaning prevent the necessary impetus to link to other phrases that is, in Lyotard’s formulation, a fundamental quality to the phrase. In the following explanation, Lyotard identifies the challenges that he faced in formulating his phrase-affect, and the challenge the phrase-affect poses to discourse:

From the fact that the affect-phrase is inarticulate, several noteworthy features appear to follow. Here are three of them: 1) The affect-phrase appears not to allow itself to be linked onto according to the rules of any discursive genre; it appears on the contrary to be able only to suspend or interrupt linkings, whatever they are; 2) the affect-phrase injures the rules of the discursive genres; it creates a damage; 3) this damage gives rise in turn to a wrong. For the damage suffered by discourse can be argued within the rules, but this argumentation is inappropriate to the affect-phrase in every case, if it is true that that phrase does not give rise to a genre and cannot be argued. The damage that the affect-phrase causes the discursive genres is thus transformed into a wrong suffered by the affect-phrase. Articulated phrase and affect-phrase can only ‘meet’ by missing each other. From their differend results a wrong. If articulation and inarticulation are irreducible to each other, this wrong can be said to be radical (Lyotard in Bennington, 2000, p.91).

This radical torte that is ‘suffered’ by the phrase-affect is one of the extremely paradoxical threads of thought that drives much of Lyotard’s later work. Being inarticulate the phrase-affect is found begging for articulation, but is instantly betrayed when given a mode of articulation. Instead, the phrase-affect has to be found to be always *wanting* to find

³⁶ It is worth pointing out that in the translation to *The Differend*, Georges Van Den Abbeele sets the standard in Lyotardian translation by using the English term ‘phrase’ instead of the strictly semantically correct translation of the French word ‘phrase’ to the English word ‘sentence’. The reasons for this, as given by Abbeele, is because in both French and English the word ‘phrase’ can be used as both a verb and noun, and that the phrase gives a broader notion than the ‘sentence’ as indicative of a “constellation of instances, which is as contextual as it is textual” (Van Den Abbeele’s Glossary in Lyotard, 1988b, p.194).

articulation, but must always remain elusively out of grasp if a wrong is not to be imposed. Says Lyotard of this highly paradoxical dimension of the affect-phrase, “they are witnesses but do not represent anything to anybody” (Lyotard in Bennington, 2000, p. 91)³⁷. It is here that Lyotard draws an analogy between philosophy and psychoanalysis in that the affect-phrase mirrors Kant’s notion of aesthetic feeling as ‘pure’, disinterested (in that it refers to nothing) pleasure or pain. Described by Lyotard as a “no-thing” in the Kantian sense, Lacan’s notion of the ‘Thing’ (*la chose*) also fits under this figure of the affect. Bennington explains this disinterested ‘thing’ within the affect-phrase as “monotonous in that it is always only a sense of pleasure and /or pain” (Bennington, 2000, p. 91). Bennington continues along this vein of negation, “meaning that it is ‘both an affective state (pleasure or pain) and the sign of that state’: and this status is explicitly related here ... to Freud’s account of affect as non-representational, as opposed to word-or-thing-presentations” (ibid). The phrase-affect is silent in that it can only signal, as Bennington asserts, to the fact that something is happening or in Lyotard’s syntax to the ‘it happens’ of an event. In this sense, Lyotard’s affect has no meaning within the *cogito* because it does not communicate anything but itself as an occurrence. According to Nouvet, “the affect only and always says: there is pain/pleasure. It does not signify pain and/ or pleasure; it only gives a sense of pain and/ or pleasure in their absolute singularity” (Nouvet, 2007, p. 111). It does not ‘say’ anything more than what it signals because it can’t - there is nothing to say but that it is an affect that can only be felt in feeling and sensation. Lyotard elaborates further:

What is important in the affect is the load it carries, how much it overloads the thought-body, the psychical appearance ... By “overload” (a mechanical metaphor), one indicates the “presence” of a nonsignificant phrase (pleasure or pain?), neither destined (from whom to whom?), nor referenced (of what is it a question?), which happens suddenly in the course of phrases ... Then, in an always unexpected manner (and therefore, in the mode of a “once again”), the affect repeats itself, introduction and repetition together (Lyotard, 2002a, pp. 33-30).

Here Lyotard incorporates a paradoxical notion of time that is important to his analysis of Freud, and that is crucial to the concept of the (in)articulation of the ‘affect-phrase’. Especially of importance is what Lyotard considers to be the *singularity* of the affect, and the way this singularity occurs ‘in’ and ‘outside’ “clock time” (Lyotard, 2002a) at the same moment (as deferred action). These paradoxical temporalities Lyotard identifies within the affect challenges the notion around the discourse of time (in the Western sense) as linear,

³⁷ This also sheds light on Lyotard’s controversial and often misinterpreted assertion that “The witness is a traitor” in *The Inhuman* (Lyotard, 1991d, p. 204).

chronologically predetermined and measurable. For Lyotard, “the movement that counts time, presupposes time” and it is this ‘aporia’ that the affect-phrase exposes (Lyotard, 2002a, p. 30). Inspiration is taken from Freud’s case notes as outlined in Lyotard’s eponymous essay ‘Emma’ in which the patient (Emma) expresses her unreasonable fear of entering all grocery shops. According to Freud’s analysis (via a Lyotardian critique) Emma is able to uncover in her therapy (with Freud) that the irrational fear is linked to an experience she had in a grocer’s shop when she was a child. This experience had been ‘forgotten’, but manifested itself as a disturbance in later life whenever she entered a grocery store. Here, the original ‘first’ shock is the experience Emma had as a child. This shock is so shattering and traumatic for Emma that it is a) at the time not registered as anything other than a shock, and b) continuously returns as a second blow, as a return of the original affect, whenever she enters a shop because of the extreme trauma of the first experience but because she has no memory (or signification) this second blow has no meaning. It just *occurs*, but this occurrence has its coordinates outside and *in excess of* the temporality to which it belongs. The technical synopsis of the conflicted temporalities that Emma experiences as a deferred action is explained in Lyotard’s own words in the following excerpt:

An event (an excitation) occurs at T2. There is no representative trace of this even in the vertical series of T’2, T”2, etc. the psyche (of Emma at T2) does not then have representations of the event. These images are not merely too confused or too pale, they are not at all. In the place of the vertical line, then, a blank – T2 is forgotten straight away. It is not inscribed in the representative order. The same can also be said in mechanical language: the energy introduced by the excitation at T2 is not and has not been tied up in representative formations, neither consciously nor unconsciously (Lyotard, 2002a, p. 32).

The ‘deferred action’ is the return of the first shock, the second of the ‘double blows’, that is the presentation of the affect-phrase and the *representation* of the repeated affect (which does not represent anything). In this way the affect, Lyotard explains, “is how the excitation is present, i.e., as a cloud of energy not entirely fixed in psychic appearance but also not “free” either. The affect is present but not represented” (ibid). Lyotard will utilise this ‘asymmetrical’ temporality to provide a temporal piece of resistance to the type of linear temporality that the logic of performativity enforces. This will also provide Lyotard with the theoretical impetus to explore how the past can ‘haunt’ the present and claim it by evoking a silent feeling of anxiety that is reminiscent of childhood, and it is the relationship between the affect and a childlike inability to articulate that I now turn.

Infancy/ Childhood

The theoretical trope of infancy is a particularly strong one in Lyotard's later oeuvre (*Lectures D'Enfance* was published in 1991 and though various essays have been translated from this collection there still remains major essays that are not yet translated in English). However the figure of childhood can be seen in the (ironic) title *The Postmodern Explained for Children: Correspondence 1982-1985* (Lyotard, 1992a) in which each of the essays are addressed as letters to the children of the various interlocutors of Lyotard's philosophy of the 'postmodern' (included in this group of children are his own son and grandchildren). In my reading, it seems no accident that by the fourth edition of this book the title has been truncated to just *The Postmodern Explained* because anyone not familiar with Lyotard, and hoping for a 'postmodern for dummies'³⁸ as the reference to children *might* imply, would be left sorely disappointed (not to mention tested). I include this here, because it is important to emphasise the difference between the empirical and biological notion of childhood as the unsophisticated and 'immature' time before the maturity and 'completeness' of adulthood, to the sense that Lyotard perceives childhood as "the transcendental sense of a radical *before*" (Bennington, 2007, p. 200). This 'before' of course, displays the hallmarks of Freud's affect-phrase, but for the moment Lyotard furnishes this notion in his own language away from Freud's clinical description of childhood (and sexuality). Lyotard offers this definition of his notion of childhood as a radicalised 'before' in the following:

By childhood, I do not mean, as rationalists have it, an age deprived of reason. I mean this condition of being affected at a time when we do not have the means – linguistic and representational – to name, identify, reproduce, and recognize what it is that is affecting us. By childhood, I mean the fact that we are born before we are born to ourselves. And thus we are born of others, but also born to others, delivered into the hands of others without any defences (Lyotard, 1993c, p. 149).

Childhood, in this sense, is a 'state'; one of being born (or 'thrown' as Heidegger might say) into an environment, culture, and way of being that is constitutively unknown and unrecognisable to the 'unformed' (and uninformed) 'child' (having arrived 'too late'). Instead childhood, Lyotard continues, infers a state of *infancy* that is necessarily positioned to be spoken of and for by the language and actions of others 'before' articulation and knowledge (mastery) are granted in their own right (through the entry into adulthood). Here the child is

³⁸ The ubiquitous series of '... for Dummies', which originated with 'microsoft' but has since morphed into any skill or domain of human existence such as 'Cooking for Dummies', 'Gardening', 'Dancing', 'Cooking' etc, etc, is supposed to offer simplified and clear instructions on how to 'do' something. According to Wikipedia there are currently 1700 titles in the 'for dummies' series. It seems we need instruction on lots of things (or, there just might be lots of 'dummies' out there).

“born later, with language, precisely on leaving childhood” (Lyotard in Smeyers & Masschelein, 2000, p. 151). As an insight (and provocation) to the aspect of Kant’s thinking about knowledge acquisition and its relation to immaturity, Lyotard tells the story of how, in ‘Answering the Question: What is the Enlightenment?’ Kant “defines the Enlightenment as the emergence of mankind from its self-imposed immaturity... If childhood persists after childhood,” writes Lyotard, “it is [quoting Kant] ‘laziness and cowardice ... it is so easy to be immature’” (Lyotard, 1993c)³⁹. Lyotard’s tactical move to address his letters to children in PME, however, differs from this notion of childhood as somehow inferior to that of adulthood and instead points to a view of childhood as being *the* privileged space of unprepared-ness, of susceptibility and openness ‘before’ (E)nlighentment. To get to this point, however, Lyotard elaborates (in *The Inhuman*) on the qualities of childhood that may remain into adulthood. Lyotard asks the question:

What shall we call human in humans, this initial misery of their childhood, or their capacity to a ‘second’ nature which, thanks to language, makes them fit to share in communal life, adult consciousness and reason? That the second depends on and presupposes the first is agreed by everyone. The question is only that of knowing whether this dialectic, whatever name we grace it with, leaves no remainder (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 3).

Here the child is seen as needing to be ‘saved’ from its status of immaturity and lack of development, to be initiated into the life of the adult that is endowed with language, knowledge and certainty. However Lyotard questions whether any trace of childhood might not linger within adulthood. “Born children”, Lyotard asserts, “our task would be to enter into full possession of ourselves”, a possession that occurs only within the realms of adulthood (Lyotard, 1993c, p. 148). His concern though, is whether or not this full and total maturation into adulthood can really be seen as complete. Could there not be some traces of childhood left ‘behind’ into adulthood? Lyotard deals with this question by investigating and delving into the ‘before’ that signals childhood (or in Lyotardian parlance, is the *sign* of childhood) as the space *before* thought is cognisant, before experience is looked back on as such, and before adulthood replaces innocence. Lyotard instead critiques the notion of developing into an adult (with the concurrent acquisition of knowledge and sophistication), as requiring a certain degree of ‘forgetting’ and ignoring of a potential openness and susceptibility that childhood incorporates. Such a forgetting of childhood, Lyotard further critiques, is framed within a discourse of *freeing* oneself from a state of incompleteness and uncertainty to the

³⁹ Ever the great moralist, one imagines the severity of Kant’s recrimination of childishness to align with his extreme impatience with being interrupted by the music of the village and the church bells outside his window that he complained were a distraction and interruption to his writing and concentration.

more stable state of mastery and control. This, Lyotard notices, is what the Western doctrine of Humanism, and its conjoint Enlightenment principal of emancipation, seems to signal (as Kant's comments on childhood as immaturity depict). Here,

Emancipation consists of establishing oneself in the full possession of knowledge, will, and feeling, in providing oneself with the rule of knowledge, the law of willing, and the control of the emotions. The emancipated ones are the persons or things that owe nothing to anyone but themselves: Freed from all debts to the other (Lyotard, 1993c, p. 150).

Childhood, however, challenges the certainties and assumptions that freeing oneself presupposes, and this is where Lyotard insists upon a recognition of the illusion of certainty that is offered by a discourse of emancipation. The exemplary example to the humanistic rule of emancipation is, of course, education. In relation to Freud, Lyotard's notion of childhood and infancy belong to the realm of the inarticulate and unrepresentable as "a state of lack" (Lyotard, 1993c, p. 152) and it is this 'lack' that emancipating oneself means to escape from ("the dream of having done with my lack, with what I lack, with what made me lack, what made me have lack" (ibid)). In education, this lack is what drives the need for children to be initiated into the adult world of knowledge as a necessary condition of their childhood. "That children have to be educated", reminds Lyotard "is a circumstance which only proceeds from the fact that they are not completely led by nature, not programmed. The institutions which constitute culture supplement this native lack" (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 3). Childhood is also, however, the lack that provides the narrative of history with its impetus toward a future 'emancipation' and fullness (which is always in the future, and which is never able to be arrived at). It is not the purpose of this chapter to explore this avenue here however, but what I do want to glean from this analysis of childhood is the depiction of infancy as existing as a lack (of articulation, knowledge, and maturation). Lyotard uses these qualities in which to depict the *figure* of childhood that inhabits our 'grownup' forays (and into, as we shall see, thought and art).

Finally, to return to (Lyotard's) Freud, the affect-phrase as the unmitigated event of the 'first blow' of *Nachträglichkeit* becomes the moment of infancy that exceeds biological labels of maturation to that of a general state of "incapacity". The first blow or shock precedes signification, it just happens, and as such is the moment of "prematurity" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 17) in the psychic apparatus – the 'infancy' of the phrase as an affect 'before' articulation and meaning can be ascribed. This, according to Tomiche, is "a hypothesis [retrieved from Freud] based on the notion of the prematurity of the psychic apparatus and elaborated in

Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and *On Narcissism: An Introduction*” (Tomiche, 1991, p. 59). This for Lyotard is the infancy of the affect-phrase, an infancy “which would not be a period of the life cycle, but an incapacity to represent and bind a certain something” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 17); an infancy that is inherent to thought as that which exceeds thought as an event. “This”, Lyotard implores, “is the constitutive infirmity of the soul, its infancy and its misery” (ibid). Furthermore infancy as affect is ‘impossible’ to detect, but that does not preclude the necessity of *trying* to find it, *trying* to remember it, *trying* to ‘bear witness’ to it. Infancy and childhood as traces of an indetermination, for Lyotard, present us with a debt that can’t ever be finalised or realised. One can though, Lyotard stresses “insist on an attitude of thought and life which attempts to lend its ear to the thing, although it is inaudible since the ear is not in a position to hear it, since, in a sense, there is nothing to hear” (Lyotard, 1999b, p. 4). It is to the insistence of the inaudible that I now turn back to Heidegger, and further this discussion within the context of the obligation to honour the inaudible in and through art.

The Inaudible: Anamnesis, Art, Debt, Obligation

That said, stress is undeniably placed in a text like *Heidegger et les ‘juifs’* on listening to this area that is by definition inaudible, that is, untranscribable, although, of course, one does not stop trying to transcribe it, including Freud (Lyotard, 1999b, p. 2).

When Lyotard sat down in 1988 and wrote (in two weeks) in a fit of impatience and frustration his reaction to the Farías ‘dossier’, he would have been aware that his formulation of “the jews” as the figure of the ‘forgotten’ affect, would garner much criticism⁴⁰. He was right. It was deliberately provocative, and those familiar with his work were shocked (though probably not truly surprised) that he would choose such a deliberately polemical label, and those with only a passing familiarity with his work would continue to be baffled (if they found the postmodern a difficult concept, then “the jews” would prove almost impenetrable to understanding). The provocation was aimed also at his own colleagues, and apart from Farías, Lyotard’s book was also formulated as a response to Lacoue-Labarthe and Derrida’s deconstructionist approaches regarding ‘the affair’, and in ‘thought’ in general. Lyotard spoke of the criticism he received, by colleagues and commentators alike in an interview with Elisabeth Weber (Lyotard, 1999a) in which he admits he wrote the text very quickly (the inference being maybe *too* quickly), but that it was his first attempt. In a reappraisal of

⁴⁰ Farías constructed his book as a presentation of the all the documents either written by or about Heidegger that linked him to National Socialism.

Lyotard's work after his 'turn' to Freud in the later years, Bennington (2007) suggests that in retrospect "the jews" is less shocking than what it was at the time of the affair, due in part to Lyotard's further attempts to engage with Freud's unconscious in texts such as 'Prescription' (1999c) (see Chapter Five) and the previously referred to 'Emma' (2002a). Readings' (1991) position in *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* concludes that Lyotard's turn to Freud is a weakness in an otherwise impressive oeuvre in that Freud is not taken seriously enough within academia. In the context of this thesis however, this exploration into Freud is indispensable in outlining the elusive and paradoxical notion of the inaudible, which Lyotard wrote about, (and I will utilise further).

Describing Freud as a "Jewish thinker" (1999a, p. 40), (both literally and metaphorically) Lyotard traces a link between the Jewish tradition of the *aleph* (as the breath that precedes any articulated sound in Hebrew) and Freud's inaudible notions of affect and infancy. Here the affect is aligned with the Talmudic tradition of the inaudible voice of God in the Torah. The New Testament in the Christian tradition in the Gospels and Epistles, are "the written reports of words spoken [*paroles voisée*] by someone who claimed to be God incarnate" in which the issue of a displaced voice is not problematic (Lyotard, 1999a, p. 43, brackets in text). The voice of God in this Christian tradition was heard 'directly' and transcribed accordingly. Not so for the Torah (or what Christians call the Old Testament) in which the voice of God was found already written *as law*⁴¹ in the tablets discovered by Moses (otherwise known as the Pentateuch). The aleph, Lyotard points out, is symbolic of this silent voice and is always present as the law of the pronouncement of further words to come and it is the obligation to the followers of the faith to continually try to find ways to voice this 'impossible' voice. This further nuance to the book was to be explored in much more depth after the release of *Heid.*, and with the worst of the furore the affair created in France amongst its first generation of poststructuralist thinkers over⁴². However, it is also mentioned here as a further nuance to Lyotard's choice of naming the 'unnameable' and the 'unpresentable' as "the jews" and the deliberately tactical analogy deployed by Lyotard

⁴¹ The Torah can be translated as meaning 'the law', a theme that is constantly returned to by Lyotard.

⁴² I am not claiming that the problem with Heidegger is over. Far from it, as each generation that engages with Heidegger's thought seem to renew this problem and articulate it in new ways. With the 120th year anniversary of Heidegger's birth landing in 2009 I read many reviews of books published for the occasion reviving this discussion (and, it has to be said that most were in a negative light and seemed to reignite the vitriol that surrounded the first emergence of the scandal). This contemporary revival of the backlash to Heidegger must also be placed within a political process that involves a broader conservative project to damage forms of thought that are seen as 'threatening'. This is as relevant today as it was in the 1980s when the 'affair' caused such a sensation.

between the affect and infancy in Lyotard's reading of Freud, and the Jewish tradition of silence.

Lyotard explains that Heidegger's appeal for French philosophy, and the reason why the affair was primarily a French one, was because Heidegger's construction of Being and its necessary negation as the 'forgotten' dimension in thought and art, appealed to a specifically French notion of 'presence' that alluded representation. This "devotion" to the *unrepresentable*, Lyotard asserts, has a long and industrious lineage in French literature and art. He explains:

It remains true, however, that if the "French" are more susceptible to it than others, it is because they have for a long time, with Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Flaubert, Proust, Bataille, Artaud, Beckett, and what they call "writing," testified to the fact that the real objective of literature (to speak only of that for now) has always been to reveal, represent in words, what every representation misses, what is forgotten there: this "presence," whatever name it is given by one author or another, which persists not so much at the limits but rather at the heart of representation; this unnameable in the secret of names, a forgotten that is not the result of the forgetting of a reality – nothing having been stored in memory – and which one can only remember as forgotten "before" memory and forgetting, and by repeating it. It is this which "philosophers" in France (and elsewhere, to be sure) have understood as what is trying to write itself in Heidegger's texts (Lyotard, 1990, p. 5).

This 'forgetting' by Heidegger that Being is always forgotten, but must be remembered as forgotten in thought and art is the true 'scandal' of Heidegger's silence on the *Shoah*. Lyotard continues:

Here lies the paradox and even the scandal: how could this thought (Heidegger's), a thought so devoted to remembering that a forgetting (of Being) takes place in all thought, in all art, in all "representation" of the world, how could it possibly have ignored the thought of "the jews," which, in a certain sense, thinks, tries to think, nothing but that very fact? How could this thought forget and ignore "the jews" to the point of suppressing and foreclosing to the very end the horrifying (and inane) attempt at exterminating, at making us forget forever what, in Europe, reminds us, ever since the beginning, that "there is" the Forgotten? (Lyotard, 1990, p. 4).

To return to the psychoanalytical slant, the (inaudible) 'forgotten' in *Heid.* aligns with the 'first blow' or shock that Lyotard appropriates from Freud's theory of affect and it is the process of retrieving the memory of this shock that introduces the *artistic* dimension in Lyotard's approach. In Chapter Six I will also depict how the inaudible aligns with the 'first blow' in sound as the hidden affect in music. For the moment, this retrieval in Freudian parlance is called an *anamnesis* of memory and in regard to Emma this process of retrieval

would have been initiated within Freud's studio (leaving Lyotard to surmise the artistry involved in psychoanalysis). It is during the process of retrieving a lost memory (in this case the trauma suffered by Emma in the shop) that signification and meaning can be awarded in retrospect. Here the (Talmudic-like) rules of psychoanalysis are applied in that it is the obligation of the clinician to pay homage to this first shock that affected and moved the psychical apparatus of the patient. For Lyotard, this approach is to be extended to thought itself, especially in the representation of the narrative of history that really consists only of a series of 'shocks' (to the traumas felt in individuals to collective traumas suffered by groups of people). Lyotard urges the anamnesis of Western thought itself to constantly re-remember traumas suffered throughout civilisation. The place that performs such retrieval, such an anamnesis, is in the space of *art*, for it is art that has the power to 'announce' without speaking a word. We are indebted to this trauma, as affect and as an infancy that is always an unavoidable dimension to history and thought and it is, Lyotard contends, our obligation to remember and repeatedly try to honour and rearticulate this.

Heidegger's continuing silence surrounding the Holocaust and his tacit complicity with National Socialism, after Lyotard's analysis, emerges as a symptom of Western reason and the lack of obligation to 'bear witness' to thought as remainder. In Lyotard's critique, there is no infancy to thought in the Western tradition, of which Heidegger is one of the major interlocutors. There is no chance of an affect; there can only be the possibility of rational certainty with no remainder. The real Jews paid the price of the consequence in the attempt to eradicate "the jews" as affect and remainder in Western philosophy, in the Final Solution as the "impossible witness" (Lyotard, 1993d, p. 143). Lyotard explains this consequence as "the project of exterminating the involuntary witnesses to this forgotten event and of having done with the unrepresentable affect once and for all, having done with the anguish that it is their task to remember" (ibid). Heidegger's thought, even in his entreaty to listen to the space of Being as a counter to the threat of rampant technological and economic growth is deaf to the inaudible dimension that inhabits thought as an event. This 'deafness' that Heidegger's thought exhibits, in Lyotard's analysis, is the difference between "a representational, reversible forgetting and a forgetting that thwarts all representation" (Lyotard, 1990, p. 5). For Lyotard, "Heidegger (following Hegel) in his meditation on art, had to miss completely the problematics of the sublime, as such" (ibid) and it is this 'overstep' that informs both this critique and Lyotard's later work. In a practical sense, if we are to consider Heidegger's own silence as a reflection of his thought, he would not have identified the obligation to comment

on the Holocaust ‘after Auschwitz’ because there is no equivalent obligation to bear witness to imposed silence in Western thought. In certain ways, Lyotard concludes, the imposition of silence and the inability to listen to the inaudible is continuous, an event as catastrophic as ‘Auschwitz’ by other means; and the condition to try and resist this ‘ontological’ deafness, interminable. This, Lyotard contends, is the ‘negative lesson’ of Heidegger’s silence, a lesson “that the “forgetting” of the *Shoah* by the great thinker of Being ... is that this Forgotten is not primarily Being, but the obligation of justice” (Lyotard, 1993d, p. 147).

Concluding Comments

This journey of the inaudible as Freudian affect and infancy, and Lyotard’s concern with articulating the radically inarticulate within this Freudian rubric, is useful in formulating the inaudible in music that is the focus of this thesis. Lyotard’s investigation into Heidegger’s silence exposed a notion of the inaudible as paramount to the obligation to bear witness to justice, and the debt (inspired also by the Jewish tradition of silence) that within obligation attends to this silence. Could there not be an analogy here in the musical realm? The need to bear justice to the unheard *inaudible* qualities of artistry, history, context, power, might expose their own testimony to what it is that is unique in music. Freud’s first blow, the affect, is felt only as pain or happiness and it is this *affectation* that ‘drives’ and initiates the creative impetus to represent the inaudible force of the affect in writing, painting, and music. In this light, Lyotard talks of the way the inaudible ‘law’ is inscribed upon the body (as the ‘first blow’ or excitation); we are affected without recourse to signification, meaning and cognisance. Art, however, grants us the means to ‘return’ via anamnesis to the memory of this affect. However, Lyotard extends Freud’s anthropological framework to the composition of art itself: art (in music, painting, writing) perform an anamnesis with the ‘matter’ of their support (in timbre, colour, words). For Lyotard, art is the very zenith of the inaudible; it announces itself as being present without uttering a word. How the inaudible in music is differentiated from the inaudible breath of affect, and from the inaudible presence of art, is a further task of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Testimony, Memory, Sublime: Lyotard's 'Diffracted Traces' in Art

What art gives is not "the given". It gives to and gives rise to thought (Lyotard, 2002b, p. 75).

Introduction

This chapter locates and explores Lyotard's thoughts in relation to art as a mode of inscription that summons a feeling of 'presence'. The purpose here is to elucidate certain 'qualities' that Lyotard considered essential to the realm of art that will contribute to the way we think about music (and the pedagogical resonances this might inform a 'musical' philosophy of education). The previous chapter looked at Lyotard's appropriation of the Freudian unconscious as an exploration into the inaudible quality of the *affect*. While this discussion was framed within a theme of silence that dealt specifically with a certain 'political' perspective, this chapter looks to a more detailed investigation of the aesthetic quality of this theme of silence as the constitutive dimension to *visual* art. For Lyotard art holds a profound responsibility towards 'bearing witness' to the unknown and 'forgotten', and to disrupting formations of dogma and stasis in thought and society. Concurrent with this view, the space of art is seen as an antidote to the constant threat of totalitarianism and terror that emanates from modern techno-scientific societies. The notion of "the jews" as the unrepresentable and inarticulate instance devoid of meaning earlier in this thesis aligns in this chapter to Lyotard's 'negative aesthetics' that approaches art in such a way as to obviate and eliminate any recourse to understanding and reason. From a Lyotardian vantage point, art 'works' on the body/apparatus through a deprivation of the senses as what is *lacking*, in the same way that "the jews" works on the body/apparatus as the forbidden and forgotten space for Lyotard's critique of Western reason as what 'thought cannot think'. The singularity of what is presented within the 'event' of art in the instance of its timbre, tone, or nuance is framed as a *debt* that Lyotard insists is immanent (and unpayable) alongside an (in)human capacity of openness and susceptibility to sensation and 'affection'⁴³. Art, Lyotard continues,

⁴³ As will be explained, Lyotard's notion of 'inhuman' is endowed with two meanings. One is cruel and ruthlessly performative, the other is akin to a notion of 'infancy' as a creative impetus. In this context, the inhuman here is aligned to the latter meaning.

negatively reminds us that what we ‘feel’ as sensation arrives alongside a threat of not feeling again, of *anaesthesia*.

The second half of the title to this chapter ‘Diffracted Traces’ works as both a descriptor and structural device to the ensuing exploration of Lyotard’s writings on and about art, and was used by Lyotard as a heading for a paper he presented in 1993⁴⁴. Inside the artwork, Lyotard contended, embedded within it as a conduit to ‘touching’ the viewer, are the diffracted traces of the artist’s ‘vision’. This vision lacks any cognitive mode of visibility, and is re-presented through the transfiguration of the painting as shards of colourless and formless ‘presence’ that are ‘given colour’ by the artist. These painterly fragments are received by the viewer in the form of an event that belongs outside the time and conceptual parameters of modernity (as teleological ‘clock time’). The intention with this chapter is to accumulate the traces of Lyotard’s ‘vision’ on art, and to explore the diffracted traces of his thought matter when commenting on art. According to the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (2002) the noun ‘diffraction’ stems from the Latin verb *diffringere* which means to break into pieces. As a term in physics, diffraction also means to bend light or matter (in wavelengths of various kinds, such as acoustic or visual) around an obstacle. ‘Traces’ here is also related to the metaphorical notion of bending or shattering of matter, and indicates fragments that are left behind (as a trace) or, in the case of Lyotard’s analyses of art, are unable to be presented (but are ‘there’ nonetheless). This chapter utilises these meanings in a figurative sense to explore key texts that illuminate certain aspects on aesthetics in Lyotard’s oeuvre that will contribute to understandings of pedagogy as engaging with an inaudible presence.

The unifying thread in each text is the link to Lyotard’s critique of representation and his constant impetus to move beyond a relation to art that concentrates on meaning and content, to the artistic *event* as uniquely singular in its configuration of ‘matter’ that exceeds form within its occurrence in space and time. Lyotard crossed paths with many artists throughout his lifetime and wrote on the work of many more. Some of the names that he traverses in these writings are Sam Francis, Marcel Duchamp, Jacques Monory, Albert Ayme, Daniel Buren, Valerio Adami, Shusaku Arakawa, Ruth Francken, Karel Appel, Barnett Newman and Bracha Ettinger. Describing the primary function of his commentary on these artists, Lyotard (2002b) explained that the aim of such critique is to continue the artistic gesture of their art

⁴⁴ The paper ‘Scriptures: Diffracted Traces’ (Lyotard, 2004b) was delivered by Lyotard at a conference in 1993 celebrating the work of the artist Bracha Ettinger. It is also a variation of an extract from the essay ‘Anima Minima’ published in *Postmodern Fables* (Lyotard, 1997f).

within his writing. The shattering descriptor of the ‘diffracted’ metaphor is deployed in this chapter to outline the gestures that emerge within these texts, to provide a different perspective or point of entry into Lyotard’s thinking on art and aesthetics as a way to elucidate a broader artistic gesture specific to his philosophy. The aim here is to give a kaleidoscopic montage of the discontinuous fragments of Lyotard’s thought on art from the 1980s and 1990s, starting with the interview given at the time of the curated exhibition *Les Immatériaux*. From here the chapter then traces the artistic importance of testifying to unspeakable horror as the only way to preserve the fidelity of the event in *Heidegger and “the jews”*. Two artists that Lyotard worked closely with and who informed his writing, Bracha Ettinger and Barnett Newman, are then explored.

***Les Immatériaux* (1985)**

According to Herman Parret, when Lyotard was asked in an interview whether he was heading toward writing a systematic theory of aesthetics due an increasing engagement with art in his writing, Lyotard admitted that the majority of his texts on artists and their artworks were an outcome of “a great deal of chance and contingency ... due to encounters, collaborations, personal sympathies” (Parret, 2009a, p.15). Lyotard was interviewed during the exhibition *Les Immatériaux* (The Immaterials) that was held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1985 in Paris. The exhibition was commissioned and co-curated by Lyotard and the director of the Centre de Création Industrielle⁴⁵, Thierry Chaput⁴⁶. In the interview released alongside the exhibition conducted by Bernard Blistène, Lyotard spoke of his interest in art in general and painting in particular, as endorsing a kind of artistic ‘mode’ of thinking and acting. This unique disposition could be valuable, Lyotard contended, because it provided a space of resistance to the (dominant) Cartesian programme based on ideals of emancipation and rationality, and of ‘truth’ “measured by the yardstick of signification and knowledge” (Lyotard cited in Bennington, 2008, p. 4). Having published *The Postmodern Condition* in France six years earlier Lyotard continued the line of critique that had been articulated in this book through the conceptual impetus of the exhibition. As such, the exhibition continued to question the validity of certain signifying processes propagated alongside (modern) notions of technological ‘progress’ and performance that were emphasised in the book. The focus on the impact of technology, and on the ways and means

⁴⁵ Centre de Création Industrielle is a subsidiary of Centre Georges Pompidou that specialises in exhibitions in a broad base of design disciplines from science to art and high-tech industry.

⁴⁶ The press release and other information about this exhibition can be found in the blog of Eric Kluitenberg (Kluitenberg, 2002).

of living in a changing world coping with technological progress, remained of particular importance.

Within the physical space of the exhibition, Lyotard demanded the spectator to viscerally experience the way technology could alter and transform the Cartesian impetus of 'Man' as possessor and master of nature and as the stable referent to (and of) knowledge and knowledge production. This was evoked by turning the exhibition rooms into a kind of web as the physical manifestation of Lyotard's 'matrix-figure'⁴⁷, in which sheaths of cloth and other 'materials' that served to partition the exhibition space into thirty-one different zones created a labyrinthine effect. Standing as the (metaphorical) portal for signification, the spectator would be 'persuaded' (or seduced) into experiencing the displacing effect of the dissolution of material objectivity within the exhibition space. Within this matrix effect, Lyotard urged an embodied experience as the 'figure' that displaces meaning and representation within discourse (experienced in this case within the parameters of an exhibition). Here we can see Lyotard creating his own 'artwork' that acquires the qualities of the artistic event by cleverly utilising the unpredictable movements of individual spectators trying to navigate their way around the art space. One would be tempted to say that they are also trying to navigate their way toward some kind of cohesive meaning within the parameters of the exhibition space. Instead Lyotard turns this search for direction within the labyrinth of the exhibition, into the metaphor of searching for the meaning and certainty that postmodern life inflicts on those 'condemned' to wander around its endless maze. This, Lyotard states, is the purpose of the exhibition, "to make us feel the strange in the familiar, and how difficult it is to imagine what's changing" (cited in Crowther, 1992). To achieve this disorientating effect, Lyotard describes the elaborate structural element in the exhibition in more detail:

So, instead of walls, we'll have a system of webbings that will be stretched from floor to ceiling, and the ways in which they're lighted will permit us to vary the distances that the eye can cover and to modulate the indications that ought to be followed, but without being prescriptive, since many of the sites we'll be

⁴⁷ This term is of particular prominence in Lyotard's book *Discourse, Figure*. As this is not available in English yet (it is finally to be released in July 2010) I can only analyse this in terms of secondary sources. The main one I have used is Bracha Ettinger (the same artist that Lyotard wrote 'Diffracted Traces' for), who describes the matrix-figure as "well integrated into psychoanalytic drive theory", and the disruptive figural process at work in the aesthetic. I quote Ettinger: "With the matrixial object/*objet a* we are entering into the transsubjective field. However, all of these objects are interrelated, and they are all linked to art: to the enigma of the creative act, the emergence of meaning, and the aesthetic experience" (Ettinger, 2006, p.74,5). Ettinger's analyses of the matrix-figure aligns with Lyotard's 'silent' or 'invisible' affect-phrase in that "the matrix-figure lacks form, image, and discourse, even though it inhabits simultaneously these three spaces and even though the artwork emerges from it. Its offspring can be seen in phantasy, while in reality it can only be indirectly evoked, after a passage through the creative process of the artwork" (Ettinger, 2006, p.76,7).

building will be in the form of intersections that allow one then to go off in any number of directions ... Each of the visitors will have a kind of Walkman, and even though they won't have to tune into different stations, they'll move from one broadcast to another as they walk through the exhibition space ... This is a way of permitting me to create a soundtrack of commentaries that won't even really be commentaries at all, and the textual elements included in the visit to the show will be a considerably more forceful presence than it usually is; there will also be music and other sound effects (Lyotard, 1985b, p.4).

This extract provides a unique insight into the way Lyotard provided a physical platform to realise the philosophical basis of his critique on modern, techno-scientific society. Involving all senses, the discontinuous and fragmentary elements to the 'art' materials serve to illustrate the dissolution of representation and materialism, and the emergence of an intensification of a 'non-materialist' postmodern milieu. The interview extract also illuminates Lyotard's pedagogical stance of the philosopher to find new modes of 'inscription' other than the book⁴⁸. Here the surface of the 'support', whether it is pictorial, musical, or otherwise, must in its mode of inscription incorporate the new technologies in order to alleviate the totalising qualities that Lyotard considered so entwined within the locus of techno-scientific development. Through an artistic interaction with such 'dangers', Lyotard suggests that the openness that is created within such spaces might serve to nurture and protect possibilities of creating new spaces of meaning and knowledge. As the only time he was involved so pivotally in an activity of this kind⁴⁹, the *Les Immatériaux* exhibition can be seen as the physical and practical manifestation of what he considered to be most pertinent to the work of art at this time of his intellectual life. The questions: "What do we do if we no longer have the prospect of emancipation?" and "What sort of line of resistance can we have?" (ibid) that informed the philosophical basis of the exhibition can be seen to be placed by Lyotard firmly within the orbit of artistic experimentation that concerned itself with making 'visible' that which cannot be seen through questioning what makes it possible to *see*.

The position of the artist, then, is crucial in formulating responses to these questions and as such is awarded by Lyotard a philosophical status that transcends traditional conceptions toward the functionality of art. Within the ambit of Lyotard's intellectual life at this particular point, it is also interesting to view this exhibition as fully endorsing an 'ethic' in artistic activity that champions the 'avant-garde'. While this is certainly not a new addition in

⁴⁸ Which, to a certain extent he ignored himself. Whilst always writing and championing art, his most prominent mode of inscription was undoubtedly *writing*. However, we must also be aware that Lyotard thought of 'writing' in a rather extended sense.

⁴⁹ Though there would be no more curated shows, he actually wrote many catalogue extracts for exhibitions as described in *Gesture and Commentary* (Lyotard, 2002b).

Lyotard's oeuvre at this time, *Les Immatériaux* did serve the purpose of very effectively marrying the intellectual/philosophical impetus of Lyotard's work to the practical expressions of the artist. In terms of the role of the intellectual, especially in the context of the demise of the 'grand narrative'⁵⁰ of emancipation, Lyotard clearly considered his involvement with the avant-garde in art to be a response that endorsed artistic activity that resonated at a certain level of 'the political'. The intellectual in Lyotard's view then, would need to take the artistic disposition of the avant-garde artist in order to rejuvenate and expand on alternatives to notions of mastery and certainty. This, he continues, is the only alternative intellectuals have when faced with the corruption of such 'modern' ideals. He explains further in the interview:

I think that it's something that's very closely connected to artistic activity, or philosophico-artistic activity. It's something that has to be thoroughly explored by asking ourselves what's happening at the level of time, space, and the social community in contemporary art. That's what I've been trying to explore by means of these various small texts that I write on art, and sometimes of music, when I feel sufficiently audacious (Lyotard, 1985b, p.5).

The 'Immaterial'

This approach to analysing art within the nominal parameters of time and space would be elaborated upon further, and anthologised in the collection of presented papers and essays published as *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Lyotard, 1991d). As mentioned previously in the context of the exhibition, the notion of the 'immaterials' serves as a disruptive device that Lyotard considered himself responsible, as the philosopher, to elaborate upon within the terrain of the artist. Here the 'immaterial' is utilised as a tool for critiquing the notion of progress, and the way that progress in technology and the arts has been connected to material objects. Through juxtaposing 'industrial' objects (such as the computer – a mammoth advance in technology in 1985)⁵¹ within 'artistic' contexts (such as in the exhibition space itself) Lyotard tried to illustrate what he considered to be the insoluble links between 'progress' in art, and the Enlightenment project of *progressing* toward emancipation. The point of the juxtaposition of the technological/industrial with the artist/experimental was to

⁵⁰ This term is discussed in the previous chapter. As defined by Lyotard in the *Postmodern Condition* various examples of grand narratives are "the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (1984, xxii).

⁵¹ In an essay written in honour of Lyotard after his death, Jacques Derrida attributes to Lyotard and the *Les Immatériaux* exhibition the catalyst using a word processor. Lyotard had asked Derrida to write the catalogue of the exhibition. Derrida continues: "Let me simply recall, rather than saying more about the calculated randomness of this exhibition, the chance Jean-François's invitation presented me, namely, the wonderful machinations that led me to learn to use, despite my previous reluctance, a word processor, which I have depended upon ever since. Instead of giving grand narratives about major debts, I prefer to speak of this apparently minor debt that Jean-François perhaps knew nothing about, just as I myself never knew whether he used a typewriter or a computer" (Derrida, 2001, p.228).

highlight the intensification of the way conceptions and sensibilities of and toward reality have been altered because of technological advancements. ‘Reality’ in such conditions, says Lyotard, becomes *less* material and solid and more ethereal and complex, especially with the introduction of digital (binary) data. The press release given for the exhibition further illustrates the dissolution of reality into ‘non-materials’, into the immaterial:

Why ‘Immaterials’? Research and development in the techno-sciences, art and technology, yes even in politics, give the impression that reality, whatever it may be, becomes increasingly intangible, that it can never be controlled directly - they give the impression of a complexity of things. (...) The devices themselves are also becoming more complex. One step was set as their artificial brains started to work with digital data; with data that have no analogy to their origin. It is as if a filter has been placed between us and the things, a screen of numbers. (...) A colour, a sound, a substance, a pain, or a star return to us as digits in schemes of utmost precision. With the encoding and decoding-systems we learn that there are realities that are in a new way intangible. The good old matter itself comes to us in the end as something which has been dissolved and reconstructed into complex formulas. Reality consists of elements, organised by structural rules (matrixes) in no longer human measures of space and time (Lyotard cited in Kluitenberg, 2002, para. 25).

Despite the poor translation, this press release evokes in a very convincing fashion Lyotard’s impression of the transformative dimension to ‘reality’ once it has been filtered through a digitalised process. The dissolution of materials as ‘objects’ to fragmentary forms of energy is aligned with, and serves as a metaphor for, the fragmentation of the grand narratives that structure society. An exhibition of *non-materials* requires not only a deconstruction of art, but also technology, and also the conceptual and physical space in which art occurs. The fragmentary nature of the exhibition was for Lyotard the physical manifestation of this notion of ‘matter’ as energy, as opposed to the modernist view of the complete and objectified work of art as artefact. Here, Lyotard expands this idea:

We make the point, obviously enough, that all of the progress that has been accomplished in the sciences, and perhaps in the arts as well, is strictly connected to an ever closer knowledge of what we generally call objects. (Which can also be a question of objects of thought.) ...Finally, there's no such thing as matter, and the only thing that exists is energy; we no longer have any such thing as materials, in the old sense of the word that implied an object that offered resistance to any kind of project that attempted to alienate it from its primary finalities (Lyotard, 1985b, p. 3).

This fragment of Lyotard’s involvement with curating an exhibition has been included in this chapter to illustrate the necessary depth and commitment that Lyotard imbued in his association with art and artists. I have also included this analysis here as the catalyst to a shift in Lyotard’s intellectual trajectory from the middle of the 1980s onwards that was marked by

a quite distinct move ‘beyond’ the notion of the postmodern, and even ‘beyond’ the notion of the differend. While this exhibition was undoubtedly thought through in the context of both these markers in Lyotard’s intellectual trajectory, it also depicted many themes that would be elaborated upon in much detail in Lyotard’s late work. The notion of inscription in the expanded sense of rearranging energy formations on different apparatuses, whether material or immaterial, and the negating impact of memory that accompanies inscription, will be dealt with next.

Art as Testimony: *Heidegger and “the jews”*⁵²

Attested, suffering and the untameable are as if already destroyed. I mean that in witnessing, one also exterminates. The witness is a traitor (Lyotard, 1991b, p. 204).

This revealing statement made by Lyotard has been puzzled over by many⁵³. Certainly reminiscent of the Shoah and of the abject cruelty displayed by collective humanity, the issue of testifying to events passed in a way that doesn’t weaken their potency *as* an event was continuously reconfigured and improvised upon in Lyotard’s writing. The issues of memory, of historical fidelity, and of the need and impetus for proof, are mingled together with Lyotard’s drive to attest to that which escapes such forms of inscription; memory is unreliable, historical ‘truth’ is debateable and the constant drive to prove ‘facts’ could be seen as a circular and self-reinforcing mechanism of modernity. How then, to testify to the unknown, the unheard, or the ‘unthought’ without betrayal? The testimony is a task, says Lyotard, and the task is an aesthetic one. This testimony does not involve bringing onto the stage of history the ‘lost’ facts that, once retrieved, complete the cast of actors in the definitive rendition of the story of humanity. This is idiocy; more than this, such notions of completion and fulfilment trace the outlines of terror. Rather, the aesthetic task that Lyotard considered worthy of the obligation to testify involves a retrieval of a different sort, a retrieval that doesn’t look for the rule or concept of its action, that has no final and definitive destination in the mechanics of its processes, and that lacks all cognitive ‘human’ coordinates of rationality. This retrieval is in search for a *trace* of the pain and anguish of suffering as a presence that can only be eluded to and desperately searched for through an unbound creative

⁵² It is necessary for me to make clear here that this section is different from the chapter entitled ‘Lyotard’s Freud’ which deals explicitly with the book *Heidegger and “the jews”*. This section presented here places emphasis on the artistic implications for memory and forgetting, and is to be viewed as distinct from (although not totally unrelated to) any engagement with Heidegger and Lyotard’s critique of Heidegger.

⁵³ A succinct account of what this statement might mean in the context of Lyotard’s wider oeuvre is given by Kent Still in (Still, 2007).

process. A recollection of ‘events’ grounded in memory involves a necessary slaughter; a selection of memories or ‘facts’ must be chosen, must be put to use, while other memories are exterminated. On the other hand, a retrieval of the sensorial feelings of affect as the unknown quotient to historical narration through a Freudian theme of anamnesis, attests to a type of memory and ‘truth’ in a state of privation and incompleteness. No ‘account’ can hope to be exhaustively and definitively complete. In this respect, art’s deficiency is its ‘secret’ power. “It does not say the unsayable” comments Lyotard, “but says that it *cannot* say it” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 47, my emphasis).

For art to hold to such an outrageous claim, for it to hold as a testimony that eschews the necessary clutches of conceptual rationality, it must move beyond the reaches of communicative transparency. Rather than *re-presenting* a concept or underlying meaning, art’s ‘job’ for Lyotard is to *evoke* what escapes the conceptual paradigm, and then only as a presentation that points to this inadequacy. As the writing in this section should have made clear by now, the gold standard of this type of testimony is with regard to the Holocaust and to the inadequacies of a straight representation of the ‘the facts’ as recounted in history. For Lyotard no such inscription, whether historic or artistic, is ever going to fully capture abject horror and terror by merely representing these emotional dimensions as replications of the ‘real thing’. Rather, Lyotard is interested in the power art has in conjuring the deficiencies of ‘rational’, ‘real’, ‘eye-witness’ accounts of the horrors inflicted upon humanity in a way that resists the temptation to consider such accounts as definitive, and therefore finished and ‘done with’. Such a definitive rendering of an account is tantamount to a conclusion and termination of the (continuous) ethical obligation to continuously attest to such atrocities and is the main problem or inadequacy of the historical process of narration. Rather than the ‘facts’ of the Holocaust, rather than direct accounts of its horrors, Lyotard positions art as the conduit to a direct link with the blankness and darkness laced with the threat of annihilation that is the primeval condition of human existence made explicit through the Holocaust. Nothing can hope to capture exactly the terror in its contradictory minutiae and vastness, but Lyotard considers the process in art to allude to the dangers of annihilation through existing outside the cognitive coordinates of memory. With regard to memory, Lyotard eloquently states in the first half of his essay *Heidegger and “the jews”* the problem of its inscription and possible negation:

Whenever one represents, one inscribes in memory, and this might seem a good defence against forgetting. It is, I believe, just the opposite. Only that which has

been inscribed can, in the current sense of the term, be forgotten because it could be effaced. But what is not inscribed, through lack of inscribable surface, of duration and place for the inscription to be situated, what has no place in the space nor in the time of domination, in the geography and the diachrony of the self-assured spirit, because it is not synthesizable – let us say, what is not material for experience because the forms and formations of experience, be they unconscious (those which are produced by secondary repression), are inapt and inept for it – cannot be forgotten, does not offer a hold to forgetting, and remains present “only” as an affection that one cannot even qualify, like a state of death in the life of the spirit. One *must*, certainly, inscribe in words, in images. One cannot escape the necessity of representing. It would be sin itself to believe oneself safe and sound. But it is one thing to do it in view of saving the memory, and quite another to try and preserve the remainder, the unforgettable forgotten, in writing (Lyotard, 1990, p. 26).

Here, Lyotard equates visibility alongside representation as a form of annihilation. Once something is made visible, is inscribed onto a surface, it is instantly vulnerable to the act of forgetting and erasure. The above quote also draws a contradictory judgement on the value of art (if we take Lyotard’s lead and consider ‘inscription’ in as wide a view as possible). One needs to represent (to paint, to write, etc) but this representation must hold within it the traces of the unknowable and the unthinkable at the very limits of, and as the deficiency within, its occurrence as an artistic event. This is the process of, and the reason Lyotard champions, the avant-garde that I will come back to.

The singularity of the inscribed event can be effaced precisely in the representational testimony to it, in that not everything has been represented in that testimony (hence the traitorous status of Lyotard’s ‘witness’ at the top of this section). Something has always escaped and for Lyotard, there must always be a remainder. This ‘remainder’ is powerful and unsettling because it cannot be forgotten if it is not inscribed in memory, and as such is not “a breakdown of memory but the immemorial always ‘present’” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 20). Here the process of retrieval that reveals that there is always a ‘presence’ that lies outside of memory is presented by Lyotard as a ‘working through’ in the manner that Freud intended in his approach to anamnesis. While this will be dealt with in the next section in more detail, it is important to see here the links Lyotard is making between a ‘mechanics’ of memory in the apparatus of the mind, and the retrieval of a ‘forgotten’ affect within the artwork. Here Lyotard is linking together the psychological apparatus of the mind where memory is inscribed in a way that cannot be represented cognitively but is felt as anxiety (as exhibited in Freudian secondary repression), and the artistic ‘retrieval’ of affect and sensation that are constitutive of the artwork. Through such ‘retrieval’ there is no ‘memory’ of the desired affects and sensation that the artwork creates. Rather, these occur without recourse to

predetermining criteria and as such cannot be stored as memory in any cognitive framework and therefore cannot be subject to the condition of forgetting. Importantly for Lyotard, what art can reveal is “what every representation misses, what is forgotten there: this ‘presence’ whatever name it is given by one author or another, which persists not so much at the limits but rather at the heart of representation” (Lyotard, 1990, p. 5).

One of the more powerful aspects in regard to the position of art as testimony that comes from Lyotard’s conflation of the ‘apparatus’ of the Freudian mind, and the notion of artistic anamnesis, is the issue of the ‘presence’ of anxiety and affect that took place in Europe during the war. As has been previously mentioned, the catastrophe of the Holocaust provided Lyotard with the ultimate example to show how the annihilation of the Jews was a symptom of the anxiety of the unknown (and unrepresentable) on the political apparatus of the West. This particular “slaughter” for Lyotard, testified “to the unthinkable” by trying to erase the threat posed by the Jews (as “jews”). “It is not enough”, begins Lyotard of Freud’s analysis, “to accomplish the murder; one must remove all traces” (Lyotard, 1990, p.25). Here the intention to ‘erase’ all Jews by the Nazi party could happen by creating the “din that is necessary to cover the silent crime” through the outbreak of war (Lyotard, 1990, p.28). Because very few people knew exactly what was happening in the concentration camps, and because the mass extermination couldn’t be represented on the political stage (“obviously, a ‘politics’ of extermination exceeds politics”, says Lyotard with heavy irony, “it is not negotiated on a scene”) (Lyotard, 1990, p. 25), a ‘complete’ and absolute forgetting could be attempted:

The SS did everything possible to remove all traces of the extermination. Its orders were to make sure nothing was recorded. They continued to organize convoys, continued to gas and incinerate even though the Allied front was only six miles from the death camp and the German army needed all remaining personnel and material. The solution was to be final: the final answer to the “jewish” question. It was necessary to carry it right up to its conclusion, to “terminate” the interminable. And thus to “terminate” the term itself. It had to be a perfect crime, one would plead not guilty, certain of the lack of proofs. This is a “politics” of absolute forgetting, forgotten (ibid).

This attempt to forget the crime, however, would fail (due, ironically, to the very extensive documentation by the SS) and it is here that Lyotard’s extraordinarily complex notion of representation comes to the fore. Only when shifted from a forgotten, unknown ‘affect’ as secondary repression and moved to the forefront of ‘consciousness’ as representation of this affect, can something truly and definitively be forgotten. To forget that there is the forgotten

(the ultimate crime), according to Lyotard, lies in the realm of attempting to explain, depict or make known, the unrepresentable. In the case of the Holocaust, Lyotard's reasoning as to why the Holocaust never allowed a complete forgetting of the crime lay in the way that this 'battle' was fought outside the Western apparatus of consciousness. He explains:

How, then does the slaughter, as I put it forward, testify to what it kills? In that it cannot kill it on the scene of politics and of war, but behind the ghastly scenes. In public, one rails indifferently against Bolsheviks, democrats, decadents, capitalists, Jews, blacks. One wages war on them, in public. But in "reality" one cannot wage war on the Jews; one makes them disappear, annihilates them. They are not the enemy in the ordinary sense. They have not been declared the enemy. They have no claim to the spotlight of confrontation on stage. The "politics" of extermination cannot be represented on the political scene. It must be forgotten. So that no one can remember it as anything but the end put to a nightmare. For the nightmare would continue in the memory even of its end (Lyotard, 1990, p. 28).

When it comes to representations of the Holocaust, however, the threat of forgetting the horror and brutality lies in the very shift from the unknown to the explicitly known and in the process eliminating any memory of a forgotten remainder. Rather than secondary repression, which hides an affect outside the apparatus of the conscious, "It is feared that, through representation, it turns into 'ordinary' repression. One will say, It was a great massacre, how horrible! ...one cries out 'never again' and that's it! It is taken care of" (Lyotard, 1990, p.26). Just how to avoid such ordinary repression, and to ensure a secret remainder remains hidden and therefore protected from negation, is dealt with next in the case of the artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger.

Bracha Ettinger's Memory of Oblivion: 'Anamnesis: Of the Visible'

The importance of the work of the artist ... is clearly its connection to the question of memory. But to say memory is not enough. It is rather the work's connection to the statement: I remember that I don't remember anymore ... It is a work of anamnesis ... not only of a historical past ... but of painting itself and of colour itself ... The work of Bracha L. Ettinger is an anamnestic work, guided by the presence of the Shoah. This "presence," like *the Thing*, does not demand anything. It makes itself forgotten (Lyotard cited in Pollock, 2006, p. 8).

Lyotard presented this paper 'Anamnesis: Of the Visible' in 1995 on the occasion of his friend Bracha Ettinger's exhibition entitled *Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger: Halala – Autistwork* in the Israel Museum. Ettinger is both an artist and psychoanalyst and, according to Herman Parret (2009a), was one of the group of artists whom Lyotard met in person and formed a friendship with. (Parret also gives examples of Lyotard writing about artists whom

he never met, but provided critical appraisal of their work regardless). In fact, Ettinger's work would prove to be of great interest to the ageing philosopher due to the unusual and psychoanalytically inspired critique of memory that was constitutive of her art⁵⁴. For Lyotard, Ettinger's artwork evokes the intransigency of linear history through an inventive use of mixed mediums (such as paint, photocopy dust, and photographs) and technologies (such as the printer and photocopier) that physically challenge historical 'reality' and diachronic notions of teleological time. The opening quote to this section outlines Lyotard's reverence for Ettinger's use and critique of memory (actually taken from another paper devoted to her work which this chapter takes the name and inspiration of in the use of 'Diffracted Traces'). As a Jewish woman whose life was traumatically affected by the Holocaust, the issues of definitive accounts and the impossibility of the 'eyewitness' filtered through and influenced the thematic creative impetus of her art. For Lyotard, Ettinger's work "reveals the most singular function of art and writing, which is *to testify for apparition over appearance*. Yet, *in appearance and through the means of appearance*" (Lyotard, 2004b, p. 103, italics in original).

The striking element to Ettinger's art that drew this comment from Lyotard is the use of photographs that have been photocopied repeatedly, sometimes incompletely, with the intention of obscuring the subject matter and emphasising the visual grain of the photocopying process. What Ettinger is demonstrating in a very explicit way is Lyotard's idea of the artistic *labouring* involved in the artwork as a 'working through' that is exceeding the visual constraints (of the images in the photographs) by literally obscuring the subject matter through repeated and relentless copying. Through such labouring the 'trace or sign' that Lyotard considers constitutive of the artwork is more than metaphorically referred to; the actual work of art starts to look sketchy and grainy the more the image is copied and the images start to fade. Ettinger's work seems for Lyotard to be the very embodiment of, and provide the physical co-ordinates for, the "double paradox" that art must strive for as "chromatic material which will be unseen because beyond the visible, yet is colour" (Lyotard, 2004a, p. 107). If the gesture that Lyotard is referring to (within Ettinger's art in this case, but also more broadly) happens despite the artist's intentions, this emphasises the process of anamnesis within the actual 'matter' of the artwork as an event. This is Lyotard's point of departure from a Freudian 'metapsychology', for he contends that it is actually within the

⁵⁴ The fact that Ettinger was twenty years younger and strikingly elegant no doubt helped the friendship along as well. Lyotard was fond of women.

‘working through’ (Freud’s term in the clinic is *Durcharbeitung*) of the painting *itself* that initiates the artistic event of “a gesture of and within substance, in and of the space-time that is extended through this very gesture – a gesture which is not the sole result of a conscious subject, namely the painter” (Lyotard, 2004b, p. 107). In this analysis, Ettinger’s work differentiates between memory as a recollection, “*mémoire, Erinnerung*” says Lyotard in French and German, of events in the historical sense and a memory retrieval that is free from signification and scientific ‘proof’.

Anamnesis and history keep present what is forgotten. The latter does this by trying to be faithful to the past, through its witnesses. Anamnesis is guided by the unknown, since it is engagement with unpredictability and invisibility that allows the event to happen (ibid).

Both these ‘processes’ are valid; it just happens that Lyotard considers the artistic gesture to be revealed within the anamnesis process and this gesture has no correlation to historical linear time. Lyotard continues:

Anamnesis is at first sight something completely different. It explores the meanings of a given ‘present’, of an expression of the here and now, without immediate concern for (referential) reality, and it does this by means of associations which are said to be ‘free’ (Freud; and perhaps Benjamin’s notion of aura). This is not about researching the past to establish its truth. Stuff gets drawn from all periods into the current context without worrying about argumentation, nor how it is going to work for writing. The apparent absence of constraints, this ‘freedom’ to associate and be fearless of the incongruous, the absurd and the scandalous, is the opposite of a strong regulatory disposition, and can even be violent (Lyotard, 2004a, p. 108).

Ettinger’s art contravenes the linearity of time by exploring differing technological processes within her use of old photographs, many of which are either from personal family collections and some from the archival footage of the Jewish ghettos (particularly that of Lodz in Poland). Her works bear a literal witness to a multilayered notion of time through mechanically interrupting the photocopying process, displaying an aspect of Lyotard’s ‘anamnesic’ ‘freedom’. In a commentary on Ettinger’s work, Brian Massumi muses that “it is often said that everything ended with the Holocaust: writing, art, feeling, even and especially history” (Massumi, 2006, p. 212)⁵⁵. However, just as Lyotard is concerned with how to phrase “after Auschwitz”, Ettinger decides to confront this problematic by using photographs of women going about their daily business at a particularly traumatic moment in Western history, belying both their likely predicament as Jewish women in a ghetto and their timeless quality as women living together intensely in a community. Through the mechanical

⁵⁵ Brian Massumi is of course one of the translators to the English edition of Lyotard’s *Postmodern Condition*.

process Ettinger utilises, and interrupting “the line of descent between the original and its copy” (Massumi, 2006, p. 201), these women’s images fade away in the way that memory of these traumatic times and the people who bore the brunt of such trauma is vulnerable also to such fading. What Ettinger is achieving through the ‘burial’ of the subject matter in paint, colour and photocopying-induced ‘grain’ is the burial of rational historical memory and the cognitive certainty of the event (of the Holocaust), to make way for the irrational trauma of the threat posed by annihilation and extermination (what historical recall misses). Here Lyotard considers Ettinger’s true painterly triumph to lie in the way the actual paint and colour perform their own anamnesis, letting the artistic gesture ‘speak’ over the din of meaning and representation, “an anamnesis that is not only of the historical past but of colour itself” (Lyotard, 2004a, p. 118). This historical past for Ettinger and Lyotard is guided over by the ‘presence’ of the Holocaust. The ethical obligation to remember must shift to the realm of the artist in order to revitalise, implores Lyotard:

the benign name of the ‘Holocaust’, covered over by the ceremonial forgiveness of heads of state and the Church, and once again under memorials – so many modalities of forgetting. The *Shoah* is dread. The monstrous abjection on which Europe has constructed its conventional narrative of emancipation suddenly ... resurfaces ... erupt[s] to visibility (ibid).

Ettinger’s art, through a process of anamnesis, keeps present what is forgotten in historical accounts and narratives of the Holocaust by opening a passage to experience the event.

The Sublime: ‘Newman: The Instant’

There is, however, a sublime feeling. And Kant even qualifies it as the combination of pleasure and pain, as the trembling (“on the spot,” at the moment) of a motion both attractive and repulsive at once, as a sort of spasm, according to a dynamic that both inhibits and excites. This feeling bears witness to the fact that an “excess” has “touched” the mind, more than it is able to handle. That is why the sublime has no consideration for form, why it is an “unform.” For form is what gives the given, even with respect to imaginative representations. In primary repression, the apparatus cannot at all bind, invest, fix, and represent the terror (called originary, but without origin, and which it cannot situate), and this is why this terror remains “within” the apparatus as its outside, infuse and diffuse, as “unconscious affect.” In the sublime feeling, the imagination is also completely unable to collect the absolute (in largeness, in intensity) in order to represent it, and this means that the sublime is not localizable in time. But something, at least, remains there, ignored by imagination, spread in the mind as both pleasure and pain – something Burke called terror, precisely, terror of a “there is nothing,” which threatens without making itself known, which does not “realize” itself (Lyotard, 1990, p. 32).

The concept of the sublime is one of Lyotard's most prolific theoretical preoccupations, and as such there are a multitude of writings on various artists' in the 1980s particularly, that deal with this concept in depth. Although he didn't exactly move away from this area in his final decade of writing, there is a sense of a lessening of intensity within this Kantian 'turn', which is evident in his growing use of Freudian affect used in *tandem* with the sublime. In this later period, the sublime is seen as analogous to the 'presencing' function (of the unrepresentable) of Freud's notion of anamnesis within the rubric of deferred action. I will come back to this point later, but for the moment it is important to point out the neighbouring concept of the differend, to which the sublime can be seen to be embryonically attached. For Lyotard, as exhibited through his texts on art, the sublime is marked as the fundamental *feeling* of the differend as the pain of the mind's failure to grasp (and represent) the concepts of the imagination, thereby creating a schism or abyss between feeling and its cognitive representation (Lyotard's language). To get to this point however, Lyotard would need a long and detailed excursion through Kant's *Critique of Judgement* with an intense engagement and critique of the section 'The Analytic of the Sublime' as evidenced in his *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (Lyotard, 1994). This would be the platform that Lyotard would elaborate "the analysis of a differend of feeling in Kant's text, which is also the analysis of a feeling of differend, and to connect this feeling with the transport that leads all thought (critical thought included) to its limits" (Lyotard, 1994, p. x)⁵⁶. While I will leave the political application of Lyotard's use of Kant here, and with it the notion the differend, the important quality that needs to be highlighted is that of reaching the limits of something, of 'breaking' the mind and rendering it immobile by its incapacity to represent concepts in their magnitude and vastness. Lyotard explains:

In his *Critique of Judgement* Kant outlines, rapidly and almost without realizing it, another solution to the problem of sublime painting. One cannot, he writes, represent the power of infinite might or absolute magnitude within space and time because they are pure Ideas. But one can at least allude to them, or 'evoke' them by means of what he baptizes a 'negative presentation' (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 85).

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Bennington tells of the amusing story of Lyotard's lectures at the University in Vincennes in Paris, filled with smoke and packed with eccentrics all wanting to hear more of the scandalous Lyotard of *Libidinal Economy* (Lyotard, 1993f). However these lectures take place in 1979 and Lyotard has once again moved beyond a conceptual model and in this case is pre-empting the differend. The gathered crowd, however, are not pleased and people start yelling for more talk of the libidinal. Lyotard doesn't seem to mind at all. Bennington continues: "A few months later, in the summer of 1980 the whole place will be bulldozed by the French Government and moved out to St. Denis. Lyotard's class starts happening on Saturday mornings, reading Kant; henceforth there are not twenty of us in the room ... He's still always happy and amused: thinks we might now finally get some work done" (Bennington, 2008, p. 3).

It is here that Lyotard re-appropriates the sublime in the services of art, which is particularly evident in his analysis of the artistic processes of the avant-garde. ‘Newman: The Instant’ (Lyotard, 1991g) deals with the art of Barnett Newman and outlines Lyotard’s use of the sublime and its relation to (and against) diachronic *time*. While Ettinger’s work also deals with time in the context of memory, at this point Lyotard is interested in the way Newman (explicitly driven by and belonging to “the aesthetic of the sublime”) evokes time as an event within the artwork, and through this (painterly) evocation isolates “different ‘sites of time’” (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 78). Newman’s ‘work of art’ in Lyotard’s analysis, deals not only with art as an object, but also the process in which Newman delves in the production of art. Finally Lyotard is also interested how Newman’s art ‘works’ collaboratively with and on the viewer as a spectator⁵⁷.

According to Simon Malpas (2002), Lyotard’s interest in Newman is not merely coincidental or fortuitous (unlike many other artists Lyotard wrote for). Newman was not only a leading figure in American abstract expressionism, but was also a very accomplished and informed theorist on aesthetics who had published treatises on the sublime (amongst a raft of other aesthetic issues) in various art journals throughout the post-war period until his death in 1970⁵⁸. Whether the philosopher and painter ever met is not clear (Lyotard was yet to earn his name as the ‘travelling professor’ before 1970 and may not have even travelled to the United States long enough at that time). Lyotard, however, clearly found in Newman an artist whose aesthetic theoretical impetus was very much in concert with his own theoretical trajectory. Both, in their own areas and idiosyncratic ways, could also be seen to be outsiders amongst outsiders, relentlessly following their own creative pathways and blazing their own artistic trails irrespective of fashion and societal expectations. The question of time, “an obsession shared by many painters”, was not *the* most compelling dimension to Newman’s art for Lyotard. Rather, it was “the fact that it gives an unexpected answer to that question: its answer is that time is the picture itself” (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 78). Time, in this ‘dimension’⁵⁹, is experienced ‘sensorially’. As the issue of time for both Lyotard and Newman was intricately linked to that of the sublime, Lyotard’s commentary on Newman’s work as the manifestation of time *felt* as sensation within a rubric consisting of space and time, (and thus awarded a ‘presence’), was particularly significant.

⁵⁷ Robert Harvey outlines this in more general application to Lyotard’s work with art/ists. (Harvey, 2005, p. 620).

⁵⁸ Newman’s contemporaries in this area were painters such as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothco.

⁵⁹ In fact, this paper was first presented in the catalogue of an exhibition entitled ‘Time: looking at the fourth dimension’.

As an exemplary example of Newman's 'sensation of time', Lyotard comments on the series entitled *Stations of the Cross* (exhibited at the Guggenheim in 1966) are revealing. The subtitle to this work is the line uttered by a despairing and bewildered Jesus, "My God, why hast thou Forsaken me?" presented here in the Hebrew, *Lama Sabachthani*. At this moment Jesus is left desperately clamouring for meaning, and his distraught and almost frenzied plea to God to put an answer, a *meaning*, to his anguish resounds in a desolate and despairing void of silence. Newman's blocks of oppressive black paint, interrupted by an almost surgically precise vertical line of white evoke this void, slamming the spectators' unwitting gaze into a confrontation with an evocation of an 'instant' in time that is suspended in a state of abject horror. Newman considered the question Jesus cried out (commonly referred to as Christ's Passion) to be the question of mankind; "the cry of man, of every man" (Newman in Tate Online, 2002, para. 4). Lyotard notes that Newman's Passion is the Hebrew version in that "the reconciliation of existence (and therefore of death) and signification does not take place" (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 87). Instead, Newman leaves us waiting for the Messiah to bring meaning by leaving the work with no fixed signification and realist representation so that any historical reference to this drama is buried within the abstractionist approach. Instead, we are left with the abstract, but pulsing, event of the black and white painting 'saying' nothing but this void. There is no Christ, there is no cross, and there is only the raw black on white canvass, there to evoke the 'instant' of Christ's anguish, which becomes 'our' anguish. Newman writes:

Lama Sabachthani – why? Why did you forsake me? Why forsake me? To what purpose? Why? This is the Passion. The outcry of Jesus. Not the terrible walk up Via Dolorosa, but the question that has no answer... This question that has no answer has been with us so long – since Jesus – since Abraham – since Adam – the original question. *Lama?* To what purpose – is the answerable question of human suffering. The first pilgrims walked the Via Dolorosa to identify themselves with the original moment, not to reduce it to a pious legend; nor even to worship the story of one man's agony, but to stand witness to the story of each man's agony: the agony that is the single, constant, unrelenting, willed – world without an end (Newman in Malpas, 2002, p. 208).

Lyotard and Newman would have been in agreement that this lack of meaning and signification is in fact a symptom of mankind being 'abandoned' by meaning in modernity. Further to this, Malpas considers Newman's depiction of Christ's anguish in his art to be an intentional move away from a mythology that Christianity so exemplifies. Instead, Christ's instant of anguish becomes our permanent (Lyotard would say immemorial) state of anguish: meaning is impossible now that myth has been destroyed. This is presented in Newman's

work without imitating ‘reality’, but through evoking the raw materials of emotion. What Lyotard hears in Newman’s painterly void is “not the *Know why*, but *Be*”. He continues:

It has to be understood that this *Be* is not concerned with the resurrection in the sense of the Christian mystery, but with the recurrence of a prescription emanating from silence or from the void, and which perpetrates the passion by reiterating it from its beginnings. When we have been abandoned by meaning, the artist has a professional duty to bear witness that there is, to respond to the order to be. The painting becomes evidence, and it is fitting that it should not offer anything that has to be deciphered, still less interpreted... [and] is an allusion to Burke’s terror, to the terror that surrounds the event, the relief that there is (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 88).

Even though Newman found him rather strange, (“surreal” is how describes the writings), Lyotard notes that the threatening qualities of privation and terror that Edmund Burke spoke about (in 1757) as constitutive of the sublime feeling, were very much ‘present’ (albeit negatively) in Newman’s work. “Certain ‘sensations’”, implores Lyotard, “are pregnant with a threat to our self-preservation, and Burke refers to that threat as *terror*” (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 84). Newman evokes this terror, through Lyotard’s analysis, by removing all explicit modes of signification and instead insists on the painting as a representation of *nothing* but the colouring sensation itself. Newman’s evocation of “shadows, solitude, silence and the approach of death may be ‘terrible’ in that they announce that the gaze, the other, language or life will soon be extinguished” (ibid). But also, for Lyotard, this evocation produces an emptiness that is bereft of meaning but paradoxically brimming with the fear that nothing will ever happen again, that we will be left to flounder in Newman’s ‘nothingness’. Burke’s sublime feeling however, through Newman’s paintbrush and Lyotard’s pen, conjures the feeling that out of this abject deprivation of sense and meaning “that something will happen despite everything, within this threatening void, that something will take ‘place’ and will announce that everything is not over. That place is mere ‘here’, the most minimal occurrence” (ibid). Newman demands that we dwell in the present artistic ‘instant’ as the event of the ‘here’. “The feeling of the instant”, Lyotard explains of Newman’s artistic achievement, “is instantaneous” (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 80).

The Sublime and the Avant-Garde

With the advent of the aesthetics of the sublime, the stake of art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to be the witness to the fact that there is indeterminacy (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 101).

Barnet Newman also figures in the article 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde' (Lyotard, 1991m) with reference to the sublime and to the essay Newman wrote entitled *The Sublime is Now*. Lyotard traverses what Newman means by his quest in and through art as the sublime experience, the 'now' of the sublime, through an interrogation of the 'unnameable' in the Torah, and Augustine's "temporal 'ecstasies'" (Lyotard, 1991m, p 90). Newman's 'now', or 'instant' as referred to previously, is one that runs against a notion of time that is constitutive of a (human, rational, 'Enlightened') consciousness from Husserl onwards. Instead, Newman's sublime (and Lyotard's) is a feeling held in abeyance between the past and the future in a state of pleasure that is tainted with the pain of not happening again. For Lyotard this produces the questioning sensation of "*Is it happening, is this it, is it possible?*" and is an event or occurrence that is "approached through a state of privation" (ibid). Within the painterly event, Lyotard considers Newman's approach to exemplify the expression of the threat that the 'it happens' of the event of the painting, the 'now' and 'instant' of the painterly occurrence, might not happen again. What is sublime in Lyotard's analysis of Newman's work is the way that, through evocation rather than realist representation, his painting demands of the viewer a capacity to appreciate the 'here and now' dimensions that are present in the work of art. "Not elsewhere, not up there or over there, not earlier or later, not once upon a time. But as here, now, it happens that... and it's this painting. Here and now there is this painting, rather than nothing, and that's what is sublime" (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 93).

Newman's approach is for Lyotard constitutive of the avant-garde question as to what is 'at stake' in painting. Rather than meaning, historical accuracy, signification, and nostalgic representation, the avant-garde instead ask the question: what does it *mean* to paint? In the realm of the visual art their role, according to Lyotard, is "to make seen what makes one see, and not what is visible" (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 102). Where the sublime feeling enters, is the way the avant-garde impose upon their audience and in their art a *state of privation* in terms of form and structure by inscribing "the occurrence of a sensory now as what cannot be presented and which remains to be presented in the decline of great representational painting" (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 103). The avant-garde work with the feeling of the sublime within this

state of privation by denying what Lyotard previously refers to as the ‘solace’ of clear and ‘good’ forms. Rather than imitating the beauty in reality, the avant-garde instead try out unusually and sometimes shocking combinations in order to move beyond the beautiful and to beyond the expectations and cultural norms of art and thinking. The disarmament of imitation, of reality, of mimesis, in art disarms in the same way that consciousness is disarmed without the binding powers of meaning.

Concluding Comments

This commentary on Lyotard’s writings on, and involvement with, art and artists is but only a brief and cursory glance at an intricately detailed and sophisticated aesthetic propensity that spanned an entire intellectual career. It is the view of this thesis that an understanding of Lyotard’s engagement with art is required to understand a ‘Lyotardian aesthetic’ as a quality that is central to his wider theoretical oeuvre spanning the ‘genres’ of both the political and ethical. From the mid 1980s onwards, this chapter has traversed some major currents of his thought on art through an analysis of selected texts, and attempted to elucidate the centrality of memory, the testimonial dimension to art, and the notion of the sublime as a significant aesthetic disposition in the avant-garde. This analysis is significant for the wider exploration of the inaudible, particularly the way Lyotard encourages a necessarily exiled approach to work at the edges and borders of the artistic space in order to pay attention to indeterminacy and incompleteness as the power and creative force of art. The inaudibility of the art of music, like the invisibility of the visibility and the unrepresentable in the representable, are not elaborated upon as some kind of mystical manifesto for the protection of art for art’s sake. Rather, this negative (ontological) aesthetic serves a much more practical and pragmatic, even severe, function for Lyotard and is the driving force of this thesis. The sentiment of the sublime and the anamnestic quality of art resist in a crucial and unique way the positivistic, instrumentalist imperatives of late-capitalist ‘democratic’ societies: they allow a ‘presence’ to emerge that exists outside any apparatus of consumption and which in its timeless ‘unrepresentability’, escapes the modes of inscription which offer up memory to the negation and nihilism of modern life.

CHAPTER FIVE

Infancy: Aesthetic Touch and the Body

The capacity to feel pleasure and pain, affectivity, *aisthèsis*, is independent of its possible articulation... this time before the logos is called *infantia* (Lyotard, 2006, p. 109).

... an “infancy,” thus, which would not be a period of the life cycle, but an incapacity to represent and bind a certain something (Lyotard, 1990, p. 17).

Introduction

An infant child cannot speak; it murmurs and gurgles, grunts and groans, cries and screams, as the facility to speak in articulated language, though an expected potentiality (“held in abeyance” as Lyotard will repeatedly tell us) is not *yet* realised. Through a constant array of urgent needs, the infant is the reminder to the adult world of all that it lacks. The infant unwittingly exhibits the negation of the qualities of adulthood, but in doing so seems to seek to restore these qualities; the child is distressed, therefore comfort is sought from a parent; the child is hungry, so food is given; the child is frightened and cries, therefore assurance is given to prove that love and harmony are plentiful. We all pass through this time of infancy, yet little or no memory exists; we live this time before language through the stories that are told to us about our birth and of the type of baby we once were (placid, grumpy, happy, chubby, demanding, sickly, clingy), and through photos and various other media that form a pastiche of a life that is yours, but not yours, in that you cannot remember it in any conscious sense. Your memory is unprepared and ill equipped to cope with this mysterious time in your life, and your recollection of this radical ‘before’ is bound to fail. In saying this, you acknowledge and accept that this infancy has been with you, even though it is recounted through others, and in a special kind of way is ‘present’ as a thread that makes up the fabric of your lived life that is retrieved through a remembrance that works backwards but is ‘coloured’ by the present. This infancy, despite you having no direct access, is singularly yours and yours alone. Lyotard’s notion of infancy incorporates these traits as part of an exegesis that outlines the necessity of “an openness to non-being” that continues as “a debt that persists”, that we are obligated to honour in and through artistic action (Lyotard, 1999f, p. 163). This chapter traces the contours of this Lyotardian approach to infancy as the site without language that occurs both in and outside of conscious time, and which emerges as a zone rich with creative potentialities.

The purpose of the chapter is to explore and extend in writing the lines of the ‘body’ as inhabited by this infancy that never leaves but that emerges through a special type of retrieval, described as anamnesis, which is susceptible and receptive to the sensorial *touch* of affect. The nature of this touch, and the openness and receptivity to being touched that is evocative of the infant body as helpless and dependent is theorised by Lyotard to show how the aesthetic affect is both unavoidable and inescapable. The infancy born from this inevitable openness to the affect, however, comes at a price, as the last section of the chapter will graphically depict. The cruel incision of ‘the law’ that is depicted in the last section is described by Lyotard as the culturally ‘normed’ and disciplined body as historical object that must ‘pay’ for its infancy as the state of aesthetic openness. The infancy that Lyotard theorises as the zone of indeterminacy inherent to the body that is open to affect eludes and escapes the determinations and certainties of the adult laws in which it emerges. This potentiality for aesthetic affectivity is described as infancy because of the affective state of inarticulacy and muteness that occurs before meaning and signification. This affective state of infancy means that art exists, and any system or apparatus of the law cannot harness that creativity as energy precisely because this mute infancy lies outside the ‘adult’ world of articulation.

To arrive at this infant state Lyotard works over the Freudian state of *infantia*, re-inscribed as the persistent and relentless fissure within the ‘bodily’ space as an incalculable ‘blank’; a ‘monstrous’ presence that demands of the body that it be penetrable to its touch, but also indebted to it precisely *because* of this penetrability. Lyotard dissipates the body, expanding it beyond anthropomorphic parameters and the *logos*, into formations of immaterial matter that exist as a *way of being* in and toward space and time. This way of being has a name for Lyotard, analysed in the chapter as ‘Anima Minima’, or, the minimal soul that exists through the touch of the aesthetic event. Here Lyotard opens infancy as a zone in which the ‘work’ in art is aligned alongside the inaudible gesture as an enigmatic presence of and in this matter that alters by touches the space-time in which it occurs. Lyotard further stretches the borders of the body to include infancy as a zone of pure affect at work inside the art object, which mobilises the facility to be touched from the outside by that artwork as a sensorial affect. The purpose here is to trace the contours of Lyotard’s writing on aesthetics through an investigation of these touches, within the full spectrum of the body as both an artistic and ‘fleshly’ apparatus in possession of (but also held to ransom by) a specifically Lyotardian formulation of infancy as the space of bodily receptivity to the aesthetic event.

The chapter is split into three distinctive sections, all of which elaborate a notion of infancy within slightly different guises and approaches. The first section gives an overall impression of Lyotard's use of the term infancy, and covers the chronologically earlier use of the term 'childhood' that becomes interchangeable with 'infancy' in the later decade of writings that return to the influence of Freud. This section details a broad sweep of why Lyotard would take such an active interest in the notion of infancy and childhood as a special space of Orwellian-inspired bodily resistance. The next two sections take a different approach, and instead hone in on one important text each to provide a different perspective to depict the creative improvisations that Lyotard would deploy in explaining the more complex nuances of this notion of infancy. The first of these sections deals with the fable 'Anima Minima' in which Lyotard sketches an outline of an aesthetic receptivity as the minimal condition of existence. The second, and most disturbing, of these sections deals with a literary appropriation of a short story by Kafka to depict the violence the body is subjected to when initiated into dominant social constructions described under the rubric of the 'law'. In the text entitled 'Prescription', infancy is placed as the zone of indeterminacy that escapes constructs of determination and mastery and remains elusive to modern tendencies to prescribe and control differing modes of the law.

A New Beginning: Honouring the Infant

Why and how is this artistic-oriented honouring of the infant necessary? Here we embark on a particularly elusive and vexing dimension to Lyotard's 'writing' (and this word must now be invested with the French notion of writing as a creative act in its French formulation of *écriture* as evocative of a 'holy' writing endowed with a certain sense of sacredness and even mysticism). In an essay dedicated to his own son in the collection of essays to children in *The Postmodern Explained* (1992a), Lyotard extols to the infant David and the readers he knows will come later, to "extend the line of the body in the line of writing" (Lyotard, 1992a, p. 96). This essay, entitled 'Gloss on Resistance' draws on George Orwell's *1984* and the resistance posed by the lead character Winston's diary entries as the only moments in which freedom could ever be exercised within the oppressive and totalitarianism system he inhabited. Here the infancy 'within' Winston as indeterminacy and lost memory is extended to the infancy of language in the creative labour involved through Winston's diary entries. Despite every aspect of life as prescribed and controlled, Lyotard sees Winston's desire to express himself in ways that escape the confines of the system as the most potent form of resistance;

Winston's childhood is his alone. No matter how ubiquitous and controlling the society around him is in the present, this childhood can never be erased. For Lyotard, Winston's writing is a labour "allied to the work of love but it inscribes the trace of the initiatory event in language and thus offers to share it, if not as a sharing of knowledge, at least as a sharing of a sensibility that it can and should take as communal" (Lyotard, 1992a, pp. 96-97). This sharing of a sensibility is far more important to Lyotard, in that everyone has their own, singular, expression and occurrence of infancy and childhood. The 'facts' of these childhoods are not important; it is the fact that everyone *has* a childhood at the very least in terms of an unknown past or area of indeterminacy that is of importance. For Lyotard, Winston has his 'real life' equivalents in the form of Adorno and Benjamin. The childhood that Lyotard ascribes to the writings of these two writers cannot be captured, and remains elusive while still providing the impetus for new beginnings. In story-like manner befitting the subject matter, the reader is initiated to this open sense of childhood:

Let us recall – in opposition to this murder of the instant and singularity – those short pieces in Walter Benjamin's *One Way Street* and *A Berlin Childhood*, pieces Theodor Adorno would call "micrologies." They do not describe events from childhood; rather they capture the childhood of the event and inscribe what is uncapturable about it. And what makes an encounter with a word, odor, place, book, or face into an event is not its newness when compared to other "events." It is its very value as initiation. You only learn this later. It cut open a wound in the sensibility. You know this because it has since reopened and will reopen again, marking out the rhythm of a secret and perhaps unnoticed temporality. This wound ushered you into an unknown world, but without ever making it known to you. Such initiation initiates nothing, it just begins (Lyotard, 1997f, pp.90-91).

To compliment and expand this notion of childhood, as an ageing man Lyotard increasingly turned to a formulation of infancy that was informed by Freud's notion of the "sexuated"⁶⁰ (*sexuée*)" body (Lyotard, 1999b, p. 11). For Freud the 'sexual' mobilised the body to become receptive to excitation and affection, and Lyotard incorporated this 'excitable' dimension to the body with his own continuing investigation into the negative artistic presence of a "formless mass" (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 17) as the arresting power that *moves* and *excites* in a work of art. Lyotard weaves both these Freudian-sexual and affective-artistic conceptual threads into a very complex yet malleable web that encompasses art, presence, and time. This formulation of infancy that incorporates these artistic and sensorial dimensions, preoccupy and colour the final decade of writings of which the major works *Heidegger* and "*the jews*",

⁶⁰ I am keeping with Robert Beardsworth's translation of the French verb to this English neologism because of the handy depiction of the 'sexuated' as being in line with the grammatical function of the verb as a *state* or *occurrence*. As will be explained, this is exactly the active meaning Lyotard was referring to.

Postmodern Fables, The Inhuman, Lectures D'Enfance, Misère de la Philosophie, Signed Malraux, Soundproof Room, and The Confession of Augustine are emblematic. These last works, and the various journal articles and essays that also belong to this period, deploy the constant pedagogical task of rewriting and re-working the enigma of 'presence' in art, and was characterised by an appeal to elaborate upon this presence as a gesture that emerged within the artistic space. Drawn from his philosophical engagement with the inarticulate unconscious via Freud, Lyotard also incorporated a re-articulation of the Kantian sublime 'spasm' as constitutive of the aesthetic experience. From this angle art as testimony 'remembers' its infancy, recalling the sublime, as "the ungraspable and undeniable 'presence' of a something that is other than mind and which, 'from time to time,' occurs ..." (Lyotard, 1991n, p. 75). These qualities render infancy with a temporal disjuncture that separates it, when given artistic co-ordinates, from diachronic measurements of time. This will bear significantly on later thoughts of resistance within late-capitalist formulations of captured and pre-programmed notions of time for Lyotard.

As is pointed out by interpreter and translator Geoffrey Bennington in a recent paper delivered at a colloquium on Lyotard⁶¹, this transition to a notion of infancy can be tracked alongside a career-wide preoccupation and attachment to "signifying the other of signification" that ran, at the very least, and even if not fully acknowledge as such, as a theme or motif as an "evasive configuration" throughout Lyotard's entire corpus of writing (Bennington, 2008, para. 5). From the 'libidinal band' in *Libidinal Economy*, the 'figure' of *Discourse, Figure*, the 'unpresentable' in the works of the postmodern, and the ethically incommensurable and heterogeneous language idioms and games in *The Differend*, Lyotard 'finally' arrives upon infancy articulated by Bennington as "less a self-present state, still less a period of life that is to be brought to presence ... and more a mute ... accompaniment or lining of all my more adult-seeming utterances, accessible always only indirectly or laterally, inventively, 'artistically', in 'writing'" (Bennington, 2008, para. 8). Here, infancy is seen not as chronologically prior to adulthood, but more as a baffling and un-graspable zone that inhabits ("squats" says Lyotard provocatively) over, within and alongside the expanded 'body' of the artwork or 'adult' as signified or presented discourse or apparatus. As a clandestine visitor of the adult body, direct access is never granted but must be creatively coaxed out of hiding. Infancy, as Lyotard has it, does not answer to direct demands.

⁶¹ Paper presented by Bennington at the Society of Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy Conference in 2008.

Traversed in these later writings are the artistic ‘names’ of this *silent* infancy that are invariably endowed with a certain negativity. Arakawa’s ‘blank’, Paul Klee’s ‘uncolour’ grey, Pascal Quignard’s mute death rattle⁶² are referred alongside other literary and theoretically inspired ‘names’ such as Jacques Lacan’s ‘Thing’ as *la chose* and Samuel Beckett’s ‘unnameable’. These infant modalities are delicately filigreed throughout Lyotard’s writing, and into his renewed engagement with psychoanalysis that informs this writing. Bennington further points out that the focus of these late writings shifts more to the silence of the differend *itself* and the “affective dimension” of the differend (Bennington, 2008, para. 8), something Lyotard spoke of in conversation as being the ‘supplement’ to this eponymous book⁶³, but which is especially significant to the focus of the inaudible in this thesis. The gap between signification and presentation is never (and must not be) resolved and is the condition of silence that marks itself *as* a differend. This notion of infancy articulated by Lyotard in the later writings, bears on the silent affect provoked by the differend, and aligns with the destitution and “*misère*” of the infant encounter as incomplete, inarticulate, ungraspable and unprepared.

In the set of essays collected under the title of *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (1991d) Lyotard’s focus intensifies around the figure of the infant as articulated through a notion of a childhood that is delineated alongside an indebtedness that is impossible to ever pay off. (“This debt to childhood is one which we never pay off”) (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 7). Recalling Fynsk’s proposition of speaking of the passage between an infancy of the body to an aesthetic mode of encounter, these writings emphasise a critical approach to a humanism that hermeneutically seals off childhood as a past period of the life cycle. However, Lyotard warns that it is precisely through the traits of indeterminacy and un-preparedness that the creative impetus (or drive, “*trieb*”) emerges, and that these qualities make their appearance in their ‘childish’ guise of distress, anxiety and fear. In line with the questioning of the human in this set of essays, Lyotard maintains that this distressed childhood as a figure of infancy ‘appears’ and haunts the human long past the end of this supposed anthropological determination and by doing so, heightens the very possibilities of existence. He explains further: “Shorn of speech, incapable of standing upright, hesitating over the objects of interest, not able to calculate its advantages, not sensitive to common reason, the child is

⁶² Certainly mentioned within *The Inhuman* essays, the more artistic incorporations (or appropriations) of these ‘names’ are in the set of essays entitled *Postmodern Fables* (Lyotard, 1997f). Quignard’s mute death rattle (via Lyotard) will be of importance in the next chapter.

⁶³ Not only in conversation with Bennington, but also in the interview ‘That Which Resists, After All’ (Lyotard, 1992c).

eminently the human because its distress heralds and promises things possible” (Lyotard, 1991e, pp. 3-4). Here the negative dimension to Lyotard’s formulation is clearly seen: the child is human because of the qualities that make it *less* than human, (or ‘inhuman’) and it is this delay from entering humanity that makes this infant figure so potent. Lyotard continues, “Its initial delay in humanity, which makes it the hostage of the adult community, is also what manifests to this community the lack of humanity it is suffering from, and which calls it to be more human” (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 4).

Finally, the passage between a childhood that outlines a non-representational oblivion of infancy as constitutive of a negative-ontological mode of being, arrives at a creative encounter of infancy as a ‘remainder’ unable to be ‘assimilated’ by discursive and representational forms of signification. Infancy in Lyotard’s lexicon at this point is one of a radical encounter that engenders an enigmatic silence that both appends itself to and distends discourse. It is in this radical excess that Lyotard’s particular formulation of infancy pushes past the limits of a specifically psychoanalytic theory to a position of ethical listening that honours the inaudible infancy to words, speech, theory, and art (and in the next chapter, music). To listen for the enigmatic silence of the infant figure is, for Lyotard, the acknowledgment of the wound that infancy inflicts on the maturation of thought, discourse, and aesthetic matter; we write *against* words, we compose music *against* silence, we paint *against* the visible. Infancy haunts, but it does not speak, and the following two texts to be analysed are testimony to this haunting.

‘Anima Minima’ (the affectability of the soul by sensation)

The model of infancy, as constitutive of the negative traits of inarticulacy, of lost memory, and of lack of signification and meaning, is of course the exemplary example Lyotard drew from to help describe the ‘mute’ presence in art, (and more generally the silent affect-phrase in the continuation of his philosophy of phrases initially outlined in *The Differend*). This section deals with the way Lyotard appropriates the traits of this infant to draw an analogy to the moment of affect before it is registered cognitively as an event. It is from this silent site of deprivation that Lyotard mobilises the infant as a figure of disruption that both seeks and displays the limits of language. Following this negative form of ‘pragmatics’ Lyotard’s writings are by necessity elusive: art ‘strikes’, it comes upon us⁶⁴, it inscribes, it touches, but

⁶⁴ To my reading, this is an example of Lyotard in very Heideggerian ‘mode’. Refer to Chapter Two as to why Lyotard will continue to refuse to acknowledge Heidegger in any explicit way (except for the occasional passing reference), but I see a

he warns, it does this without us knowing because we are unprepared for this strike and are constitutively unable to anticipate an event 'before' its arrival. Nor can we know it as an event upon its occurrence. Such is the ambiguity and opacity to art that renders us as infants, unable to say, know, or articulate the sudden jolt of being seized ("by the throat", Lyotard will add enigmatically when writing on Malraux) by the artistic event. Signification as meaning and representation can only be apprehended 'afterward', in a backward glance.

To a certain extent Lyotard incorporates these infant traits, particularly the deferred passage toward meaning where signification is essentially 'undone', in the style and methodological approach to his writing. While explicitly turning to the unconscious in *Heidegger and "the jews"* to talk about a mode of 'otherness' that is 'there' but unavailable, in other efforts he is less obviously psychoanalytic and instead is stylistically oriented to performing this mode of infancy in more literary-inspired fragmented forms such as the essay. As James Williams points out, the essay for Lyotard, was his favoured mode of expression in which he both revitalised and invigorated the conditions of its existence and artistic possibilities (Williams, n.d.). Lyotard himself cited Montaigne as not only the master of the essay form, but someone who explicitly dealt with a type of infancy as free association with no guiding rules in relation to this form. Lyotard explains: "And at the risk of seeming weird, I'd add that the procedure of freely and equally floating attention is what is at work in Montaigne's *Essais*" (Lyotard, 1991k, p. 31). The text under consideration in this section is a striking example of this essay-form, in this case classed as one of Lyotard's 'little narratives' under the aegis of the fable.

Positioned at the very end of the group of essays collected together in the *Postmodern Fables*, the essay 'Anima Minima' (1997a) performs something of the negative ontology to which its content is devoted. By way of explaining the purpose of the collection as an important and little utilised form of questioning, in the cheekily short 'Preface' Lyotard reveals more about

particular parallel here to Lyotard's writing about the power of art as striking a consonant chord to what Heidegger has to say about the essence of art in 'The Origin of the Work of Art'. The negative traits to the infancy of art as a formless mass that appear by a reversal, an anaesthesia, of sensory awareness in Lyotard that helps explain the 'inhuman' immaterial matter in art, has much in common with Heidegger's ideas on the creative 'coming forth' of art as a withdrawal (or veiling) in presentation. For Heidegger, what strikes us as the essence of what it is that is artistic in art despite context and history appears, 'comes forth' as a retreat and detachment from the worldly context and instead 'hits us' in that we can say of this artistic 'thing' in art nothing more than that it *is* art, rather than it being anything else. Take for instance this quote: "Rather, the simple "factum est" is to be held forth into the open region by the work: namely this, that unconcealment of a being has happened here, and that as this happening it happens here for the first time; or, that such a work *is* at all rather than is not... Precisely where the artist and the process and the circumstances of the genesis of the work remain unknown, this thrust, this "that it is" of createdness, emerges into view most purely from the work" (Heidegger, 1978, p. 182). While Lyotard eschews any notion of 'essence' I think it is clear that in talking about a mute infancy that inhabits language and art, he bumps shoulders with Heidegger at the very least in regard to the enigma of artistry and the task of articulating such an enigma.

the purpose of deploying the short fable structure in terms of a critical stance to ‘postmodernism’:

Here then, are fifteen notes on postmodern aestheticization. And against it!
You’re not done living because you chalk it up to artifice (Lyotard, 1997g, p.
vii).

Stripped bare of discursive layers, Lyotard concentrates on the ‘minimal soul’ as a kind of ground zero of ‘the subject’, and the physical placement of the essay mirrors the sylphlike line of thought that has driven the preceding essays to this point. Working backwards, Lyotard has arrived at a moment that suspends ‘the soul’ in midair without corporeality and without consciousness, and only ‘after’⁶⁵ postmodernity has raged and ravaged over its historico-political and aesthetic conditions of existence. The use of the term ‘soul’ here by Lyotard is of course not related to a Christian ‘soul’, or even any metaphysical notion of a higher or transcendental being. As Schwab points out, this term is often used by the French philosophers of the twentieth-century (including Deleuze, Derrida and also the French/Anglo Samuel Beckett) to explore the boundaries of the human. In these aesthetic and philosophical interpretations, including the current use to which Lyotard ascribes, the soul “is conceived as the site of a transference between the human and its other” (Schwab, 2000, p. 59). Despite the certainties and determinations of a sociological and philosophical milieu centred on rational mastery, the soul in this context has found itself pared down to something that exists *only* when affected without Enlightenment embellishments of self-knowledge and rationality. Not only is this soul only animated when affected or touched, but also this capacity for affection is derived only from the ‘outside’. The touch, according to Lyotard in this essay, is external, emerging from some origin distinctly *inhuman*. This inhuman is the ‘other’ to the inhuman of technological progress, and instead is derives its ‘inhumanness’ from artistic *matter*.

In a discussion of Lyotard’s treatment of the soul in the posthumous work on Augustine⁶⁶, Neal Curtis considers this externally driven animated soul-formation to be Lyotard’s primary offensive against a dominant (Western) philosophical notion of the (Christian and/or Enlightened) soul as the main “motor of both humanity and history ... understood as self-activity” (Curtis, 2003, p. 197). Lyotard instead emphasises the *need*, the “connivance” between the soul and its openness (here we have hints of the ‘excision’ of infancy to be discussed later) to sensation and affectability. This “affectability of the soul by sensation ...

⁶⁵ In parenthesis here to emphasise the non-diachronic version of time that is emblematic of the term postmodern as arriving at the same time in the manner of the deferred shock that has been outlined in the preceding chapters.

⁶⁶ Published as *Confession of Augustine* (Lyotard, 2000a).

conceals an absolute dependency of each in relation to the other” Lyotard goes on to say. “The *anima* exists only as affected” (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 242).

Lyotard further attends to questions posed by the *anima* to notions of the body, and the temporal displacement that occurs within bodily borders when affectation or excitement ‘befalls’ or touches the apparatus. Reminiscent of the human infant body as being at the very least physically and cognitively undeveloped, Lyotard chooses to emphasise that the particular formulation of infancy that he draws upon is unadorned and cognitively ‘naked’. It is important to note at this point that the lines Lyotard draws between the body as a flesh and blood material existence and this ‘originary’ naked infant body that inhabits art aren’t exactly clear and seem to be, by necessity, constantly blurred. Rather, the body of the infant figure is evoked as a site within the ‘adult’ body that is savage and unpredictable in its constitutive ‘lack’, both in the phenomenological sense and the artistic, in which the infant seems to be both driver and exciter. In an illuminating quote that effectively illustrates this paradox, the qualities of the body as ‘pregnant’ with this ‘nascent’ (Lyotard’s terminology) potentiality that draws its creative force from within these potentialities is described further:

The body is unique. But so singular that it is neither known nor understood. We do not refer here to the body in time and space which is claimed by the doctor, the legislator, the recruiting sergeant, the manager and the sexologist. It is neither the sensory body of the psychologist nor the culturally normed body of the anthropologist, *but the monster inhabited by the Thing* and, because of this, endowed with spatiality, temporality and materiality other than that known by the experts or even our own bodily consciousness. *The bodily multiplicity encrypted on the body constitutes the indeterminate concealment and dimensionless place of the faceless Thing* (Lyotard, 2004a, p. 113, italics in original).

The body is positioned as minimal and, by necessity, *monstrous* in its primal complicity with a seemingly innate infancy described above as the (Lacanian inspired) ‘Thing’. It is in and through the ‘Thing’, re-inscribed here as the infant body, where the potentially fertile ground for creativity can be located, and it is this ground of undetermined multiplicity that Lyotard sees in need of theorising. It is here that he turns to explicating a ‘minimal soul’ in which ‘the subject’ is a body capable of thought and creative energy that touches and renders this body an infant. Lyotard goes on to explain this touch as an event in more detail:

The event touches the soul-body, what I call here *anima minima*, and this touch is not represented. Lacking language, there is not yet here what Freud calls *Vorstellung*, or ‘representance’. It’s too early. It’s before. The soul-body is infant, without speech. The infant does not know how to speak, the infant cannot represent (Lyotard, 2004b, p. 104).

Like Augustine's lament in recapturing the moment of God's touch (as revelation and pure event), Lyotard's minimal soul exists through a disturbance of pure affection as an event that displaces a modern-derived mastery of consciousness in both the realms of time and the body. A line is drawn between consciousness and the present, describing the "originary concordance" between "thought and the world" as the necessary dimension to the "spontaneous affectability of the soul by the sensible" (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 242). However, this line also crosses an abyss (a differend) of the incommensurability between the event, and the cognitive knowledge of the event only ever being known 'after', or *belatedly*. Lyotard illustrates this gap or lacuna in *The Inhuman* using Epicurus' logic of human death: "that I have nothing to do with it, since if its' present, I'm not, and if I'm present, it's not" (Lyotard, 1991d, p. 11), and draws further inspiration from Augustine's desperate opening line to his confession: 'Late have I loved you'. For Lyotard, art is the testimony and passageway in which the soul as *anima* 'bears witness' to this disturbance and interminable chasm between the affect and its' signification, as a *minimal* condition that is both an embodied and temporal touch as sensation. The nature of this sensation as affect in 'Anima Minima' is detailed in the following:

But sensation is also the affection that 'the subject' – one should say: the body/thought, which I shall call: *anima* – feels on the occasion of a sensible event. True or false, *aisthesis* immediately modifies the anima, displacing its disposition (its *hexis*) in the direction of well-being or ill-being. Philosophical aesthetics allows this connection as a principle. This principle, however, presupposes a substance-soul with the faculty of being affected (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 242).

What emerges from this analysis is a non-form of the 'body' as untameable, uncontrollable, un-knowable, and *savage*. The affective body is one that is *monstrous* in its savagery because it is not endowed with the 'humanist' characteristics of cognition and memory. Sensations remain ungraspable by consciousness in the same way as the time of the unconscious affect remains elusive to diachronic time. This 'monster' exists only when prodded out of *anaesthesia*, inciting a move away from idleness by the aesthetic affect, and Lyotard doesn't shy away from ascribing a certain threat of menace and darkness to it, "it merely has *manere, sistere* in it" says Lyotard (rather too innocently). "The soul comes into existence dependent on the sensible, thus violated, humiliated" (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 243) he goes on to say, letting the sinister dimension come to the fore. This is especially the case in regard to the parasitic tendency to 'house' (inhabit) the mysterious and faceless 'thing' that Lyotard draws from Lacan (with undertones of Levinas' face of the Other), as constitutive of this monstrous body

and the power-inducing force within art. It is here that the mysterious ‘thing’ is aligned with the shocking, that is constitutive of the sensing body. He continues:

Sensation makes a break in an inert non-existence. It alerts, it should be said, it exists it. What we call life proceeds from a violence exerted from the outside on a lethargy. The anima exists only as forced. The *aistheton* tears the inanimate from the limbo in which it inexists, it pierces its vacuity with its thunderbolt, it makes a soul emerge from out of it. A sound, a scent, a color draw the pulsing of a sentiment out of the neutral continuum, out of the vacuum (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 243).

Lyotard chooses the description of monstrous to describe the body in a state of inarticulateness before articulation, as the ‘moment’ before cognition and rationality. In the context of this chapter, the ‘aistheton’ as the monstrous zone of affectability aligns with the excitable zone of infancy that eludes consciousness and conscious action and that drives the desire to be touched by affection and excitation through the singular aesthetic experience. (The monster will be revisited again in Chapter Eight). “Existing is to be awoken from the nothingness of disaffection”, Lyotard continues, “by something sensible over there. An affective cloud lifts at that moment and deploys its nuance for a moment” (ibid). Here, the anima as outlined by Lyotard, is always under threat by the ‘nuance of the moment’, the “time to time” of the (monstrous) infancy, but at the same time is utterly dependent on (violently wishes for, Lyotard describes elsewhere) these sensorial modes of affection in order to exist. “Even while the event brings the soul to life, casts it into the living heart of pain and/or pleasure” continues Lyotard with this paradox, “no matter how carried away it might be, the soul remains caught between the terror of its impending death and the horror of its servile existence” (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 244).

Lyotard’s overall approach is to try and think the temporal structure of the oscillating tensions of existence and non-existence through the affectability and receptivity of the soul by sensation. The negativity that Lyotard exhibits in aligning the event with the terror of its non-existence, with the position of the ‘subject’ permanently held in limbo between life and death, enables him to leverage open the space between meaning and signification as fundamentally incommensurable. The ‘time’ between these dialectical oppositions defies a Hegelian synthesis, and instead Lyotard focuses on the anaesthesia of the event as arriving alongside the affect that snatches existence “out of nothingness”. “That there is something anaesthetic in aesthetics is a lesson that the arts are the first to give us,” Lyotard continues (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 245). As the carrier and reminder of the absence of sensation through initiating the sensational event as a series of beginnings, art is charged with the duty of

honouring the ‘precarious’ situation between nothingness and a ‘some’-thing. Art, as infancy, occurs before signification and only as a series of beginnings despite its negativity. The beauty and function of art is to provide a reminder that death is inevitable, even immanent, but that grace and hope belong to this inevitability. Art, Lyotard implores “is the vow the soul makes for escaping the death promised to it by the sensible”. This escape though, as we know, is only ever temporary, and arrives always as an infancy of new beginnings. “Art, writing give grace to the soul condemned to the penalty of death” says Lyotard in ‘Anima Minima’, “but in such a way as not to forget it” (ibid). Rather than our-right negativity in the shadow of the threat of death, Lyotard installs a sense of hope and new beginnings, a constant renewal that is ‘provoked’ and ‘prodded’ out of the negative threat of affect. Once again, aesthetic renderings of memory and testimony are paramount, and it is to a more graphic depiction of the ‘touch’ of body that I now turn.

‘Prescription’⁶⁷

We speak of a “blood debt.” But there is blood and blood. *Sanguis*: the blood of life in the arteries and veins; and *cruor*: the blood that is spilled. The first nourishes the flesh. It gives it its hue of blueness, its pinkness, its pallor, its sallowness, its early-morning freshness, the infinite juxtaposition of nuances that drive the painter and the philosopher crazy; an immaterial matter. As for the law, this innocence of the flesh is criminal. It must expiate this fleshly innocence. The blood that flows is called *cruor*. Expiation requires cruelty, *crudelitas* versus *fidelitas* (Lyotard, 1999c, p. 180).

Written in the aftermath of a virulent backlash to his provocative polemic *Heidegger and “the jews”* Lyotard turned to a literary example to elaborate upon a sense of violence, guilt and manipulation that mirrored the horror of the Holocaust and also elaborated a certain dimension of infancy as existing alongside a notion of inescapable and interminable ‘originary’ guilt. Given first as a lecture in 1989 and published in *Lectures D’Enfance*, the text ‘Prescription’ drew upon Kafka’s darkly ironic short story, *In the Penal Colony* and can be seen as a companion piece to *Heidegger and “the jews”* that creatively draws on Freud’s unconscious in covert and enigmatic ways. Both texts deal with infancy in a way that elaborates what can exceed and escape from the clutches of what is known and heard. The

⁶⁷ According to Geoffrey Bennington, this text was originally given as a lecture in 1989 under the title ‘Avant La Loi’ [Before the law]. Bennington draws the parallels to this and to an earlier paper written by Derrida in 1982 on Lyotard and Kafka entitled ‘Devant la loi’ [In front of the law]. This adds yet another layer of complexity to the analysis which I shall not delve into here, other than to point out that Derrida and Lyotard had a long and complex professional (and personal) relationship which both acknowledged and recalled fondly but with conditions. From what I can draw from Bennington’s observation is the very many convergences and divergences these two theorists had “which would, beyond the crossing points enumerated by Derrida at the beginning of that paper, more recently also go via Augustine and Paul” (Bennington, 2007, p. 200).

earlier text deals with the inaudible affect that is ‘heard’ in exemplary fashion in Talmudic law and became the object of termination in the anti-Semitism of National Socialism. The later text to be analysed in this section deals with an infancy of the body that escapes the determination of a law that wants to claim and take away this infancy as the part of the body that resists the prescription of the law. That these two texts can be considered companion pieces is not immediately obvious, apart from their close proximity to being published. Avital Ronell gave the first hint this could be the case in her review (Ronell, 1989) and Lyotard himself mentioned the links in a late interview (Lyotard, 1999a) . It is tempting to read this essay as an alternative approach from a man frustrated with very negative feedback, and Christopher Fynsk (2007) supports this view by reporting Lyotard’s genuine distress and anxiety at the negative view many of his colleagues and readers held toward his work on “the jews”. The text under analysis here deploys the theme of originary guilt that was first articulated in *Heid.* in a more violent, but perhaps more palatable version because of the fictional framework. Lyotard explains: “*Heidegger and ‘the jews* was a first attempt, written very quickly and impatiently (for which I have been much criticized); the text on Kafka was written more patiently, though apparently, if I may say, under the law of Kafka himself” (Lyotard cited in Lyotard, 1999a, p. 40).

‘Prescription’, then, is the creative embellishment and improvisation to the depiction in *Heid.* of testifying to what escapes the ‘apparatus’. The term apparatus will soon gain more importance in relation to the essay, but it is also to be seen as inflected with meanings previously awarded by Lyotard. The notion of the political as a historical scene and apparatus was used in *Heid.* along with the accompanying application to the site of the conscious and unconscious derived from Freudian metapsychology. Here the political/psychical usage of the apparatus provided the site to demonstrate the way the annihilation of the Jews testified to what was supposed to disappear through their annihilation. Conversely, the act of killing and bringing onto the political apparatus the anti-Semitism in ‘Enlightened’ ‘modern’ Europe, in reality testified to the indeterminate and uncontrollable dimensions that such an ‘Enlightened’ modernity failed to harness or acknowledge. What escapes the apparatus cannot disappear or be forgotten, because nothing is remembered to be forgotten. The mute indecipherability of the “jews” could not be exterminated because its ‘existence’ lies outside the political apparatus capable of hearing. In Lyotard’s fictional attempt to demonstrate this, the infancy of the body lies forever outside the reach of the apparatus of death, no matter how effective the execution.

Lyotard turns to Kafka's fictional torture device to help explain the inhabitancy of an infancy that renders the body guilty before any 'touch' of the 'law' as language, discourse, knowledge, and memory (even education) can 'discipline' or *know* it. In describing Kafka's story as "white with hallucination" in its brutal clarity, Lyotard opts for a metaphorical blood-letting of the story that drips from his pen and stains his own text with the 'blood' of Kafka's condemned man through evocative descriptions of incising and engraving flesh and the draining of the blood that the body 'pays' for being constitutive, precisely, of a flesh and blood body. This is the infancy, as immaterial matter that colours and breathes life into the human body through warm blood and blue veins in the above quote, that must be 'expiated', drained, annihilated by a law that demands it knows and controls the body. The law however can never know this translucent beauty inherent to the infancy within it and as such is "jealous" of this enigmatic radiance 'before' the touch of the law.

As Lyotard declares, his essay 'Prescription' is written "under the law" of Kafka, by which we can take to represent another case of a shared sentiment whose stakes could be described as "not to create beauty, but rather to bear witness to a liability to that voice that, within man, exceeds man, nature, and their classical concordance" (Lyotard, 1999d, p. 198). Rather than direct explication, Lyotard steers clear from an explanation of Kafka's intentions in terms of the mechanics of the story, and instead creatively bases his essay on an interpretation of the feeling and nuance of Kafka's writing as a continuation from and 'honouring' of Kafka's artistry. The 'law' that is obeyed in this approach means that meaning and interpretation of both Kafka and Lyotard's appropriation of Kafka remain elusive. This might explain why Anne Tomiche describes Lyotard as being particularly cautious when dealing with literature, despite the fact that he often referred to various literary sources to help explain philosophical concepts. Tomiche explains Lyotard's care to "always underscore how the commentary is never adequate to the literary text" (Tomiche, 2001, p. 150) in his utilisation of these literary examples throughout his writing. Here Lyotard is more interested in the tone and 'diffracted' traces within the infancy of language that Kafka deploys (in extreme form, according to Lyotard) than a literary commentary or character analysis. However, Lyotard does outline the sweep of the story and it is worth a brief excursion here to do the same.

Set on a nameless, geographically isolated, tropical island, Kafka's short story *In the Penal Colony* (Kafka, 2005) follows a Western explorer who is asked to observe the execution of a criminal at the behest of the colony's recently appointed Commandant. The execution is overseen by an officer who is a loyal and ardent supporter of the former Commandant, who

bequeathed the ‘fabulous’ machine of death (and inspired the continuing frenzied ardour of his officer disciple). The machine, simply called the ‘Apparatus’, is a complex conglomeration of mechanisms set in a structure that sits in the open next to a deep pit in the earth. The officer takes great delight, whilst climbing a ladder to check the apparatus, in explaining to the (slightly nonplussed) explorer the differing elements of the apparatus and the various functions of the different parts. Lyotard explains these parts and their uses in the following:

The officer describes to the Western explorer – in French – the machine for execution and how its parts work: the tilting Bed, the box of cogwheels called the Designer, and the Harrow, with its glass needles irrigated by water. The machine writes the sentence on the body of the condemned, recto and verso. Or rather, it cuts it into his body until he dies, bloodless. The coup de grace is delivered by a long steel needle (the only one in the apparatus) that pierces his forehead. After which, the bed tips the tortured body into a pit (Lyotard, 1999c, p. 176).

Further details are revealed. The ‘Bed’ is moulded to fit the human body with appended belts to keep the accused pinned down, and is smothered in a layer of absorbent cotton wool to help soak up the blood he will shed. The Bed, evocative of a pig on a spit, slowly rotates once the victim has been securely fastened, to allow fresh flesh to be exposed for inscription. The ‘Harrow’ consisting of glass needles is contoured around the human form and the incisions these needles make are controlled to evenly and uniformly gouge into the skin the deeper the incisions become. The ‘Designer’, consisting of the cogwheels, has been pre-programmed to control the length and administration of the written sentence that is followed, literally, to the exact letter of the law.

Not fully comprehending these details at first, the explorer becomes at equal measures more intrigued and horrified as his knowledge grows until he finally asks what heinous crime the condemned man has committed to warrant such a brutal and tortured demise. The answer to this is of course that the condemned man does not know his crime, has not been convicted through a trial, nor has he even had the chance of defending himself; his guilt is original and certain. “Guilt”, says the officer to the explorer “is never to be doubted” (Kafka, 2005, p. 145). The farcical explanation the officer gives is directly drawn from Kafka’s text, and is quoted for full impact in Lyotard’s essay. The explanation is as follows:

If I had first called the man before me and interrogated him, things would have got into a confused tangle. He would have told lies, and had I exposed these lies he would have backed them up with more lies, and so on and so forth. As it is, I’ve got him and I won’t let him go (Kafka cited in Lyotard, 1999c, p. 181).

The Violent 'Touch' of the Law

What can we make of this 'originary' sin when considered next to Lyotard's notion of infancy?⁶⁸ What is it that Lyotard is identifying by tracing a line from the guilt of the condemned man to a guilt that is both singular and universal in its application? Kafka's story can primarily be seen to be a critique on the aestheticisation of the political, and the violence that is inflicted as punishment on the 'political' body through the touch of the law inscribed on to the surface of this adult body-politic. In *Heidegger and "the jews"* the apparatus was a construct of modernity that held an arrogant fidelity to certainty and mastery that was exemplified by the rise of the Nazi Party. In 'Prescription' the Apparatus is a more obvious construct of brutality that leaves a mark on the flesh of the body by trying to acquire, through draining the blood, the beauty that renders the body an infant through this blood. The body must pay for its infancy by relinquishing the un-graspable and elusive infant quality that it shelters. In the elegantly written passage that speaks of the blood debt, Lyotard takes us one step closer to illuminating the infancy that the Apparatus is so desperate to acquire, and that kills as soon as it takes hold.

Kafka, as Lyotard would have been aware, would succumb to tuberculosis-induced starvation in 1924 before the horrors of the Holocaust, but being Czech Jews, his sisters would all be transported, first to the Lodz Ghetto, and eventually to deportation (and death) in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. The blind faith of Kafka's officer, and the ruthless performativity of the Apparatus in the penal colony, point a prescient and chilling barb at the dangerously inhumane dimension to the bureaucratic-inspired terror that would begin to grip Europe a mere ten years after Kafka's death and that was steadily gaining ground during his lifetime. Although the inscription of the law onto the body for Lyotard is to be seen in a more figurative sense, there is something extremely disconcerting about the image of the Harrow's fine needles cutting into the flesh of the condemned man for a crime that remained beyond comprehension and would remain secret. The devoted officer in the penal colony points out there is no use in knowing the crime: "There would be no point in telling him. He'll learn it on his body" (Lyotard, 1999c, p. 180).

⁶⁸ Taking a step back from Lyotard's interpretation and Kafka's writing, the dark and chilling prescience of the unfettered accusatory dimension to a law of societal rule that is depicted through the officer's blind love and faith in the apparatus is astounding in its application to modern life. More of Lyotard's 'names', 'remembered' under the rule of an infancy, appear in their stark and mind numbing idiocy into the twenty-first century: 'Guantanamo', 'Afghanistan', the 'Iraq War' are a few choice examples.

The death camps of the Second World War would be the literal application of the Harrow's inscription on the skin of the 'condemned', and the crime would be just as baffling. Kafka's 'hallucinatory' powers would be prophetic when history became literally tattooed onto skin in the form of concentration camp serial numbers and 'guilt' would be beyond scrutiny and recrimination. As Rosi Braidotti so eloquently states, this inscription on the flesh (here evoking the analogy of the tattoo) that history inflicts is inherently violent, and at the very least, leaves a decisive impression: "One may be empowered or beautified by it" she goes on to say "but most people are not; some just die of it" (Braidotti, 2002, p. 3). Kafka's fictional penal colony, always intended as a satirical comment, instead started to colonise the realm of real life in ways that would have directly affected his personal situation and indeed impacted tragically on that of his family. Here, history's inscription would prove lethal.

No doubt tainted with this historical bloodlust as reparation for perceived 'crimes', Lyotard's interpretation of the story takes a slightly different tack and intensifies the temporal disjuncture between the incision, the bleeding wound, and the debt of the crime. If we are to view the chronological order of Lyotard's writing within a schematic structure (this is problematic for many reasons⁶⁹) the analogy of the first touch of the law 'before' the punishment of cut flesh would be emphasised within the rubric of technological efficiency and the 'blind' performativity that Lyotard identified in the writings of the late 1970s and early 1980s (of which the *Postmodern Condition* is the most famous example). The Designer in Lyotard's interpretation of the story carries out the inscription of the crime, which remains secret to everyone but the old Commandant. The instructions that are fed into it (let's say programmed) ensures the entire Apparatus 'knows' exactly how it will go about inscribing the condemned body before the execution takes place. The analogy of the computer is directly drawn in the following:

The box [as a component of the Designer] is what we now term the "dead memory" in a computer, the text of the program being its living memory. Once the program is inserted, one presses the *Enter* key (Lyotard, 1999c, p. 177).

This analogy of a computer is taken further when the performance of the Apparatus as a whole is observed. "The machine is blind not because it does not know how to read" Lyotard explains, "but because it can read only the prescriptions inscribed in the language of the

⁶⁹ As should be clear by now, Lyotard's entire oeuvre is difficult to place into any clear thematic or practical progression. This is as much a methodological stance as any other; there can be no 'march' toward an 'enlightened Lyotard' just as there can be no sense of a general progression toward emancipation. However, as has been explained in the first section, it is possible to identify various concerns that have repeatedly emerged albeit in extremely different and creative guises.

former Commandant” (ibid). This is the crucial element to the performance of the Apparatus; it follows instructions that need to have been entered and ‘prescribed’ prior to the delivery of its performance. There is no ability to judge or to experiment; the Apparatus, like the computer, simply obeys the orders that have been *prescribed* without the necessity for reflection or thought.

Clearly Lyotard is interested in more than a straightforward analogy between the penal colony’s torture device and the blind performativity of technological performance and it is here that a further subtlety is added to his interpretation of the story. The violence that the Harrow inflicts is, in a more nuanced reading, the reparation the body ‘pays’ for having been touched a ‘first’ time *before* the law of the Harrow. Here Lyotard is reaching beyond the performative mode of the Apparatus as a blind technical device to a figurative analysis of the violence that any induction, particularly in such unavoidable and potentially calamitous examples such as language and discourse, inscribes upon the body. The infancy that constitutes an innocence of unfettered openness before the law (of language, of adulthood, of knowledge, of education) requires a payment as a wrong – this innocence, Lyotard paradoxically asserts, is guilty precisely because it *is* innocent and this in itself reveals a complicity between the law and infancy (recalling the complicity identified in the previous section between the affect on the anima as a minimal soul). Nothing can stop the violation of this innocence in its induction processes, and to a certain extent, this is inevitable (a necessary evil). The law, then, also needs this infancy in order to be enacted *as* the law. Infancy as innocence is the crucial point because of the implication to the body and its aesthetic potentiality. “Innocence”, continues Lyotard in regard to the law, “is *in all certainty* the sin because it knows nothing of good and evil ... what comes first, is not the commandment; it is birth or infancy, the aesthetic body” (Lyotard, 1999c, p. 182). In this reading, innocence (as infancy) is akin to what has previously been referred to as the affect phrase and as the silent but always present potentiality to the receptivity of this phrase within a universe of articulated phrases, and in the context here, the latent potentiality on the *body*.

Conclusion and New Beginnings

This chapter has linked the notion of infancy to the formulations of an aesthetic soul that exists through affect in ‘Anima Minima’, to the forever-elusive infancy that escapes the Law in ‘Prescription’. At the centre of the analysis is to find and help explain the fragile but persistent impetus for art and the potential resistance art holds, through an inherent infancy

that can't be acquired, against an apparatus of power and domination. There are many dimensions to support this argument, and the deep analysis of the two texts and the introduction to the broad themes of infancy, attest to this. One of the main tenets of this chapter is to explain the debt, in terms of infancy in this context that is a continuous element to human existence. Infancy is what lies outside the reaches of the apparatus conceived as broadly as possible, and as such, cannot ever be acquired. Rather, it is only as a series of beginnings that infancy can be approached, ensuring that artistic creation will continue as long as people are subject to birth and death. This is the debt that is paid for in Kafka's blood, but also in never fully exhausting the ability to create anew. This chapter also heralds the beginning, in ending the current focus, of a greater engagement with texts that deal explicitly with music. While the chapters up to this point have dealt with silence, the aesthetic, and infancy, these themes are carried alongside the key notion of the inaudible in music that will finally inform a pedagogy of the inaudible.

CHAPTER SIX

Music, Mute: Lyotard's Anti-Histories of Western Music

We don't understand music - it understands us (Adorno, 1998, p. xi).

Introduction

Music is the love of sound. It is the spontaneous fusion of the realms of language and memory that remain mysterious and always in the shadows of true comprehension. We recognise music as an art because it reaches beyond who we are and what we know. To make up for their lack of empirical evidence, the Ancient Greeks turned to mythology to explain the origins within language and memory of the power of music. Etymologically related to the word 'muse' in English, music for the Greeks sprang from the art of the muses who were the goddess daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne. These muses were assigned the roles of both guardians and inspiration in the arts. Their mother Mnemosyne, whose name comes from the word *mnemon*, was the guardian of memory and her daughters inherited this quality to guard and distribute alongside music, poetry and language. Portrayed as beautiful, lither women, music for the Greeks was viewed as potentially as intoxicating as the wine Dionysus poured into the golden goblets of Mt Olympus. Music had power to disarm, to placate, to render speechless. On his epic journey, Ulysses would become distracted and utterly enthralled with the music of the Sirens that to his yearning soul seemed to conjure the most exquisite sounds that both reminded him of, and blinded him from, his home and his faithful Penelope. Through their artful blend of mythology and polymorphous spirituality, the Greeks approached the mysterious evocation of language and memory in music as an art that touched and stirred both the primal and transcendent. These myths dealt with the question of why music exists, which in turn dealt with a question of origin. A couple of millennia later we are still no closer to an answer, but harking back to the Ancient Greeks, working around the edges of this question involves an encounter with philosophy as the love of knowledge and the instrument with which we address our astonishment at the power of art and music. This chapter dwells in the vicinity of music as memory and language, and as such deals in a certain way with the question of origin.

What follows is what I have termed an ‘anti-history’ of western music⁷⁰. This does not mean to say that music has no past, quite the contrary. It is a question of what we *mean* by past. Here is where Lyotard makes his original contribution to music in which history and origin will be radically questioned in music, bringing into relief some pertinent questions that will be asked when considering a pedagogy that is informed by musical ideas. This section of the thesis on music has been reached by a ‘working through’ of the inaudible in realms of the political, painterly-aesthetic, and infancy. The inaudible in this chapter is attached to notions of time and artistry as sounded through music, a stage that must be travelled through if this thinking on music has resonance and implications for how we can think about pedagogy and the education of the child. Of importance is the sense of timelessness and a-temporality that what is musical in music creates, and the notion that this ‘zone’ exists outside any frame of reference and is transitive in terms of any historicising focus. Of importance further, is the notion of performativity in music as a force driving development in a postmodern system. Performativity, as a cultural condition, sucks music into the vortex of an endless motion of repetition that empties sonorous matter as musicality from its time-dependent musical frame. This critique is outlined first in this chapter and further developed in Chapter Seven.

This chapter is structured to contrast two different approaches Lyotard took in exploring music, and the intention is to set the scene for a further exploration of the inaudible in music in the following chapter. Laid out here as two ‘anti-histories’, and this chapter is split in two halves to be read as two alternative approaches to traditional notions of historicised music. Both sections are to be read as a series of beginnings, very much in the sense of childhood and infancy that has been dealt with Chapter Five. The continuity between the two sections, however, is the idea that what is artistic or musical in the work of music is transitive – there can be no history of the gesture of music. This is a ‘history’ that will not be found in the history books, because the musical (mutic, or inaudible) gesture cannot be ‘archived’ or inscribed. Drawing from the essence of the Ancient Greeks, Lyotard takes the mythic framework of analysis and fuses this with the structural device of a fable. This section explores music as a sonorous gesture of matter that is introduced in ‘Music and Postmodernity’ through an analysis of the text ‘Music, Mute’. As part of a general inquiry into the changing state of knowledge, Lyotard offers insights into what could be viewed as a

⁷⁰ Lyotard wanted to write a book on an anti-history inspired by the burst of unanticipated passion and ‘enthusiasm’ of the 1968 protests led in part, by his students (see Lyotard, 1993g). This book was never published, but it certainly gave rise to many other writings that dealt with the fallibility of narrative in history, namely *The Postmodern Condition*, and *Enthusiasm* (Lyotard, 2009a).

fundamental shift within our relations to time, memory and matter (both material and artistic). In this text specifically, Lyotard explores the ‘gesture of art’ hidden inside music that goes beyond the audible and affects auditory thought. He further differentiates between the audible and inaudible, as sonorous matter that is heard as a lament for the sounds we can’t hear, and what is called the musical ‘material’ as the timbre of sound that we do hear. These observations elucidate for Lyotard an art that is inscribed through music that challenges chronological time and can instead be seen as an embodied reception of nuance and timbre that is timeless in its fleeting immediacy. I maintain this imbues a certain musicality in the purposefully literary stance that Lyotard takes in ‘Music, Mute’ and deals with a primal or negative-ontological exploration of the human. This musical skein of thought replaces the overwhelming philosophical abstractions that the first section and ‘anti-history’ will portray, and will lead us to more human conditions of life in which music resonates.

Anti-History 1. ‘Music and Postmodernity’ and the Emancipation of Sound

The history of western music may be thought of globally as the grand narrative of the emancipation of sound (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 38).

In the essay ‘Music and Postmodernity’ Lyotard draws a parallel between the condition in which knowledge is produced in contemporary western societies (as elaborated in great detail in *The Postmodern Condition*), and the condition in which musical knowledge and action is conceived and performed in this same context. First published in French in 1996 and subsequently published in English for the first time in 2009, this essay on music offers an insight into Lyotard’s continuing refinement in thinking the ‘postmodern’. As a major current of this thought, the essay also displays a solidification of the importance of music as an art of equal importance to literature and painting⁷¹. The *Postmodern Condition* based its premise on an unavoidable incredulity about the journey of humanity toward freedom, salvation, and perfection (see Chapter Two). In ‘Music and Postmodernity’, Lyotard transfers this critique to the history of music. Instead of humanity, *sound* is positioned as the entity that is supposedly marching towards freedom, and this journey to freedom is the grand narrative western European musical traditions have followed. The unshackling of sound from its inherited structures and restrictions of the past can be traced throughout this history, and the ‘holy trinity’ of melody, harmony, and form in classical music have all been radically

⁷¹ In his introduction to a special issue of music and Lyotard, David Bennett asserts that Lyotard was not the only philosopher of his time that privileged music. He states, “‘Music and Postmodernity’ illustrates how central music was to Lyotard’s aesthetic theory, as is it was to the other French poststructuralists” (Bennett, 2009a, p. 17).

critiqued and re-worked. Lyotard's observations in this essay do not question this; however, he does allow a level of disquietude to enter the discussion when we consider whether or not this 'history' of 'freeing' sound is really what music aspires to. What is music's *petit recit* if its grand narrative of freeing sound is up for debate? Where else can music go if sound exhausts itself? If we have thrown away tonality to the abyss of atonality, what else is left to create anew in music? Will it still be music?

These questions concerning the state of music in contemporary developed societies form the outline of a critique that severely undermines the certainty with which traditional conceptions of musical 'progress' have been constituted. Incredulity toward this grand narrative of freeing sound from its past formulations, in Lyotard's analysis, is unavoidable in the postmodern context that questions the conditions of existence from which this sound emerges. We are flooded with a deluge of options in which to listen, compose, play, buy, sell, perform, and experience music. In the frantic, over-crowded and noisy postmodern milieu our ears are accustomed to endless arrays of sounds and genres of music. Our aural sensibility is at once attacked and comfortably numbed by the hyper-technological conglomeration of sounds that we encounter on a virtual and lived non-stop rotation. Sound is very rarely shocking. Where as once the *Rite of Spring* caused a riot in a bourgeois Parisian theatre, there is now a growing amount of concern at the level of spectacle and extra-musical, 'value added' incentives that are routinely demanded in both 'classical' and 'rock' music genres. Music from other cultures is instantly available; music is 'consumed' like any other commodity. The level of eclecticism in musical taste and experience often correlates directly with the level of expendable income. It is no wonder, then, that Lyotard identifies a certain cynicism with music in postmodernity. "Everything can be 'interesting'", Lyotard observes, "citation, ornamentation, kitsch, parody, the neo-this and the post-that" (2009b, p. 39). However, this eclecticism and *bricolage* in music does not necessarily help open our ears to the power of sound. With such aural saturation, music needs to work harder to affect us. "We are deaf", opines Lyotard when channelling the observations of the composer Edgar Verèse, "to what sound can *do*" (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 40).

Performativity and Music

Although the term performativity is not used in 'Music and Postmodernity', the entire premise behind Lyotard's analysis of the current state of music is that it draws on this critical framework. To set the scene for a potential opening of hearing to sound as the requirement of

the postmodern condition of music, a renewed exploration into the critique of this condition is required. If we take the main tenets from the discussion in Chapter Two, performativity is controlled performance calculated by prescribed inputs and outputs that evolve towards the best possible ‘action’ or performance in order to achieve the fastest pathway to a desired goal. As computers become more prevalent, so too does the expectation to perform like a computer in wider contexts of existence increase. The intimate association with capitalism and the need for these performances to be directed toward greater margins of profit places the notion of development as the great ‘driver’ and instigator of performativity. “This development”, Lyotard continues in ‘Music and Postmodernity’, “complicates the relations between the elements of a system in such a way that the system finds itself performing better” (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 38). As can be expected from this continuous process of refinement, most often this occurs at the expense of previous elements of a system, “which will be condemned to disappear if it does not improve its performance” (ibid).

An important clarification Lyotard makes in this essay includes the drive for profit as one of *many* clusters of influences that contribute to the increasing differentiation that in other contexts he also labelled as ‘negative entropy’. Here is the bombardment of different types of music available to us identified above, now placing itself within an increasingly complicated and differentiated postmodern milieu. As we have heard before, performativity “operates without finality. It is indifferent to good and bad, right and wrong, or, if we prefer, the only good that it recognises is the improvement of performances” (ibid). We can intervene in this process of development, “give it directions, or moderate it by working in its way, or within its terms. This is obvious in matters concerning economics or in techno-scientific research” (ibid). This is the postmodern condition, one in which human beings are caught in this paradoxical process involving technological developments, processes of capital, and the resultant performances required of these influences that demand efficiency and constant refinement. Performativity thus provides the conditions to both heighten complexity and refine the (system’s) performance. This constant and unremitting entropic devolution shatters any other ‘great story’ about humanity; it simply ensures that systems become more complex and more powerful. The task for society as the system becomes more powerful is to find ways to alleviate the inhumane affects of this process, and in the arts the main task becomes one in which to find spaces for artistry to be found anew before being reclaimed by the drive for performativity. Lyotard explains this paradox, and the effects of the absorption of these

contradictions into the conditions of the postmodern, through the grand narrative of emancipation:

The postmodern condition is that of human beings when they are caught in this process which simultaneously develops their powers and demands their enslavement... The world described as developed or [in] development is not supported by any narrative that would legitimate its path by an eventual emancipation. The systems simply become more powerful (ibid).

In music, the increasing power of the system demands, for the vast majority of the time, that 'freeing sound' is not the first priority. Rather, it is the dissemination of musical performances that are delivered in as efficient mode of delivery as possible. This efficiency must appeal to as wide a group of people as possible, must be easily consumed and understood, and must be easily incorporated into the system. The eclectic 'anything goes' propensity to the postmodern ensures a fast and loose appropriation or adherence to musical rules and traditions are supported. Lyotard draws an analogy between economic or socio-political knowledge by observing that this variety and overall permissiveness means that both cynicism and increased opportunity to create are accommodated, but with conditions:

'Postmodernism' often assumes this meaning ... On the condition, however, that the work has a 'good' reception and that it is a 'cultural' success. The rule of the market for cultural objects then makes up for the absence of artistic rules, subordinating the 'production' of the works to the criteria of their communication and their circulation – the very definition of work reduced to the status of a commodity (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 39).

How, then, does sound respond, as the systems to which it largely owes its existence become increasingly powerful? How can sound re-claim and reinvigorate the artistic space in music while avoiding an inevitable absorption into the system of exchange and the vortex of performativity that further feeds this very system? The issue is not just to free sound from its previous manipulations, but also to push the boundaries in which sound is conceived and perceived; it must exceed, and must continue to find ways to exceed itself *as* sound. This, Lyotard warns, implicates the inaudible dimension to music as *heard* or audible sound.

Developments in the Emancipation of Sound

The story of the emancipation of sound, unlike the intransitivity of the musical gesture that will be developed in the next section, can be documented. We have the benefit of having being able to look back on hundreds of years of musical progressions, and we can track the developments, further complexities of the system, and the refined versions of these

developments in music that have occurred. Lyotard singles out both structural and tonal formations in the history of music, with a particular focus on the sonata form (and its various incarnations and variants) and the twelve-tone formation of equal temperament that incorporates a strong tonal ‘pull’ towards resolution. The parallel Lyotard draws to the postmodern condition are the exhaustion and loss of credibility of the grand narrative of emancipation as conceptualised within notions of Christianity and then Marxism. Flipping to the analogous incredulity of the narrative function in music within the structures of the sonata form for instance, Lyotard insists upon the loss of credibility of these technical aspects to music that focus on the expressive and ‘heroic’ narratological dimensions that echo a modernist subjectivity of individual genius. From this perspective, music is the controlled expression of the musician, just as ‘man’ is the fount of all knowledge in Enlightenment thought. He explains:

The musical poem, the symphony, the sonata, the *lied* always recounts an odyssey, happy or unhappy, of a subjectivity: epic, tragedy, elegy. Even the *leitmotiv* of Wagnerian opera, the dissonances in Mahler’s *lieder* or the poems of Stravinsky narrate the drama of a subjectivity in disagreement with itself (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 42).

This is not what music is about for Lyotard, and instead tears music away from its power to affect and move and becomes a regressive or stultified art form in danger of being overridden and nullified within these historical categories of restrictions that centre around a first-person subjectivity. It is at this point that the motion of history in western thought as a progression toward perfect and total mastery (and freedom) in Lyotard’s writing is posited as the great myth that no longer serves the same legitimating function once believed. Here, the grand narrative of freeing sound through the devolution of form and tonal content is itself relegated to what Lyotard provocatively terms the “rotting pit” (2001) of history, one in which ‘heroic’ notions of human expression master sound and where even atonality becomes mired in narrative. The shift, for Lyotard, is one that places the timeless, singular gesture of the musical event, as the central concern. In the following, Lyotard offers a differing perspective on music, shifting focus from such ‘heroic’ notions of human expression, to the ‘working through’ of the inherited customs and traditions as the main aim of music in the postmodern condition:

It might be said that composers seek to discover what sonorous material is capable of, through the rules and customs of composition that they inherit. ‘Through’, here, means both with and against those rules and customs: restrictions on the timbres imposed by instrumentation, on the lengths and

rhythms governed by bar lines, on the pitches determined by scales and modes, and on the assemblage of sonorous units submitted to the principles of harmony and melody (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 38).

Working both with and against the rules and customs is the parallel notion to finding the best possible way to alleviate the increasingly inhumane dimension to developed societies. Both music and society draw on technology in intimate and potent ways in order to do this. While technological advancement can help, a main theme that we have come across (particularly in Chapter Two) is the way technology is also a ‘driver’ of humanity, that in turn contributes to worsening the human condition in certain important ways. The consistency of this analysis in regard to music implicates the new technologies in a similar paradoxical relationship that both hinders *and* enhances creativity. This is most pertinent in Lyotard’s approach to the demise of the grand narrative of form and tonality in the context of the singular characteristics of sound qualities and timbre, through which the artistic gesture is inscribed. “It is”, he goes on to say, “about making timbres and clusters of timbres audible while neutralising the lyric, emotive or heroic expressionism to which the West has generally subjected them” (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 40).

Lyotard draws on Adorno more than once in this essay (as he will also in the proceeding essays analysed here) with the following quote: “With the liberation of the material, the possibility of mastering it is increased” (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 42). What does Adorno, via Lyotard, mean here by the liberation of the material? Clearly, the inference is to the way machines such as the synthesizer (burgeoning at the time of this writing, especially with the prevalence of ‘electronic music’) allow a greater range of tonal variation and exploration. “In fact”, he goes on to say, “this instrument can produce all the ‘intermediary’ nuances between two fixed notes in the chromatic scale” (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 40). This takes the devolution of the tonal twelve-tone scale to an even more intense stage, so as to free “sound from the narrative function that is assigned to it by the majority of western forms, the sonata, the symphony, the symphonic poem”, and to allow an even greater range of sonic range outside these structures (ibid). This devolution of tonal material can be placed analogously to the increasing differentiation of the postmodern system in general, and the drive towards ‘negative entropy’ that these complexities mobilise in particular. However, this ‘liberation’ within sonic material through the advances in technology does still maintain a zone of creativity – the caveat being that the composer extends the limits of audibility (toward the inaudible, as will be shown). To rectify the above state of affairs, one in which the market needs easily consumed and digestible nuggets of music, the task becomes one of letting “the

sound perform an act that seems to exceed the audible, and to record the trace of in the space-time-sound that determines the field of the audible” (ibid). This task is one that shifts from musical meaning to the nominal event of sound itself through its singular quality as *timbre*. In the following table, this task in music is contrasted and compared with socio-economic knowledge in Postmodernity and the analogous dissolution of the grand narratives of developed societies.

Knowledge and Postmodernity	Music and Postmodernity
Grand narrative of mankind progressing toward emancipation.	Grand narrative of the emancipation of sound.
Grand narratives no longer hold their credibility; we are not progressing toward freedom but instead are constantly developing to have more efficient and powerful systems.	Grand narrative of freeing 'sound' from the rules and restrictions of the past, such as in the narrative forms of the sonata loses credibility. There is no history of progress per se in music, just a history of cultural artefact.
Telling the stories of saving the soul (Christianity) or saving the proletariat (Marxism) is no longer sufficient. There is no such thing as a future perfect. Instead we must find ways of working in, for and against the system to alleviate the inhuman tendencies of modern life.	Telling music through the narrative structure of the sonata form as expression and power in music is no longer viable. It holds sound captive to serve the narratological function in which it occurs. Instead the focus shifts to the qualities of sound itself, its timbre, in, through, and against the progress in technology.
Increasing differentiation (negative entropy) as the system becomes more complex by refining performance through technology. Inventing new rules.	Adorno: new technologies permit sonorous material to free itself from previous constraints and possibility of mastering this material increases with advent of new rules.
Performativity eliminates certain performances deemed to be inefficient in improving overall outcome. There are no criteria of 'good', 'just', 'ethical'. The only criterion is the best possible performance.	In the absence of the grand narratives of form, performativity requires music to be culturally 'successful' as an object of commodity. The criterion of what makes a 'good' performance depend largely on how well it is consumed.
The postmodern condition is that of human beings when they are caught in the process of simultaneously making the system more powerful, but are trapped or 'enslaved' by this process. The task of knowledge is to find and develop the non-human through artistic activity to combat the inhumanity of the system.	The postmodern condition in music is that of trying to find new sounds and rules to exceed what can be heard, the audible, but this happens within a system that subordinates the production of the works to how well they communicate and circulate. The task is to develop the non-human as resistance to commodification.
There must always be a remainder – no such thing as 'total knowledge'. Lyotard names this remainder as La chose, as the sexual, the inhuman, as childhood and infancy, as the differend. New knowledge is created in these (ineffable) zones.	Music must have 'presence' that exceeds the capacity of the thought-body. Sound must gesture toward the inaudible zone of sound as the affect and assurance that art constantly creates and renews itself. The task is to extend the inaudible in sound
A radical ontology of the 'subject' as inhabited by a childhood, infancy, inhuman zone of unaddressed, unattainable, un-harnessed energy that is contingent to time and space.	Decomposition of musical subjectivity - the inaudible is not addressed to anyone or thing. It remains outside of any system of articulation and is 'performed' by the 'matter' of sound within time and space.

Timbre and Gesture as Transitive Artistry

Timbre is the distinctive quality of sound. According to Jean-Charles François, “Timbre cannot be written, it can only be produced” (cited in Bennett, 2009b, p. 49), and it is this irreducible and fleeting performative quality to sound as an event that draws Lyotard’s attention toward the a-historical dimension to music. In ‘Music and Postmodernity’ Lyotard argues against a history of *progress* in music. Instead, he observes that classifying historical periods to which certain musics belong captures only their objectified and ‘cultural’ container. In more flamboyant language, such cultural and historical artefacts are termed as the ‘burnt out witnesses’ to an event in the *Inhuman*, and as a mask that covers over the timbres quality of the artistic event in *Soundproof Room*. “This value is due only to a singular act [geste], to a paradox of time, of space and of matter, of which the work is the sensible trace or manifestation”, Lyotard explains (2009b, p. 39). Further, as David Bennett (2009b) points out in a recent essay on Lyotard and music, the timbre of any event (be it political or artistic) can not be swallowed by the capitalist system of exchange. Rather, Lyotard brings into the argument at this point the contention that timbre and gesture as the *act* of timbre is that which exceeds or escapes determination, and has no history – it occurs regardless of the time period to which it emerges. This theme will be developed at length in the next section, but it is important in relation to Lyotard’s introduction of the inaudible dimension to timbre as the mute accompaniment to any music throughout the ages. This is music’s absolutely ‘aporetic’ project, and what delivers true value to music as sound, away from public appreciation and the ‘cultural market’ of commodity circulation.

As in broader discussion on art in general, in music as in painting, Lyotard favours the ‘avant-garde’ composers such as Boulez and Cage, and also the avant-garde ‘quality’ that composers throughout the ages have mobilised in order to question the very conditions of the their art. Lyotard cites Debussy and Satie for radically rethinking tonality past the chromaticism of the late Romantic composers such as Wagner, and especially the focus that these composers had toward timbre as clusters of sound that had no meaning other than to extend the colour of the sonic palette. Timbre is the inaudible zone to sound in this context that presents the unrepresentable itself in presentation – a thesis we have heard continuously in Lyotard’s postmodern agenda. “Our ears are deaf to what sound can do”, Lyotard continues, when citing the manifesto of the avant-garde composer Varèse, “We must give back to the act of listening the power to perceive the inaudible” (Lyotard, 2009b, pp. 40-41). Listening to the

inaudible within sound is constitutively difficult to do, as according to Lyotard we have been ‘trained’ to filter out this bodily reception to sound by the lazy, market-driven eclecticism of popular music. Instead, Lyotard implicates the avant-garde in disestablishing this state by “striving for the ideal of causing the ear to sense sound-matter”. By investigating timbre, the emphasis is shifted to the immaterial ‘matter’ of music. Lyotard continues:

Freed from all destination, contemporary music pushes to the extreme its ‘stake’ in the aporia constitutive of all music: to make heard that which escapes in itself all hearing, to address what is not addressed (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 43).

What escapes here is sonorous matter, and it is through electronic technologies that musicians are now extending the sonic sound pallet toward an ever-more intense encounter with matter. Lyotard continues, “It is as if, for the musician today it were a question of getting us to hear how timbre hears itself” (ibid), and this is achieved within Lyotard’s maxim in the *Inhuman* of “lending the ear an ear” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 167). For this to ‘happen’, for music to exceed itself, the sound has to perform a type of anamnesis of its own accord in which the sounds and historical junctures of the past are mingled with the present unravelling of sound that new technologies enable. Of most importance is the need to unbound this sound from a system of exchange in which “the future conditions the present”. This is what exchange presupposes, requiring “that what is future to be as if it were present” (Lyotard, 1991n, p. 66). Instead, Lyotard wants to liberate sound from these conditions that behold it to the functions of address, meaning and destination. This, David Bennett observes, serves to fulfil Lyotard’s purpose in music as de-familiarising sound from its conventional coordinates of reception and understanding where Lyotard “conceives of the artistic act not as giving expression or meaning to subjectivity, but as challenging its formation and identity with the non-human” (Bennett, 2009b, p. 51). From this perspective, a focus on timbre over form, gestures toward the inaudible as the inhuman zone of indeterminate power and resistance to sound as captured and reproducible.

Anti-History 2. ‘Music, Mute’ and Affecting Sonorous Matter

What is audible in the opus is musical inasmuch as it evokes the inaudible (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 220).

First published in French as *Moralités Postmodernes* in 1993, the Anglophone reception of the set of essays from which ‘Music, Mute’ emerges in the form of the book *Postmodern Fables* wasn’t until 1997; one year before the death of their author. The texts of this

collection would have been conceived singularly as essays written for various art journals or, as is the case with 'Music, Mute', edited books on aesthetic themes all published between 1985-1993. Within Lyotard's extensive oeuvre, these essays perform a symbolic digression and can be seen as contributing to a repositioning of recurring themes that had begun to surface in a more self-consciously 'literary' form in his later writings (e.g. with the biographical novel *Signed, Malraux* first published in 1996, and the posthumous *The Confession of Augustine*, first published in 1998⁷²). Themes such as the duplicitous nature of representation, the opacity of meaning and knowledge, the event, the unrepresentable, and the possibilities for resistance, here are 'stripped down' of their philosophical (and overtly intellectual) bearings and presentations and are instead hewed into *small stories* intended to be received with the same wonder and awe as that of the child. Thus, through the medium of the fable, Lyotard is pointedly looking askance at the accepted form of knowledge transmission in academia by both insisting on the indeterminate reception of knowledge that governs 'childhood' (we must remain open to indeterminacy), and through actively deploying his own methodological stance of the (*his*) postmodern 'petit récit'.

The fable then, becomes an important methodological tool for Lyotard to redefine the common misconception of postmodernity as a separate and defined period and artistic movement, to that of 'rewriting' modernity. For Lyotard, "This has nothing to do with the use of parodies or quotations of modern or modernist works as we can see it happening in architecture, painting or theatre" (Lyotard, 1991k, p. 34). Rather, the diagnosis of the collapse of the grand narratives that inspire his most famous work have now evolved into a deliberate ambivalence to the shattering of narratives through the celebration of the 'local tale' as a form of resistance that the modern condition initiates. This is a subtle shift of strategy that continues the theme of the legitimation crisis in knowledge developed in the *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1984b), yet distances Lyotard from the more austere use of the term in his previous texts. Instead, Lyotard 'rewrites' his own position of the postmodern and asks of the fable "not that it be believed, only that we reflect on it" (Lyotard, 1997e, p. 101). In this way, the fable treats truth as suspicious, but it points to some kind of truth that escapes the clutches of knowledge, and is only real in as far it is felt or sensed as a trace that is left behind and discovered in excess of the storytelling process. In this light, the fable in Lyotard's rubric of rewriting modernity is to be seen as locally determined, fleeting, and not

⁷² 'Signé Malraux' published in English as 'Signed, Malraux' (Lyotard, 1999e) and 'La Confession d'Augustin' published in English as 'The Confession of Augustine' (Lyotard, 2000a).

as “a critical discourse, but merely imaginary” (Lyotard, 1997e, p. 100). Lyotard uses the fable as a symbolic representation of facts as he sees them, within a frame that incorporates a certain temporality in its structure.

The fable of interest here, ‘Music, Mute’ is positioned in the *Postmodern Fables* (Lyotard, 1997f) under the enigmatic title of ‘Crypts’. This takes some explanation. The word crypt points to some kind of tomb, a burial chamber or solemn place of reflection. There is shrouded around the word a sense of mystery, as a crypt also is a secret recess or hiding place. Within the wider organisation of the fables, Lyotard uses this section to talk about what it is that makes works of art *artistic*, where art resides. It is here then, that we are invited to listen to Lyotard speak more directly about the aesthetic nature of art through fables that take as their moral some stories about music. The metaphor of the crypt as secret, mysterious and as a burial place then comes into play with Lyotard’s notion of the enigmatic artistry that music and art in general evoke. Is he suggesting there is some kind of death of art? It is tempting to say that this is always a hidden threat. But here too, there is a hint of hope that art never leaves us; we just have to ensure the conditions are right in order for art to be found.

A ‘Reverie on the Shadows of Sound’⁷³

In ‘Music, Mute’ Lyotard preserves the smaller narrative structure of the essay (here incorporating the fable) in order to deal with the aesthetics of music. This section is organised into four sections under the headings ‘Gesture’, ‘Breath’, ‘Affect’, and ‘Sonorous Matter’ that I have chosen as themes, though these do not appear as headings in the fable.

Gesture

The ensuing analysis is divided into four sections that, in keeping with the structure of the fable, perform a didactic function that allows Lyotard to weave his explorations on what is artistic in the work of art, and what it is that makes music *musical*. The opening paragraph to the first section outlines a summary of the entire work and provides us with the first hint of how this argument will be developed with the statement that, “it is a grave and common error to impose a classification by periods or schools on works of art” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 217). Immediately Lyotard is positioning himself in opposition to conventional notions of historicising art, and already in this first statement there is a clear opposition defined against

⁷³ (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 230)

the grand narrative of the Western European canon that has as its fundamental premise the classification of art works. Instead, Lyotard considers the notion of ‘time’ in relation to this classification to be unreliable. Time can be measured only against certain events, “observable phenomena of historical reality” (ibid), and artworks can only be classified in relation to these events. What it is that is *art* in these works of art, Lyotard insists, is “independent of these contexts” but paradoxically “shows itself only within those contexts and on their occasion” (ibid). Here we have the first indication of Lyotard’s separation of the art object, with the art that appears when artwork is judged as an object; an art that Lyotard is quick to point out can only happen (occur, emerge) within the object that we consider art to reside. The paragraph is ended with what will thematically thread all the sections of the fable together with Lyotard’s notion of the art *gesture*. “The art of the work of the art is always a gesture of space-time-matter, the art of the musical score, a gesture of space-time-sound” (ibid).

The Latin root of the word ‘gesture’ is *gerere*, which means to ‘bear, wield, or perform’, and I consider this helpful when understanding Lyotard’s notion of the gesture of art. This can be seen in two senses: the first is the example of the musical score as a gesture of space-time-sound in which Lyotard evokes the notion of the score as a passage to something that exceeds the physical; the score *wields* a gesture of art that then affects space-time-sound. Second, the gesture, the wielding or bearing of the gesture that allows the emergence of art(istry) not only exceeds the work of art, it is also independent of it in that “the gesture is not the author’s doing” (ibid). The composer of the score partly wields the gesture, insofar as the composer opens a passage for the gesture of art to emerge, but the composer’s job ends there; what happens to the art inside the work of art is independent of any one ‘self’. The use of gestures when talking is also to express (bear, wield, perform) *emotions and feelings* that are in excess of what is being stated; here in music the gesture expresses (bears, wields, performs) an ‘excess’ that Lyotard hears *as art*. Lyotard likens the wielding the gesture performs in music to that of giving birth to a trace “within the audible, of a sonorous gesture that goes beyond the audible” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 218). The ‘excess’ of the gesture is what is musical in music, and it is heard as an ‘inaudible’ sound that occurs, paradoxically, alongside the audible ‘matter’ we hear as music. Lyotard explains this paradox at some length:

A twin paradox: a sonorous matter, first of all, which is not heard since it surpasses the audible, and which is nonetheless, if I may say so, *already* a sound. And then a gesture in and of this matter, and hence also in and of the space-time it deploys by this very gesture, a gesture that is not the doing, of a

conscious subject, namely, the composer. Like the woman ... *in labor*, the composer lets a passageway be opened through which something can happen that has not yet happened, a child, one's past, in this case a musical phrase, and that is nonetheless *already* potential human life, possible memory or eventual sonority (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 217).

Recalling the weakening of the grand narrative in music as the freeing of sound, Lyotard reinforces in this essay the point that the work of art can never be reduced to its cultural or empirical context. Instead, there is also a 'timelessness' that cannot be measured in the usual chronological manner in that it occurs 'already' as a sort of constant forgotten memory as anamnesis. This point will be developed in the essay 'Obedience' in the next chapter. There is a promise in the art gesture that is also timeless, and it is a promise that something will occur, that there will always be a responsibility "not to answer, but to address and carry forward" (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 229).

Breath

Lyotard disrupts the seemingly smooth surface of the fable in the second section by interposing another story within the main frame of the fable. This serves to disrupt the temporal dimension of the story telling process. The small narrative that Lyotard introduces is by the French author Pascal Quignard called 'Languages', and is itself part of a larger work entitled 'Small Treatises' (*Petite Traités*). By juxtaposing this text inside his own text, Lyotard highlights the spatiality of the fable, and in doing so turns the text into something of the 'passage' that performs a link to another world, 'take', perspective, and in this case, *voice*. Someone else's 'breath' is creating a sound that we can't hear, that intermingles with our own breath as we read, and yet creates meaning in excess of the storytelling process. Lyotard has used this device before in the fable 'Marie goes to Japan' (Lyotard, 1997c), in which the narrator (a woman called Marie) 'speaks' as if Lyotard himself is speaking. The voice in this fable is deferred, as its speaker could be either Lyotard, or a fictional character called Marie. In 'Music, Mutic' Lyotard alters this approach slightly by splicing his text and inserting the entire text of the 'Treatise' inside the body of his own work in the fable. There is no confusion over whose voice we are listening to, despite a deliberate merging of themes that blend, even 'bleed', from one author to the other.

Lyotard turns to Quignard to explore, in poetry, the inaudible in music to explain "the enigma of artistic beauty, where conceptual discourse soon reaches its limit" (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 220). Even within the fictional frame of the fable, or because of it, Lyotard takes the liberty

to borrow from the literary field because, as he explains, “it is not unprecedented... for philosophy to go to poetry school and to profit from it” (ibid). Quignard writes of the enigma within spoken languages that enables Lyotard to draw an analogy between the paradoxical heard and unheard sounds of music, “since, you understand, it is a question of sonority” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 221). Quignard speaks of a sonorous depth, sonorous horizon, and sonorous scent that emits from the spoken species (us) in a language of sounds that is primordial and based on the breath of loss and fear. He likens humans to beasts that are in constant denial of their death, but also because of this are in a constant state of lament that is ‘heard’ through the collective breath that living entails. The action of breathing is both physical and metaphysical. For Quignard (through Lyotard) the breath can only be heard within a language beneath languages (a sound within a sound, the inaudible within the audible) “always lying latent beneath the audible but never covered over by it, this breath does not speak, it moans, it mutters” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 224). This moaning and muttering however, and here lies a key paradox, is not heard but still makes a sound as an “unheard exhalation of fright” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 225). It is here that Lyotard explains his use of the word ‘mutic’ in the title of the fable as a sound that can’t be heard, but is made or performed nonetheless. Here the art in music is aligned with Quignard’s unheard breath as a primordial lament of loss and fear. Lyotard explains, “No matter how clear the phrases of the clearest music might be, they bellow forth fright in secret” (ibid).

It is this paradoxical ‘mute bellowing’ that Lyotard draws from Quignard’s text, described as a bestial lament that organises people into groups, into the “sonorous scent of the flock” that inscribes a community based on the fear of death and loss and which is articulated through spoken and unspoken (forgotten) dread of death. For Lyotard music “gets its beauties and emotions from the evocation of this condition of abandonment that is loud and mute, horrified, moist with a promiscuity without alterity” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 226). In this way music, like Quignard’s language beneath language, is not ‘other’ or separate to sound and to the spoken species; it is instead integral to and always present – a “mutic beneath music” (ibid).

Affect

Lyotard states, “Music labours to give birth to what is audible in the inaudible breath” (1997d, p. 228), and in this context breath can also be heard/seen as an affect on sonorous matter; the breath *affects*. In music, Lyotard differentiates between the sonorous matter of the

audible heard as the type of sound that emerges (what we could call the timbre of the sound), and the sonorous matter that is inaudible heard, only as the “sorrow of being affected” (1997d, p. 230) through Quignard’s analogy of the breath of lament. This ‘affection’ is the hidden threat of being “abandoned and lost ... [that] clandestinely inhabits the audible material, the timbre” (ibid), and is what phrases heard sound into *musical* sound. For sonorous matter to be heard in this way Lyotard continues, the breath of affect is heard through the ‘hallucinated ear’ that entails a certain openness or ‘passibility’ in the form of a heightened sensitivity and receptiveness. The body is threatened with loss through this openness and passibility, because the body “has doors and they are open. What enters through the body, sensations, aesthesis, is not just the form of an object, it’s the anguish of being full of holes” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 231). For Lyotard, music is a sonorous gesture of matter that is penetrable to the body, and is a constant reminder that the ‘holes’ are in fact what let emotion, feeling, excess, as *matter* ‘in’ to the very core of being. To suffer through the receptiveness of this sonic matter, is to *be*. The self is defined by its loss as a body of holes, as a body that through acknowledging these holes acknowledges its own fallibility. Lyotard explains further:

If the work of art is, it is because it bears witness to something in excess of what the body can sense, of what is sensible and circumscribed by the (biological, cultural) institutions of the body... This excess is already at the very origins of sensation. Sensation is not only the reception of useful contextual information, it is also in its immediacy the reminder of a threat. The body does not belong to you, it is sensible only insofar as it is exposed to the other thing, deprived of its self-distinction, in danger of annihilation. It is sensible only as lamentable (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 233).

Music “modalizes” the lament of loss, the emotions we have of being extinct and inconsequential and is what both individualises and communalises the self as part of a group with death in common. It is through the lament heard in music that “all the languages of the world seem secondary with regard to this lament of hunger, distress, loneliness, death, and danger” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 224). Music gives this lament its form.

Sonorous Matter

For Lyotard, music as sonorous matter is inscribed through the art gesture and this in turn is what “gives its emotional power to the opus” (ibid). Furthermore, it is Lyotard’s notion of a sonorous matter that enables the body to sense something in excess of the culture and context to which it belongs. Just as the body is filled with holes, Lyotard seems to want to plug these

holes with the sound matter that he links to making the body ‘sensible’, in that it senses anything at all. While I have mentioned previously that this is based on a primordial feeling of loss and fear, another interesting perspective worth mentioning is from Reni Celeste (2005), who describes this body has being defined within its senses through a *lack*. While Celeste is interested in the way music in film is what makes possible the sound of silence, Celeste also incorporates Lyotard’s insights by positioning music as sonorous matter as the *lack itself*. Celeste considers sound as the first sense, through the heartbeat in the mother’s womb, and this performs “the first drum roll of loss. The sound of a silence escaped and yet to come. In this sense, the first loss is the loss of loss itself. Music is this sound” (Celeste, 2005, p. 120). This analysis also aligns to Lyotard’s idea of music as a sonorous matter that is affected outside of chronological time. Like Celeste’s idea of the interiority of music as the first sense, Lyotard considers the affection of sonorous matter, lets say Celeste’s felt heartbeat, as a type of ‘modalizing’ of affects that “is already to put this noise to music, to make affection *speak in shapes*” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 227). Lyotard continues:

That being is lacking and does not lack lacking makes for a panic rumor. Despite itself, this rumor of non-being gives music the immaterial matter of the apparitions, of gestures, that are transformed in phrased appearances (Lyotard, , pp. 229-230).

Sonic matter as music then speaks in shapes, appears in phrases, and is both audible in that it occurs only when matter is affected through the gesture, and inaudible in the very process of its labour. For Lyotard this is the testimony of art and this “is not perishable either. It transcends through historical conjunctions, as the breath of being down-beat glides across the beats that segment sonorous space and give music its materials” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 233). Importantly, this sonorous space can only ever exist at the moment sonorous matter ‘gestures’ itself within it.

Conclusion

The two ‘histories’ that have been explored in this chapter raise some interesting questions for a pedagogy that acknowledges the inaudible. Lyotard’s suggestion of an excess, an extra, to the condition of music itself, alludes to a wider theoretical engagement with the modern tendency to eliminate the unknown as excess and nuance in both theory and society. As mentioned previously, the fables of which ‘Music, Mute’ is one, are placed in a later body of work that deals with literary forms administered as a type of rewriting Modernity. Rather than aligning himself along the populist notions of the postmodern Lyotard, by the time of

the fables, is referring to rewriting modernity as the condition of postmodernity itself. Here the crucial issue of temporality comes into play as Lyotard actively pursues a the Freudian ‘working through’ (Miller-Frank, 1995) in his notion of *rewriting* that has a central tenet of the way this act *unfolds through time*. As part of the process of rewriting, Lyotard positions writing, painting and music to be especially important as realms that incorporate a temporal body of lived time. This is a crucial form of resistance to a system that Lyotard considers is trying to collapse the temporal through an arresting of time as something to be harnessed and saved or sped up. The self-perpetuating engine of technological development that now controls modern society, according to Lyotard, affects our relation to time and to matter.

Time is music’s basic requirement. What it is that is art that Lyotard describes in ‘Music, Mute’ is the inaudible affection of sonorous matter and is utterly incapable of being swallowed by any modern technologies of time. What is art in music cannot be controlled or mastered, because it can only ever occur as a challenge to any attempt to measure chronological time. Lyotard considers the new technologies (of time, of development, and of modern society in general) to have the sum effect of trying to erase any element of the lived experience that is mysterious, enigmatic, and unable to be inscribed into computerised data. Through the very process of writing a fable on precisely this imprecise phenomenon that occurs as an inaudible sound that accompanies the audible, Lyotard is articulating a site of resistance through his writing, and through preserving the indeterminacy and mystery of music. Lyotard considers our relations to time and matter to be transformed in modern society, and as such, there is an implicit concentration on the role education plays as a form of resistance to these transformations. Music entails the radical rethinking needed through the spatiality of bodies that breathe life into the time of the musical event. The temporality of the music is a temporality that provides ‘artistic’ time that bears witness to what remains to be resisted in the time of modern development. Whereas the self-perpetuating and self-consolidating nature of the ‘system’ for Lyotard has no need for human experience, the indeterminacy offered by music as embodying nuance and grain challenges the performativity of the system consolidating itself in the name of development.

Finally, ‘Music and Postmodernity’ and ‘Music, Mute’ display Lyotard’s interest in music as reaching far beyond a merely acoustic phenomenon. The concept of the inaudible, as a mute ‘sounding’ within the gesture of musical sound, paired with the notion of timbre as the intransitive artistry of this gesture, opens an interesting space in which to consider a

pedagogy that listens and incorporates this *musicality* into its approach. To turn back to the very beginning paragraph of this chapter and the mythic quality of the goddess muses as guardians of memory and language in music, after an analysis of Lyotard's 'music', it is possible to now add that perhaps these goddesses could add to their list of duties the guardianship of *thought*. There is something deeply pedagogical about Lyotard's fascination with art and music, and the way the inaudible awakens and arouses ways of thinking that are fertile and rich with possibilities to think again, and to think some more. Working within and alongside the 'system' that takes as its working rule the forgetting of what is human, does not mean that it is impossible to sense the mute bellowing and lament of death that is the accompaniment of the living condition. The link between music and thought, when placed in the ambit of the inaudible, gives access to our interiority, as a memory so deeply embedded that it remains always forgotten. As Lyotard insists, this immemorial dimension to art and music is all that is left to resist. It is to a discussion of the importance of contemporary music and the extension of the inaudible through sound that I now turn.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Gods, Angels, and Puppets: Lessons On Listening

Art remains loyal to humankind uniquely through its inhumanity in regard to it
(Adorno in Lyotard, 1991e, p. 2).

Introduction

For Lyotard, music would always testify to the darkness of sound, to the shadows cast by the audible incisions into an inaudible abyss. As an art form, music comes a distant third to the two other colossi, painting and literature, that absorbed most of his powers of critique. Yet, he applied the same attentive, listening ‘eye’ to music, and the few essays he devoted solely to music shine with the luminosity to detail and insight as those that belong to the realms of colours and words. Like painting and literature, Lyotard was interested in what was ‘at stake’ in the evanescence of matter, this time ‘musical’, tightly weaved into a constellation of time and space. Lyotard spent his energies on exposing what it was that made a reading of Beckett forget the clunkiness of words, where abstract formulations in painted colour could communicate unspeakable truths, and how music could make us forget audibility. Where music asserts a fragile authority over the other ‘forms’ of art is in the explicit link to listening which held a privileged potency in Lyotard’s analytic arsenal. ‘Listening’ is not just the domain of the ears, and even then as an organ that is always physically open, sometimes even ears can falter. Eyes listen. Eyes soak up timbre and search for the harmony of the physical. The re-writing of the Kantian ‘Sensus Communis’ (Lyotard, 1992b) as a common sense heard as a *chorus* communicable to all, is inverted and thrown into the dark subterranean strata of music and the mutic death rattle that exposes us all as writhing beasts that we explored in Chapter Six. By the time of the encroaching darkness in *Soundproof Room* (Lyotard, 2001), listening is something that the artwork promulgates by cleaving open the strident scream of timeless, haunting, death where colour testifies to blindness, and music testifies to deafness.

The two essays in this chapter are located in this thesis as a deliberate ‘working through’, *Durcharbeiten*, in the realm of music directly, to emerge at the other side of this chapter closer to a pedagogical stance of the inaudible. While Chapter Six dealt with music broadly, this chapter concentrates on contemporary music and the type of listening Lyotard considered contemporary music and its deep link with technology to expose. As an art of time, this

analysis of music involves a discussion of repetition: new technologies (even in Lyotard's lifetime) were able to *exactly* record a performance, yet Lyotard will skew this relationship to time as repetition by insisting on the singularity of 'musical' time as escaping all inscription and archiving. Lyotard wants us to get as close to the genesis of sound itself: always unrepeatable, unknowable, and inaudible. Technology is heavily implicated in this explosion of sound in time and space; it is needed, but it must be surpassed, "revealing a destination which in any case exceeds the scope of techno-scientific research envisaged technically, yet thanks to which [an] obedience [to sound] is revealed" (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 168). Here is the search for a type of listening found only in music.

The chapter is structured in two halves involving an analysis of 'God and the Puppet' (Lyotard, 1991c) followed by 'Obedience' (Lyotard, 1991h)⁷⁴. These two essays were both presented at musicology conferences at the Sorbonne in the late 1980s, and the layout here follows the placement of the essays in the collection gathered together as *The Inhuman*. Lyotard unleashes an array of props that will be set upon different sound stages to expose a destination of listening that turns back on itself: gods of sound, wooden puppets controlled by wires, and celestial angels capable of hearing heavenly music that is out of this world, that is inhuman. Kant looms large in these texts, but Lyotard's use of marionettes and mystical angels would have been horrifying to Kant, who started writing his *Critiques* in part to barricade the influence of the Swedish mystic Swedenborg's conversations with angels (Nikolchina, 2005). Here, Lyotard forces Kant to fold back on himself, from *First Critique* to *Third Critique*, sprinkling a dusting of sublime gold dust over the puppets and angels on the way; to turn their inanimate or outer-worldly passivity, into the very qualities receptive to (inhuman) artistic vibrancy and richness. The following discussion helps explain what Lyotard was looking, *listening*, for in music, and in writing about music as an extension of the inaudible.

'God and the Puppet': Sonorous Matter and Impossible Repetition

I mean that if this matter, so tenuous that it is as though immaterial, is not repeatable, this is because by being subjected to its seizure by that matter, the mind is deprived, stripped of its faculty – both aesthetic and intelligent – to bind it, associate it, I'd like to say to narrativize it, and therefore, in one way or another (metaphysical or ontological) to repeat it (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 156).

⁷⁴ It is also important to note of two, much earlier, texts Lyotard wrote on music in the 1970s that I do not engage with in this thesis. 'A Few Words to Sing' (Lyotard, 1998b) is an interesting commentary Lyotard wrote on the composer Lucino Berio, and 'Several Silences' (Lyotard, 1984c) engages with the music of John Cage. I limit myself to the four musical texts that are covered in this thesis.

The essay ‘God and the Puppet’ (1991c) concentrates on the temporality of music, and the impossibility of there being any reproduction, transference, or repeatability of the musical event outside the ‘moment’ (or space-time) of its occurrence. In order to explain the singularity of the musical performance as an event, Lyotard deploys an analysis of repetition that draws primarily on the thought of the philosophers Kant, Leibniz and Bergson. This is quirkily juxtaposed with a detour through the analogies of marionette puppets and a billiard ball to further explain in metaphor the qualities of the repetition Lyotard finds in music. ‘God and the Puppet’ is a typically eclectic piece of writing that, as in the examples of the previous chapters in this thesis, retains a kind of ‘Beckettian’ approach to prose that incorporates a deliberate opacity to meaning. Rather than draw on explicit reference to any particular piece or style of music, Lyotard continues to concentrate in broader terms on an explanation of what happens *in* music within the constellation of time, space and sonorous matter. As part of the collection of essays gathered together in *The Inhuman* (1991d), this essay deals with the main theme of the collection as the elaboration of what stands ‘outside’ chronological time. This entails an exploration of the moments of human existence that don’t fit into the flow of accountable, countable, and determinable sections of measurable ‘historical’ time. By measurable, Lyotard means capable of inscription on a given apparatus. In keeping with the argument thus far, the artistry in music – its musicality – is considered an event that exists in a temporality incompatible with human measurements of time. These non-‘narrativistic’ and a-historical instances in music and art more generally are defined within the familiar Lyotard trope of the *inhuman*.

However, Lyotard concedes that on a certain level repetition is indispensable to music, and in fact repetition of a certain kind plays a crucial role in what could be termed the ‘mechanics’ of the musical process. The opening paragraph of ‘God and the Puppet’ outlines the paradox of repetition in music, and the singularity of the musical event by surmising “that repetition escapes from repetition in order to repeat” (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 153). This is followed by the equally contradictory explanation that, “in trying to have itself forgotten, it fixes its forgetting, and thus repeats its absence” (ibid). This is, of course, the creative inhuman zone that interests Lyotard in terms of what cannot be inscribed, captured, or explained in the realms of aesthetics and politics. Recalling *Heidegger and “the jews”* (1990), ‘God and the Puppet’ elaborates the escape of musical timbre and gesture from any form of inscription, and thus any form of exact repeatability. In music, timbre is a renewable source, the constant ‘becoming’ and emergence of artistic presence that is felt *negatively* as a loss or lament, as

explained in Chapter Six, and *as new* as the infancy of each musical occurrence. To get to the point where we can understand this escape from repeatability, Lyotard takes us through different categories of repetition that fall under physical, cognitive and critical ‘faculties’ deriving primarily from Kant’s distinction between determinate and aesthetic judgements.

Identical Repetition in Sound

The first set of repetitions that Lyotard outlines in the essay are both physical and cognitive, and deal with the vibratory capacity of the acoustic properties to sound and the physical structure of the instrument that produces the sound. The example given is the oscillating reed of an oboe and at this point, repetition occurs within an acoustic paradigm. Accordingly, Lyotard considers the properties of sound to be “in principle measurable, and it is the task of acoustics and the physics of vibrations to determine them quantitatively” (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 153). For the sound to be recognised cognitively (for instance as a sound that vibrates at a frequency that is to be recognised as an ‘A’), the sound apparatus, for instance the type of instrument, must remain constant to allow the vibration to repeat itself exactly. “The determination of the properties of sound”, explains Lyotard, “thus demands the exactly identical recurrence of the conditions of its production” (Lyotard, 1991cp. 154). When a sound vibrates at a certain frequency, it does so consistently. When this consistent vibration occurs, the instrument that produces this sound also remains stable. This type of ‘identical repetition’ is what Lyotard labels “understanding in its cognitive finality”, and as such is characterised as “determined or determining repetition” (ibid). This type of repetition is needed in sound if it is to ‘pass over’ into the musical realm to be recognised as music. This is the most straightforward example of repetition, and the discussion at this point descends into a much more complex reading that draws primarily on Kant.

Aesthetic Repetition

The second type of repetition that is identified in the essay is what Lyotard terms as ‘free’ or ‘aesthetic’ repetition. Aesthetic repetition expands further from the individual sound wave as explained above, to the broader outline of a piece of music that incorporates sound into a synthesized musical ‘form’. Here, repetition is mobilised within the action of aesthetic judgement required in interpreting a given piece of music. This type of aesthetic repetition draws on the imagination in order to achieve a variation of sounds that depend on the perception of differences. These subtle variations between different sounds and colours that

occur in music are not predetermined, and are what produce musical pleasure. Drawing on Kant, Lyotard explains the origins of this pleasure further:

The variation of its putting into forms comes under the imagination obeying the finality without concepts proper to the disinterested pleasure, which, according to Kant, characterizes the aesthetic feeling of the beautiful (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 154).

This Kantian formulation of disinterested pleasure ensures the freedom of aesthetic repetition from any form of determination. Kant considered disinterested pleasure to be the bridge between the perception of the phenomenon as an object we can study, and the realm of *noumena* as the inaccessible ‘*thing in itself*’. The variations of different options available within the workings of the imagination ensure that this type of repetition only works *analogously* and not determinately – it is impossible to ‘know’ and experience the musical form in and of itself. Disinterested pleasure, however, links this inaccessible ‘world’ with the knowable world of symbols and signs and this mediating role serves as a bridge between ‘mind’ and ‘matter’. No chord, phrase or pitch can be given as the definitive version or be offered as the overall paradigm, and Lyotard emphasises the necessary retreat of any paradigm in the emergence of musical form. “One does not ‘give’ the theme of a symphonic movement as one ‘gives’ an ‘A’ at the beginning of the concert to tune the instruments” (ibid), he continues. Rather, the theme of a symphonic movement is discovered within a repetition of different elements that converge together to produce the theme as a musical form. Giving the ‘A’ is, Lyotard explains, based on a “metaphysics of ideas”; we know what an ‘A’ is because of its placement within a spectrum of ideas that have been assigned fixed properties to identify this particular sound. The Kantian undercurrent in Lyotard’s analysis becomes more evident when Lyotard explains the musical form emerges from “an ontology of being as non-being” that falls under the Kantian faculty of aesthetics (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 155). A musical form cannot emerge as an exact replica of a predetermined equation; it is rather a conceptual approximation of a given formulation of signs and symbols realised through the activity of the (Kantian) imagination.

Discovering Impossible Repetition: Timbre and Nuance

So far, both cognitive and aesthetic forms of repetition in music do not take us to the point of something utterly and constitutively *un-repeatable* for Lyotard. Cognitive repetition needs exact parameters in order to measure sound *as* sound. Aesthetic repetition, although free to differentiate what is repeated in sound and form, still is determined within fixed conceptual

parameters. Both aesthetic and cognitive modes of repetition can be ‘narrativised’ and captured (and inscribed upon an apparatus) because both forms of repetition require a binding to time that is knowingly experienced; the subject is still present and aware. These forms of repetition also draw upon what Lyotard describes as an “opposition of a musical matter – sound – subject to temporal (and spatial) conditions with its composition into forms, which also requires a treatment, albeit a different one, of time” (ibid). ‘Free’ aesthetic repetition still requires an element of temporal measurability because, although its treatment of time differs from the exact repetition of the physical properties to sound, it is no less reliant on a temporality that remains constant to a reflexive Kantian ontology. Imagination may not be bound to the exact repetition of the physical qualities of sound production, but Lyotard’s point is that it is still bound to an anthropological or ‘subject-centred’ construction of cognitive time, which *ipso facto* binds it to a type of conceptual determinism. At this particular point, there is nothing about the musical performance that cannot be repeated because everything so far can be accounted for in the musical phenomena; there is nothing ‘special’ about the time of the event if it can be transplanted *exactly* to another space.

It is clear that Lyotard considered the analysis of music within the Kantian confines of aesthetic ‘disinterested’ pleasure and/or in cognitive determinism to be too narrow. What calls into question these two distinctions of repeatability in music is “the consideration of timbre, or rather, of the nuance of a sound or set of sounds” (ibid). Such a temporal quality of a given sound within a placement of other sounds in music is precisely what falls outside any kind of determinability or predictability. The nuance escapes determination because of the contingency of these sounds to a unique and unrepeatable constellation of space-time. Lyotard instead insists the ‘here-and-now’ quality of the timbre and nuance of the sound as what commands the power to affect in music. It is, of course, this temporal quality to timbre that is incapable of being ‘absorbed’ into recordable time, and as such, escapes repetition. However, here Lyotard differentiates between sound matter as a musical form (*à la* Kant) and instead conflates timbre and nuance as the sound matter *itself*. This formation of matter, says Lyotard, “appears to escape determination by concepts because it is rigorously (and not exactly) singular: its quality depends perhaps on a constellation of conceivable parameters, but *this* constellation, the one which takes place now, cannot be anticipated, foreseen” (ibid). Musical matter is a ‘pure’ perception; or rather, the perception of music is ‘in’ this matter, and this matter cannot be transplanted outside of its occurrence as performance. If perception

is ‘in’ musical matter, then time becomes something that is moved and shifted *by* musical matter.

From this singular perspective to music, the differences between performances of the same work can be distinguished (for instance between Karajan’s rendition of a Beethoven symphony, and the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra’s rendition of the same piece). Also, there are not only between performances of the same work, but also between different performances by the same entity performing the same piece. Lyotard points out that even the rehearsal of a work cannot pre-empt the timbre and nuance of the performance later that evening. Here, what escapes repetition is “not only that involved in constituting the sound’s identity, but that of the formal variation demanded by the music” (ibid). What happens in the immediacy of the musical performance is singular, it cannot be reproduced elsewhere because the nuance is not transferrable outside of its conditions of existence, and these conditions are primarily space and time:

With the nuance, it seems that the ear is given over to something incomparable (and therefore something unrepeatable) in what is called the performance, i.e. to the here and now of the sound, in their singularity, in their one-offness, in the aspect by which they are, by virtue of their position, not subjected to any spatio-temporal transfer (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 155).

The necessity of the performance to ‘give over’ the ear to what is unrepeatable leads to the idea of a *presence* that emerges as the nuance and timbre of music and which is tied and bound to its actuality through performance. Here, the musical performance is deeply singular, regardless of how much we might try to predict, prescribe and control it. You may play the same piece of music, the notes may not change and you might practice the variations in tonal and dynamic difference. However, the performance of this piece, your performance, will always involve something uniquely singular to the moment of its musical action in time. What can never be predicted, or be subject to spatio-temporal transfer, is the singularity of *this* performance *right now*.

Musical (Sublime) Presence

The idea of there being a musical presence, “a pure, punctual presence” (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 156) ties in to the ‘mutic’ dimension to music that is discussed in Chapter Six as the inaudible ‘breath’ or lament that ‘inhabits’ music. Presence is developed further in ‘God and the Puppet’ as that which escapes any subjective synthesis and repetition. As in the more poetic rendering of presence in ‘Music, Mute’, musical presence here is the nuance and timbre that

‘inhabits’ the musical performance which can only be felt *negatively* as a sign of ‘something’ that surpasses the binding powers of a mind to synthesize data. Sound as pure matter is the presence in music, and must be utterly unfamiliar and unrecognisable to the synthesizing powers of the mind. “A nuance in its actuality, its here-and-now of that time, can exercise on a given mind”, Lyotard goes on to explain, “not only the effect of a formal pleasure, which is something quite different, but the power of a loss” (ibid). The contemporaneousness of musical perception as nuance, and the loss that Lyotard speaks of, is of the *subject*; subjectivity has to be suppressed or surpassed. The pure matter of sound as nuance can only reach the subject “at the cost of surpassing, or ‘sub-passing’, its capacity for synthetic activity” (ibid) Lyotard continues. The subject, to perceive musical nuance, must lose its *self*.

And yet, Lyotard insists the loss and trauma of subjectivity is rehabilitated within an absence that as it “breaks the mind” (ibid) simultaneously affects it causing both pain (through loss) and joy (through affect). The presence of musical matter that is felt through the subject’s absence recalls very strongly the pain and jubilation that Kant ascribes to the feeling of the sublime. “The delight in the sublime does not so much involve positive pleasure as admiration or respect”, Kant tells us. As such it “merits the name of a negative pleasure” (Kant, 1952, p. 495). The presence Lyotard is embracing in music is analogous to the ‘shimmering’ of meaning described in Chapter Four as a process of retreat and advance in the sublime experience that originates from Kant. This Kantian account of the sublime involves the mind’s failure to grasp an ‘awesome’ object which leaves it scrambling and grappling instead in the realms of the imagination to compensate for the lack of cognitive data. What is awakened in this failure is “magnitude, force, quantity in its purest state, a ‘presence’ that exceeds what imaginative thought can grasp at once in a form” (Lyotard, 1994, p. 53). Lyotard remains with this Kantian sublime, but emphasises the ‘zero-sum’ dimension between subjectivity and musical matter, turning further to the Epicurean logic of death to explain musical presence through absence as the feeling of the sublime. Musical matter, in its occurrence as timbre or nuance in sound, has the same ‘finality’ and impossibility as death: “if it’s there, I’m not there; so long as I’m there, it’s not there” (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 157). Lyotard explains:

In recalling the Epicurus text, I do not mean to dramatize things – they do not need it. But I do so at least in order to get across the idea that if, among these ‘things’, there is one which does not tolerate repetition, it is death, it is matter (ibid).

Death and matter are the ‘impossible’ qualities that can’t be repeated, following Epicurean logic, simply because the ‘subject’ can never ‘know’ death and can never understand matter because it must be absent from both. However, Lyotard adds to this logic a twist by stating that the reason matter (as timbre) cannot be understood cognitively or conceptually is because it is not *inscribed* on a surface, (whether that surface is a mind or any other support capable of what Lyotard terms as ‘archiving’ information). Here we have the echoes of Lyotard’s Kafkaesque prescriptive apparatus of torture as discussed in Chapter Five. The ethical impetus turns into one where the artistic act must continue to search for what escapes inscription as that which exceeds determination and prescription, and yet provides the conditions for its very occurrence. This, for Lyotard is what the musical performance must reach for, and in doing so will attain the halcyon level of writing as *écriture*; a writing that must escape and exceed the apparatus. Of this form writing, sublime in its experience of singular musical matter, Lyotard continues:

This is what writing – including musical writing – is looking for: what is not inscribed. I’d like to falsify the value of the prefix ‘e’ to hear in *écriture* something like a ‘scratching’ – the old meaning of the root *scri* – outside of, outside any support, any apparatus of resonance and reiteration, any concept and any pre-inscribed form. But first of all *outside any support* (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 158).

But we have heard from Kant, and Lyotard’s appropriation of the Kantian sublime before. Never one to settle for the predictable, Lyotard instead takes the plunge into the obscure and bizarre to reinforce his musical project. It is to this alternative approach that continues exploring the radical singularity to the art of music that I now turn.

‘Divine Automatism’ as Pure Perception: Bergson, Leibniz, the Billiard Ball, and the Puppet

If Lyotard places music within the sentiment of the sublime, he also focuses attention onto music as an experience *of* time as non-chronological or diachronic. From this stance, there is definitely a move in the above analysis to empty subjectivity of any agency and to free the ‘musical’ from subjective representation. Consciousness, the privileged centre of reference is decimated in this critique, and with it the locus of the musical genius as the focal point in the history of western music. However it is not just the genius that suffers. Lyotard’s analysis forces a rethinking of the relationship between music and the experience of music as perceived sound. What he ushers in with the critique of subject-centred rationality in music is a ‘new’ subjectivity that takes as its beginning point a lack of mastery over sound. This is a

subjectivity, sublime in its origins, that is borne through negation and deprivation, but which is the more richly complex and fully endowed to perceive, *because* of this deprivation. Rather than consciousness as the nexus in which musical sounds are perceived within differences from each other, Lyotard talks of a Bergsonian pure perception⁷⁵ in which the sounds as (im)material objects differ from other each other independently from subject-centred significations of these sounds. Music must be made to be inhuman, shifted to a ‘para-human’ dimension, if it is to become a properly human experience. This is the ultimate paradox of the inhuman quality that art aspires to, and which now signals the darkly ironic meaning behind the title ‘God’ and the ‘Puppet’.

(God/Sound) +(Puppets/ Humans) = Music as Divine Automatism

Lyotard will shortly draw specifically on Bergson’s theory of duration to position musical perception as aspiring to a ‘pure’ mechanistic process freed from all intentionality. However, as is so often the case, to help explain and prime the philosophical, Lyotard turns to literary fiction. In this case the object of reference is nineteenth century German poet and novelist Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811) and his short story *On the Marionette Theatre*. This time, however, Lyotard’s ‘muse’ appears to have read the same philosophical texts, and Kleist’s story is the result, according to Nikolchina (2005), of a radical re-reading of Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*. In his story, Kleist’s narrator is told of the mechanistic movement of the marionette puppets played as street theatre to the milling crowds, and the grace they exemplify in their dance movements. Controlled by a ‘machinist’ who pulls the strings, the puppets display in their empty intentionality a gracefulness that only God could hope to emulate. Humans, the narrator is told, with their ‘knowing’ minds and busy thoughts, sully their movements with their ragged determinations and intentions. Even the best dancer in the world would fall short of the ‘grace’ these puppets epitomise as inanimate matter, their otherwise inert limbs obeying only the pull of gravity and the twitch of the machinist. Lyotard sides with Kleist against this version of Kant, who ridicules the pervading mysticism of his time and the ‘fabulous’ stories of those who thought they could experience directly *noumena* so that “God and eternity with their awful majesty would stand unceasingly before our eyes” (Kant cited in Nikolchina, 2005, p. 163). Kant then brings in the analogy of the marionettes in *derogatory* fashion, maintaining this type of belief reduces men to mere

⁷⁵ Another of Lyotard’s contemporaries and colleagues, Gilles Deleuze, drew very heavily on Bergson (Deleuze, 2002) and would have been a direct influence on Lyotard’s use of him.

puppets “prepared and wound up by the Supreme Artist”. Kant continues his stinging critique:

Self-consciousness would indeed make him a thinking automaton; but the consciousness of his own spontaneity would be mere delusion if this were mistaken for freedom ...Self-consciousness of his own spontaneity would be mere delusion if this were mistaken for freedom (Kant, 1997, p. 85).

Further, Kant then draws poetry into the foray (at least in Kleist’s view) by pointing out that if there is such a thing as direct contact with the ‘thing’ in itself (that sits between the external world and internal experience of that world), then all art is a puppet-show where “everything would gesticulate well, but there would be no life in the figures” (Kant cited in Nikolchina, 2005, p. 163). Instead, the puppets are simply the ‘automatons’ of God’s divine will. Kleist’s story, celebrating the divine automatism of the puppets, can be read both as a protest against Kant’s critique and reinstatement of the primacy of the artist.

Unequivocal as he is with Kleist’s literary project, Lyotard however reads the empty intentionality of the puppets through the lens of the later Kant of the *Third Critique*, and the supreme gracefulness of their movements as an analogy of the human experience of the sublime. Emptied of the powers to synthesize, the sublime experience “is an experience of the *being* of time rather than of the *passing* of time” (Trifonova, 2004, p. 149). The mechanism that the puppets obey is akin to the suppression of subjectivity that must be induced within a sensation of time characterised by the sublime. Lyotard amalgamates this reading of the sublime with the musical experience: music must render the subject a puppet that responds to the external stimuli of sound exclusively so that the subject can feel musical time directly. Kant might have been against mysticism, but his notion of the sublime turns the empty agency of the marionettes into the supreme inhuman model to tap in to what is unrepeatable to the musical experience. Only the renunciation of subjectivity morphed into ‘divine automatism’ in the sublime experience can allow music *as presence* to emerge.

The God of Sound

However, Lyotard never mentions the machinist who pulls the strings initiating movement in the puppets. In his study of Adorno and Lyotard, de la Fuente (1999) attributes to Lyotard’s essay a movement toward a negative-theology that situates Lyotard’s analysis of music as theologically inspired and closely related to Adorno’s negative-dialectical formulation of music. The idea of there being a musical presence does sound theological, but when

positioned as an occurrence within the sublime, this presence is borne of negation and nothingness. There is no chance of an Hegelian synthesis, even if it is couched in a negative dialectic, when Lyotard positions sound as emerging from the great void and abyss of Kant's *nothingness*. Kant doesn't let you *knowingly* touch the 'Thing', but he does give you *no-thing* in return, "an absence, a void, an empty place, the place of nothing" (Nikolchina, 2005, p. 164) that Lyotard supplants with a God made of inaudible music. The puppets are not only deprived of agency and intentionality, but are also pulled upwards by the inaudible promise in music in order for sound to 'fall'. Lyotard evokes the machinist as the horizon of potentiality in music, of which the 'manifold' is the possibility to all music is sound.

Why is this horizon to music, its manifold, inaudible? The puppets need to be shifted to the background and the horizon of sonic possibility needs to be shifted even more into the foreground for this to be understood. Lyotard places two poles to mark the extremities in this horizon of sound. At one extremity is sound conceived as *minimal*, the other extremity involves sound as *excess*. In fact, these two poles will serve Lyotard's analysis of the differing approaches to musical composition in contemporary music. Still within the ambit of this analysis however, these poles are given the qualities of a 'monad' that originates from the German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz. At the excessive extreme to this manifold of sound, is Leibniz's 'rich' monad that is able to incorporate every sound of the world and every potential sound. This God of sonic overabundance holds power over what Lyotard calls the "music of the spheres". This rich monad, as God, "hears all the sounds in the world, the so-called real world, but also of the other possible worlds, in the same instant" (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 162). Leibniz's God of sound has the best possible sound worlds ever conceived, or about to be conceived. In unabashed optimism, this God offers the best possible combination of sounds at any given moment. This deluge of sound renders, according to Lyotard, the God of sound *intemporal* in that this "celestial music" suffers from an excess of synthesizing, and is rendered inaudible. "All the beatings of what we spread out in what we would call the sound-history of the world are received as in a single chord, which has neither beginning nor end, since it is limited by other possible sound" (ibid) Lyotard explains.

At the other extreme Lyotard utilizes Leibniz's 'naked' monad, this time positioned as the God who can only absorb a single 'beat' of sound at once. This is where Bergson, having read Leibniz (and Kant) closely, formulates his idea of instant duration. The analogy that Lyotard makes to illustrate this minimal God of sound is the surface of a billiard ball. Here, the billiard ball can only perceive sound by one shock at a time and because of its hard and

shiny surface, no shock can be inscribed. “Its hardness and polish were conceived and realized precisely to prevent any impression being or remaining marked on it”, Lyotard explains. If sound – as a series of vibratory shocks – can only be perceived one wave at a time, the billiard ball is incapable of ‘remembering’ any other shock and can only ‘perceive’ sound as a non-sound. This lack of retaining a remembrance of past shocks to constitute musical sound enables a forgetting of repetition, but an immemorial ‘unforgetting’ of the conditions that make sound possible. What the billiard ball “lacks in order to be able to forget is the capacity for synthesizing in a single pinch or grasp (or intuition, to talk in Kant’s language) two – at least two – successive shocks” (ibid). Bergson’s theory of duration, exemplified by the billiard ball, ensures the automatic preservation of the past and the present *in the same instant*.

Music and Grace

It’s time for the marionettes to resume their dancing. The God that Lyotard is referring to in his title is a God that incorporates both minimal and excessive approaches to sound. The grace of the puppets that Kleist introduced is achieved through both of these poles of sound, because both approaches free the mind from “diachrony, from all task of synthesis” (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 163). It is a *grace* that derives from “the sufficiency of the all in one, according to God, or the one in all and for all according mechanics” (ibid). Lyotard wants us to be open to music in the way the puppets are open to the fateful certainty of their movements as inanimate matter. Rather than attach stories and meaning to music, Lyotard instead wants us to get lost in the ‘pure’ perception of music, as a “pure act” (ibid) before the birth of consciousness. However music, itself, has to aspire to this grace too “and this is why God and the doll [puppet] have no ‘quality’, since quality is power” (ibid). Instead, music must emulate the emptiness of the puppets through incorporating the extremities of sound as inanimate matter⁷⁶. This also means that music must aspire to forget repetition just as the limbs of the puppets forget each movement in order to move with the spontaneous and pure grace that Lyotard (and Kleist) describe. This means that sound needs to be thought of in its singularity, not as a series of sounds put to use to communicate a musical message. Lyotard explains:

We are a long way from the god, the god has exploded, galaxies of resonances
flee the *templum sanctum* (where the initial sound sounds) at high speed. No

⁷⁶ I will pick up on this empty intentionality as a form of grace in my discussion in Chapter Eight of pedagogy, which brings in the works of Simon Weil.

doubt they sing, linking such diverse frequencies, pitches and durations. But what cannot be equalled or repeated does not reside in linkings. It hides and offers itself in every atom of sound, perhaps (Lyotard, 1991c, p. 164).

But this calls into question, how we learn to listen to music, and this emphasis on sound itself calls into question how we organise or ‘write’ these sounds into music. The next section deals explicitly with these questions.

Listening as ‘Obedience’

To sum up, obedience, if it is indeed with this that we are dealing, is not given, it is to be unveiled in hearing (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 177).

This last essay entitled ‘Obedience’ marks an explicit return to the themes of ‘Music and Postmodernity’ and *The Postmodern Condition*, most notably the role of technology in the continuing ‘complexification’ of musical knowledge (to be taken as an example of ‘knowledge’ in general). I have included it in this analysis of significant essays on music because it also highlights Lyotard’s view on the importance of contemporary music and the link this must have with technological developments. The notion of a type of obedience that emerges with and within these changes to music that is wrought by technology and manifested within contemporary music is also an important aspect of this essay, and will be developed within this analysis. For Lyotard, it will require a certain type of obedience to sound that will de-centre the primacy of the subject, but will also expose this anthropomorphic privileging to not necessarily guarantee the emergence of any musical gesture that could be interpreted as artistry. The musical ‘frame’, as we shall see, might contain nothing *musical*.

With the spectre of Adorno casting an interminable shadow over any discussion of contemporary music, Lyotard both pays homage to Adorno’s championing of the avant-garde in music, whilst deferring from the pessimism of the Frankfurt School’s diagnosis of the ruination of music (and art) via technology and popular culture. Instead, what is articulated in this essay is the importance of technology and techno-science in music and the indispensable relationship music has to technological configurations of sound. Also evident, and that differs slightly from the other texts, is the absolutely crucial role contemporary music has in enhancing our enjoyment of music in general, and the continuing need this enjoyment feeds in demanding an ever increasing sound-scape in and through technology. For Lyotard, it is not a question of restoring to music an integrity that it once enjoyed and lost, but rather one

of extending what we thought was possible in terms of our enjoyment through a search for other “unheard of emotions” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 174). With the incessant increase in technological developments in sound and producing sound, comes the ever-greater capacity of the aural sound palette that we can experience through *hearing*. The only intervention available for Lyotard then, is to extend the inaudible; for sound to continue to move us as music we must create more scope for the inaudible *through* new sound for this to happen. Technology, then, in its capacity to extend the possibilities of creating new and unknown sounds, is central to music in unavoidable ways. Extending musical sound in hearing involves also an extension of our powers to *listen*, and listening extends beyond what we hear into the inaudible as the enigma to the musical work of art.

Emancipation and Technical Mastery

The essay begins with Adorno’s well known thesis, heard also in ‘Music and Postmodernity’ analysed in Chapter Six that with the liberation of musical material, the possibility of mastering music has increased. As a continuation from the initial premise of this statement in ‘Music and Postmodernity’ Lyotard here notes that Adorno does not offer a judgement as to whether or not this is desirable in music. (But we can surmise that this comment would not have been uttered by Adorno without a fair bit of scorn if it accommodated, even if only briefly, any pandering whatsoever to massed culture). Lyotard offers an expanded view of the ‘material’ as more than the dissolution of tonality (a point ‘Music and Postmodernity’ takes into account). The Adornian statement turns instead into one that considers how technological developments aid and abets progress in music and the arts in general. The liberation that Adorno speaks of, and the increasing mastery we hold over new developments produces a symbiotic relationship between accomplishing new sounds and mastering these sounds through technology. While Adorno considered mastery of musical material to expand relative to the liberation of tonality (toward atonality), so too has our ability to master the way in which we deal with this material through musical writing. ‘Progress’ in music equates to a constant readjustment with the material on one side, and the mastery through technology on the other. “And this euphoric reciprocity would constitute, in principle, the first possible opening for the meeting of music with contemporary technology” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 167).

Interior Listening: Extending the In/audible

What does this mean for music? Lyotard wrote this essay, as a conference paper, in 1986 at a point in time where the ‘new technologies’ revolving around the expansion of computerisation and digitalisation, would have been on the verge of entering the mainstream. The conference theme ‘On Musical Writing’ would no doubt have involved discussion on the very intense epistemological re-thinking that the impact of these technologies most certainly would be having on every aspect of the human relationship to music. How we perform music, how we create music, and how we listen to music, are questions that we never stop asking, but it is possible to imagine that in 1986, these questions had a sense of urgency that was perhaps unique up to that point. Lyotard was able to observe that each step toward ‘progress’ in wider epistemology was always countered by a technological advancement that toppled that gain in human authority and mastery. Conversely, whatever progression was made in the realm of technology also enabled a further gain to be made in the realms of research and development. ‘Progress’ was more the struggle to win back human control, a struggle that is more akin to the circularity of Sisyphus than with the straight line of salvation. Applying these observations to music, Lyotard was able to draw an analogy in the history of western music: each progress in the ‘liberation’ of sound was matched with a technological advancement that mastered what had been freed. Techno-science, however, forces change at an increasingly frenetic pace, because performing, listening, and creating music were all, even in 1986, falling under the domain of the computer. Intervention was and is necessary to assert the human relationship to music: What would be left of musical writing, when a computer could do it all for you? How could the zone of musicality be extended within (and against, Lyotard emphasised) technology? In what follows, these questions are given precedence.

The ‘Purgation’ of the Musical Object through Edgard Varèse⁷⁷

In keeping with the liturgically inspired notion of obedience to sound, Lyotard describes contemporary music as ‘purging’ from its conditions of existence the traditional constraints and constructs of its past. “It looks as though the task of composers was to go through an anamnesis of what was given them in the name of music” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 168) he further adds. However, the effects of this ‘working through’ (what Freud termed *Durcharbeitung*)

⁷⁷ Lyotard (through the translators) gives the spelling of this name as ‘Edgar’. However, Varèse himself used ‘Edgard’ for most of his life and most references to him use this spelling also. When I am not quoting Lyotard I will maintain the common usage with Edgard.

the musical past by composers and the concomitant progress in musical technologies have placed demands on the very nature of sound. “Perhaps as though sound, by means of their research and their interventions, were going through its own anamnesis through the strata of its living musical past” (ibid), he continues. The composer who radically questioned these conditions for Lyotard was the French avant-garde composer Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) “who was really the founder and first militant of the movement for the ‘liberation of sound’, in particular through the use of new technologies” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 169). Famously describing music as ‘organised sound’, Varèse saw himself at a point in the history of the development of music where the electronic medium presented possibilities of creating new synthesised sounds. For the first time, timbre could be manufactured outside the traditional structures of wooden or metal instruments and could instead be created by merging (synthesising) electronically derived sounds to produce radically new timbres *never heard before*. What would have been attractive about Varèse for Lyotard (apart from his country of origin) was that this composer was so far ahead of his time that for once technology struggled to keep up. Varèse instead foresaw many of the possibilities in new timbres through his use of the traditional instruments available to him. His forty-one piece percussion work *Ionisation*, written in 1931, was the first musical work to be scored for percussion only and pre-empted the use of a timbre in electronic music generally that did not require sounds to resonate. Lyotard uses Varèse’s thoughts and approaches to music in general to illustrate the significance of sound in music, and the stripped back element to sound in contemporary music. “The principle of musical objects proceeds from this purgation” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 171) Lyotard observes, a ‘purgation’ that leaves only the nature of sound up for debate and an emphasis on the interiority of listening.

The Sound Event as ‘Sound Space’

Lyotard analyses the musical elements of Varèse’s compositions as *sound events* that evoke the explosion of sound, the “temporal blowing up” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 179) that contemporary music exposes. For Varèse, rhythm was something that the musical work as a whole created. The classical use of rhythmic valuations, such as the crotchet or semibreve, bar line or time signature, were supplanted by a rhythm that was created on the wider scale of the event of the musical work. Lyotard notes how Varèse aimed to present a rhythmic pulse that was not created ‘inside’ the traditional framework hemmed in by counterpoint, but rather was created externally by the event of sound through “a projection of planes or masses of sound onto each other” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 170) This is a rhythm “of the whole work, of a

polyphony, if you like, and no longer of a monodic element” (ibid). The effect of shifting the internal pulse, as regulated within fixed partitions of rhythmic notation in the traditional sense, displaces and disconcerts the musical expectations of the listener. In doing so, rhythm becomes something that occurs as an effect of projected sounds that are outside the usual terms of reference for musical perception. “Rhythm is referred solely to immobile listening”, Lyotard explains – an immobility that calls for an “interior listening” because of the spontaneous flux of sound (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 169).

Pitch, in Varèse’s sound pallet, was equally as ‘immobile’, stripped back from a “sound continuum without being concerned to respect the cutting of the continuum according to mode or scale” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 171). Without the solidarity and constancy of pitch written on a treble clef, for instance, Lyotard noted how Varèse instead concentrated on the buzzing vibrations, the “enigmatic presence” (ibid) of sound as the ‘remains’ and ‘material’ of a recognisably melodic pitch. He even created his own type of instrument that extended and stretched out sound as the forerunner to the synthesized sounds that would soon emerge. However, by the early 1950s Varèse was composing some of the very first electronic pieces in which new sounds could be created, passing “the limit of what can be heard”, and extending beyond the audible to the *inaudible* “differentials and additional sounds” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 172).

These aspects to rhythm and pitch impact directly on the form of the musical work, and it is here that timbre once again asserts its primacy in Lyotard’s analysis as the immaterial condition of sound. Rather than confining timbre to the secondary process of the musical form or frame, Lyotard is more interested in the way composers such as Varèse create their compositional structures within the actual sounds themselves letting “chromatic matter ... lay itself out of its own accord” (ibid). With sheets and clusters of sound derived from non-traditional instruments and the computer, emerges the critique of western classical music that questions the primacy of such approaches to music. Instead, timbre is itself the form, “it forms form” (ibid). Sound, as timbre, becomes the vital structural device in this approach where traditional musical forms are replaced in favour of sounds structuring themselves, reversing the “the priority of form over matter” (ibid). For Varèse specifically, Lyotard points out the notion of the ‘sound space’ from which timbre as musical matter emerges from pitch and rhythm. What is created in pitch, rhythm, and timbre is a sound event that creates its own space in time and which is to be seen in its totality and not within the confines of a sonic frame.

At the 1958 World Fair in Brussels, Varèse was finally able to combine technology and timbre in such a way that created a sound event as a ‘sound space’ in near-perfect conditions. The architect Le Corbusier designed the Philips Pavilion for the event, and with its jutting angles and cavernous curves, Varèse was able to shatter any semblance of traditional sonic form and instead provide a 3D architectural space that would ‘frame’ his music⁷⁸. *Poème Electronique* was composed specifically for this purpose, providing a sonic sound scape that swathed the fluid sheets of the curved walls with synthesised sounds from over 400 speakers⁷⁹, merging solid matter with the invisible grain of sonic matter. In listening to this piece of music, it is astounding how well Varèse captured the web-like and ethereal fluidity of the Le Corbusier design⁸⁰. Even in the punctuated resonance of the synthesised sounds that bobble and percolate in scattered terrestrial-like clusters, the juxtaposition with sheets of white noise and climactic crescendos mirror the dramatic angles and smooth concaves of the pavilion. There is no classical arch and cohesive narrative in either work, simply a combination of elements in sound and plastic that creates an effect of having emerged from somewhere deep and primal, while morphing weightlessly upwards to an inaudible God of sound and matter⁸¹. Here is the totality that Lyotard cites from Varèse, a totality of musical object whose happenstance is the cortex to sound in space. The distinction between the works of art, between solid and immaterial matter, is blurred and blended. “The old conception of melody and polyphony will no longer exist” Varèse said. “The whole work will be a melodic totality. It will flow as the river flows” (Varèse cited in Lyotard, 1991h, p. 170).

Obedience as *Passibility*: Wrestling with the Angels

The final aspect to be discussed in this essay is a final flourish to the notion of obedience that Lyotard deploys in regard to what he terms as the ‘walls’ of the body that cloak both the traditional frame of music, and the subject-centred mastery of the ‘listening’ rational mind as cogito. To be truly obedient in the sense that Lyotard means it is to forget the primacy of the body in both music and listening (to become ‘puppet-like’). This type of obedience requires a decentring of the anthropomorphic notion of music as destined solely to and for (human) understanding and meaning. Describing this special type of listening, obedience in this case

⁷⁸ Unfortunately, the Philips Pavilion was pulled down after the Fair. However, another interesting fact about the Philips Pavilion is that the majority of the architectural design was by a Greek architect names Iannes Xanakis who later became one of the most accomplished electronic music composers. Xanakis also composed a piece of electronic music to be played in between Varèse’s music.

⁷⁹ The amount of speakers is according to a blog on contemporary music (Vitriolix, 2006). For an interesting commentary on a recent project that has simulated the Philips Pavilion see (fruehauf72, 2008).

⁸⁰ The easiest way to listen to this on Youtube (Varèse, 2006).

⁸¹ Famously, the pavilion was shaped like a stomach, perhaps eluding to the primal space where digestion ‘fuels’ the system.

follows the model of being obliged to listen to someone, of having “to lend one’s ear to someone ... to fall into a domain, under an authority ... to lend one’s ear” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 178). This we have heard before, but Lyotard brings in a specifically ethical dimension that is more than a little indebted to Levinas’ obligation to the Other as that which ‘links’ humanity in the face of abjection.⁸² “There is an inexhaustible network linking listening to belonging, to the sense of obligation, a passivity I should like to translate as passibility” Lyotard continues (ibid). Here the mutic ‘underneath’ the sound as established in the previous chapter is translated to a type of obedience that involves the ethical impetus to listen in a way that is not mastered by a thought-body, but one that lets sound exist in the “being-now” of the release of the sound.

For Lyotard, every attempt at art meant entering into a state of deprivation, of struggle, of withdrawal from the external, to the pull of the internal battle that would have to be waged against the known into the unknown. However, this struggle never guaranteed anything (and certainly not salvation). This ‘unknown’ (or the Kantian void of nothingness mentioned above) was often to involve the analogy of angels, although there was nothing angelic about what these angels stood for in Lyotard’s usage. Art meant struggling with the angels, and the best you could hope for was to come out limping and damaged – total victory was and must remain always impossible and you never, *ever*, came out unscathed. This time Lyotard posits sound, or rather, the “temporal blowing up” of sound as that which composers must go into battle for. This battle that must be entered into with music is to wrest the temporal explosion of sound, the “ungraspable instant [of] its flight and ... wait” *away* from the domain of the angels (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 176). Contemporary music, such as that of Verèse, exposes this struggle as the quality in music that is now ‘at stake’ for Lyotard, as the “feeling of occurrence, which all contemporary music has in common” (ibid). This *feeling of occurrence* in music opens a further discussion on exactly what Lyotard means by the notion of obedience, and the wrestling of sound away from the ‘angels’.

Angelic Obedience to Listening

Lyotard places his angels in the zone of the sonic occurrence, and he draws on the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg’s ‘transcriptions’ of conversations with angels to evoke the type of ‘listening’ that contemporary music needs to capture. This is an interesting

⁸² It may or may not have been Lyotard’s intention to bring this ethical dimension into the paper, but it is worth noting that Emmanuel Levinas’ concert-pianist son Michael was one of the conference convenors at the ‘On Musical Writing’ conference held at the Sorbonne that Lyotard presented a version of this essay at.

juxtaposition of old-world mysticism with the metallic techno-scientific interface of the late twentieth-century (and beyond) that Lyotard creates. Both the conversations with angels and the technologically developed worlds evoke the inhuman ‘other-worldly’ context that Lyotard is striving for in this depiction of music, and both worlds are complicit in re-thinking what music can *do*. Lyotard describes how in one of his ‘conversations’, Swedenborg writes of the deities in charge of hearing, whose purpose is to act as conduit between sound and thought “in simple Obedience ... which do not reason to see if a thing is thus ... whence they can be called Obediences” (Swedenborg cited in Lyotard, 1991h, p. 178). Unadorned with ulterior motive, these ‘spirits’ are passively open to receiving sound in the same way as the puppets, as inanimate matter, are open to unfettered movement. Because of their passivity to hearing sound, these spirits enjoy a type of music that is ‘out of this world’ in its purity and ‘beauty’ before passing it along to the mind’s ear of ‘man’ where it must lose some of its evanescence if its ‘destination’ is understanding. This is what interests Lyotard, and that Swedenborg articulates with such unabashed mystical ‘logic’: that these ‘angels’ of listening seem to have a direct line into sound which is passed between them as “the correspondence between spirits”, and that “man knows nothing, and wants to know nothing, of this dependence of the ear on the spirit, of this taking hostage of hearing by the beyond of the body” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 178).

Of course Lyotard’s ‘beyond’ of the body is not the realm of angels, but it is the realm of artificial or synthetic sound opened by computerisation, that stretches and extends the audible as the “radically unthought” of sound, as “the unthought of the ear, something inaudible” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 172). Angels or computers, it doesn’t matter which, are the ‘beyond’ of the body and what we can sense, and for Lyotard, both exhibit the qualities of listening as an obedience to sound that is inhuman in origin and reaches towards the artistically inhuman in execution. Lyotard’s treatise on the warfare of sound is the battle that must be ‘fought’ through the new technologies in sound. The angelic listening that holds dominion over sound before it reaches the mind must be exposed in contemporary music so human ears can supplant the angels, and we can experience the first explosion of sound. Lyotard concedes Swedenborg’s rendition of transcendental music might be a little too fantastical. “On the other hand one can understand him to be designating precisely the essential features of what there is to be ‘liberated’ in sound, and in particular the essential features of what music aided by contemporary technologies is trying to free in sound, its authority, the belonging of the

spirit to the temporal blowing-up involved in the ‘being now’ of the heard sound” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 179).

The Sound-Feeling

Sound’s ‘authority’, as the realm that Swedenborg’s angels have control over, is exposed through extending the inaudible as the creation of new sounds, with the use of contemporary technology. This is the composer’s artistic ‘task’: “It is about extending the concept of the inaudible and the means of bearing witness to this”, Lyotard urges, and a necessary part of this process involves the working of computerised and digitalised technologies (Lyotard, 2009b, p. 44). However, Lyotard highlights two approaches composers can take in order for sound to be exposed. The first approach is one taken by John Cage, whose compositional pathway involves the use of sound as it is, to “let sound be” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 177). Not only are the bustling sounds of New York traffic put to use, but also in the infamous 4’33 in which the audience’s ‘silence’ is the central tenet of the ‘work’ of music. The second approach is the opposite of this, when both organic and synthesized sounds are combined and structured with rapid repetitions and more complex configurations. Lyotard names this “the Boulez tendency” (ibid). Either approach has the same aim for Lyotard, as both approaches open a zone for listening as *obedience* through either “a minimalism of the very complex”, or a heightened complexity of the minimal or ‘poor’ (ibid). What such music produces in the listener, however, is a ‘sound-feeling’ that places the mortal ear precisely in the position of Swedenborg’s angels. In both approaches, the opening up of this inaudible space in sound is “the aim is to return the ear to listening” (ibid). Lyotard explains this zone further:

There is no music, especially not as *Tonkunst*, without the enigma of this *Darstellung*, immediately transcribed into feeling before any objectivation and therefore, in a sense, before any ‘audition’, in a sound-feeling which is perhaps the most elementary presence *of* time or *to* time, the ‘poorest’ degree or state (although it is not a state) of being-time: *Durchlaufen* (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 176).

The sound-feeling as an obedience to sound is one in which the weave that “mutes listening is undone” (ibid). Lyotard’s point is that the contrapuntal affect of music, with its differences in timbres, tones, and musical forms, covers over the zone of the first emergence of sound – its explosion into being, and the aim is recover or reassert the primacy of this space. When describing his entry into post-war America society on a quest to find new sounds, Varèse was quoted as saying “I became a sort of diabolical Parsifal ... on a quest for a bomb to explode” (cited in Toronyi-Lalic, 2010, para. 12). Avant-garde composers such as Varèse blow apart

the ‘walls’ of the traditional forms or ‘frames’ of the western music tradition by concentrating instead on sound and extending the inaudible in sound. The musical frame as ‘container’ for the sound in traditional western music constructs is to be viewed with incredulity because even in such contexts, even “in this frame, even in the case of the greatest – Bach, Beethoven, Mozart – [the musical frame] can remain empty inside” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 179). But Varèse and others like him also blow apart the walls to an anthropological construct of listening, they wrestle the temporality of sound away from the angels and replace it instead back “to the marvel of the sound-event alone” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 177). This is the passivity of and to sound that is needed in order for music in its current context to still provide the means to affect and excite. The walls of the body as sound and flesh need to fall if obedience to the art of sound can be accomplished. “With these walls, a whole anthropology of sound falls” Lyotard explains. “The obedience revealed for a moment in *Tonkunst* (with or within new technology) means that we (who, we?) are due to the donation of the event. This request is ontological, as it were; no-one is asking us anything” (Lyotard, 1991h, pp. 180-181).

Conclusion

Like the change in destination of listening, the process promised by Lyotard - the working through of his thought as a working through of music – has altered the destination of the discussion from music to the lessons involved in ‘bearing witness’ to what is ‘at stake’ in music. Getting rid of the mind to respond automatically to sound, getting rid of the human to produce the sound needed to respond, getting rid of the ‘angels’ to listen properly to this sound, are the ‘lessons’ that Lyotard tries to teach. In his writing on music, Lyotard pulverises the musical form and dismantles the scaffolding of the ‘body’ of the musical object. With ‘anthropological’ walls dismantled, what we left have is only sound as matter – not even sound comes out unscathed. Music must now be placed in a position that exposes sound to be tapped into directly, without form, without meaning. This is the automatism to music that Lyotard evokes through the puppets, an automatism that is able to respond ‘directly’ and ‘obediently’ to music as matter as something both primordial and mechanistic. The art of sound as music has significance in the stretching of sound toward the inaudible as an endless quest aided by technology made necessary *because* of technology. Reaching to the ‘beyond’ of sound is what is left in music if it is to escape the rule of performativity that anticipates the ‘beyond’ in the present. Music can be performed through computerised

technologies, but not in the communicational and pragmatic *manner* of a computer because what it is that is musical is some ‘thing’ that escapes inscription. Will we ever hear what the angels hear? Probably not. But the struggle is what keeps on promising the possibility that we might, and that’s precisely what art is about: the promise of the impossible in the possible.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Pedagogy in the Shadows: Childhood and the Inaudible in Education

Prologue: Standing on the Edge

Everyday opinion sees in the shadow only the lack of light, if not light's complete denial. In truth, however, the shadow is a manifest, though impenetrable, testimony to the concealed emitting of light. In keeping with this concept of shadow, we experience the incalculable as that which, withdrawn from representation, is nevertheless manifest in whatever is, pointing to Being, which remains concealed (Heidegger, 1977, p. 154).

Another silence ... There might be no more presentations. - But you write: "That there be no phrase is impossible!" – That's right: the feeling that the impossible is possible. That necessity is contingent. That one must continue with no means to continue. The "and" with no hold. So not only the contingency of the "how" to continue, but the vertigo of the final phrase. Absurd, obviously. But the lightning-flash happens – it lights up, bursts in the nothingness of the night, of the cloud, of the blue sky (Lyotard in Bennington, 2010, para. 16).⁸³

Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better (Beckett, 1989, p. 101).

The three quotes that serve as the epigraph to this chapter provide the means from which shadows will be cast over a discussion about pedagogy. Shadow, silence, and failure: testimony, vertigo, and the impossible. These are not the qualities generally associated with education. Rather, illumination, voice, and success: mastery, linearity, and progress. *These* are the educative goalposts we are accustomed to. But Lyotard wants us to stare into the void of being, the unknown of thought, the inaudible of sound and the inhuman in the child. He wants us to turn our backs from the sun to look at where our shadows take us, to walk up to the precipice of a cliff and to lean over and let our toes curl around the edge. The 'vertigo of the final phrase' induces fear and terror – perhaps this is really the end? Perhaps there is nothing left to do. Perhaps we know everything and have created everything. Perhaps art really *is* dead. But Lyotard knows vertigo is not strictly a fear of falling from a great height; it can also be a fear of the uncontrollable compulsion to jump. He doesn't want us to jump, of course. Death must remain unknown, or at the very least, remain a deferred unknown. But he

⁸³ This quote is actually to be found in the 'Aristotle Notice' in *The Differend* (Lyotard, 1998a, p. 75). I like Geoffrey Bennington's translation better and was fortunate enough to be given this unpublished essay containing this translation by the author when I contacted him about a forthcoming anthology of Lyotard's work on various painters. The essay is part of the forthcoming publication on Sam Francis, at the time of writing, unavailable in New Zealand.

does want us to pause long enough to feel the immanence of pain inside pleasure, the monstrous inside the beautiful, the light emitting from the darkness of shadows, all beating in our thumping hearts when looking over the edge of our selves into the abyss of humanity. Standing on the edge elicits an interiority that emerges from what remains outside a system that bans all remainder and swallows it, “coopts” it to use Lyotard’s language of the 1960s⁸⁴, when remainder as indeterminacy and bafflement ‘occurs’. This remainder is the lightening flash that Lyotard describes above, emerging from the anterior, coming from nothing. But it *gives* us the next phrase “letting a givable come towards you” (Lyotard, 1991a, p. 18), and stops us from falling. The giddy terror of vertigo and the compulsion to jump are to be revelled in and celebrated as what makes us eminently human, all too human. You didn’t jump, but you felt for a moment what it might feel like if you did.

“Fail better”, Beckett tells us in the above epigraph. This is the negative repetition involved in Lyotard’s ‘working through’ as *Durcharbeiten*. Carry on the gesture of painting in writing, carry on the gesture of writing in sound, and carry on in the face of failure. The necessity of failure avoids the ‘putting an end to it, once and for all’ ethos perpetuated through the logic of performativity in the technological interface between computerised performance and human agency. Lyotard the teacher, Lyotard the activist, Lyotard the philosopher, Lyotard the travelling professor, Lyotard the curator, Lyotard the art critic, Lyotard the music critic, Lyotard the literary essayist, Lyotard the ‘novelist’; each ‘Lyotard’ incorporating a repetition of a gesture borne of whichever art medium is being dealt with, each in different guise, and each more a hesitation than continuation of the last. There is no linearity; rather the jagged zigzag between heterogeneous islands of thought in an archipelago⁸⁵ Lyotard created in spite of knowing that each attempt could never fully ‘capture’ presence. Alluding through representation that presence is unrepresentable, that failure opens to an emergence of some *thing*. Not everything can be definitively accounted for; it means we can try again, that you *have* to try again. This ‘working through’ that Lyotard deployed in his own eclectic approach to ‘bearing witness’ to the unrepresentable where the opacity of his writing style does the ‘work’ of theorising was always pedagogical in intent⁸⁶. You, the reader, need to work too. You’re a part of this. More than implicated, you too, are part of meeting the demand placed

⁸⁴ “Will we be bought back into the fold, “coopted” as we said in the sixties?” Lyotard explains in an interview (Lyotard, 1992c, p. 417).

⁸⁵ This description of a Lyotardian ‘archipelago’ comes from Michael Naas (Naas, 2007).

⁸⁶ A commentator who describes this well is Priest (Priest, et al., 2009) when, in this particular case talking of Lyotard’s fellow compatriot Jean Luc Nancy states that he “shares with other French thinkers of a certain generation and a certain inclination ... a tendency to implicate the elements of style in expressions of thought” (Priest, et al., 2009, p. 120).

on you by reading, writing and thinking. Lyotard looked inward to see from the outside to look backwards. Disorientated? The achingly familiar needs to be made foreign, Lyotard calls this an “intimist exoticism” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 186), and that’s part of the pedagogical demand.

“Always the gesture delivers a desert” Lyotard tells us (in Bennington, 2010, para. 18). The thesis up to this point has been structured as a wandering through of the ‘deserts’, as states of deprivation and isolation, delivered through the gesture of Lyotard’s writing. This form of wandering is a gentler evocation of pedagogy from the Greek *paidagogos* who took the hand of the young boy under his charge to walk him to school. Being taken by the hand is too much direction for Lyotard, too readily formed into a “grip” (Lyotard, 1993c). When describing his own journey in and around academia he instead uses the quaint term ‘peregrination’ as an exploration open to the ‘touch’ of the gesture in an odyssey marked by continuous new beginnings⁸⁷. Failing better, again and again. Each chapter up to this point has followed this lead, failing and beginning anew in each attempt to articulate what is essentially inarticulate and irreducible; doomed to failure. What is laid out in this final attempt, is another desert delivered by the inaudible gesture that gives a temporary sketch of the coordinates of a ‘non’-pedagogy, a pedagogy that is “poor” (Masschelein, 2010), unencumbered, that involves the ‘misery’ and ‘desolation’ of a mute ‘childhood’.

The implosion of form that Lyotard instigates by concentrating on the immaterial quality of artistic matter of sound and colour in the preceding chapters is transferred here also to the ‘matter’ of thought and the solitary attention each of us needs to pay to this matter. Wittgenstein’s map of an ancient town in Chapter Two morphs into a barren landscape that transfers “material powers to scents, to the tactile quality of the ground” in which we grope around in the darkness toward a promise “that something – but what? – might perhaps happen” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 186). However the immateriality of matter within this desolate landscape has tactile qualities that are ‘felt’ as corporeal ‘touches’ that lead us outward to the beyond of what we think we know. The inaudible, as the “unthought of the ear” (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 172) has a musical value that transcends the musical, toward what hasn’t yet been thought. What follows is the elaboration of this ‘beyond’ of the sensing body as the richly pedagogic space that vibrates at frequencies below perception, but which is vital in

⁸⁷ *Peregrinations* (Lyotard, 1988c) is the title of the only book, given as a set of lectures, that Lyotard wrote in English. His English was always very poor and the battles he had with his translator and colleague David Carroll are humorously recalled in Carroll (2000).

rejuvenating and transforming the ‘known’ in thought, to facilitate the emergence of the *unthought*.

The purpose of this chapter is to shape the journey of thought that has been traversed in the preceding chapters that have drawn on the inaudible affect in the realms of politics, art, and music. The aim of this journey is to clear a space for a discussion of pedagogy that emerges from the shadows cast by mastery and certainty. Following Lyotard, or the demand made by Lyotard, this chapter involves a writing *against* pedagogy as opposed to writing a singular approach *to* pedagogy. The aim is to avoid the trappings of a methodologically rich pedagogy that would assist any notion of a linear development of ‘progress’ from undeveloped child to fully mature adult, from dark to light, from suspicion to enlightenment, from unknown to known. Rather, the aim is instead to affect a stance that avoids the heavy and cumbersome impetus to understand meaning, so as to better deal with and be open to, what Lyotard delicately calls the “lightness of thoughts” (Lyotard, 1988c, p. 5). The notion of the inaudible has been engaged in this thesis to evoke the silent affect in which some ‘thing’ has been inscribed as sensation and feeling into our bodies before being registered or inscribed onto conscious thought, but which simultaneously orientates us toward the as-yet-unthought. This ‘moment’ creates a zone of affectability in the body that is marked by a loss of stable reference points and familiar cognitive coordinates that leave the self in a state of “inner desolation” (Lyotard, 1991, p. 187). The pedagogical import of this desolation is that it induces, negatively, sublimely, a feeling of the ‘beyond’ that exceeds the senses and thoughts of the body within a time and space that evades prescription and prediction.

The Inaudible in Context: A New Beginning and a Hesitation

To a large extent, I have deployed Lyotard’s approach to language as the guiding methodological thread in each chapter of the thesis. My stance has been to experience the poetry of Lyotard’s placement of words from the ‘inside’, in which the words themselves as an affect of matter in time and space have been more important than their external meaning. I have encountered problems along the way, and I now feel that it is appropriate to lay down these problems in relation to education and a notion of pedagogy that has always been my concern. Lyotard relies on metaphor and a certain degree of opaqueness that has enabled me to attach myself to what I considered to be the beauty of his words. I took much delight in

mixing my breath with the ‘wind’ of his thought⁸⁸. The biggest problem to the approach I have taken is that Lyotard’s writing, usually not explicit in the clearest of moments, generally avoids any sustained and *direct* engagement with education. Yet, institutionalised education did feature in his critique, and certainly featured dominantly in the narrative of his life. As mentioned above, virtually all writings were pedagogical in *intent* in that Lyotard clearly wanted to convey or even transfer a certain gesture beyond his own experience of that gesture to others. The pedagogical import of Lyotard’s writings ranged from wanting to continue the gesture of an artist of interest to a wider audience, to delivering lectures on political, social, and aesthetic fields to the public. Importantly, his most famous book was written for education and the ‘state’ of knowledge. In Bill Readings’ collection of *Political Writings* (1993h) Lyotard deals with the student uprisings of 1968 in which his role as both teacher and academic are positioned as central motifs in a wider critique of justice and ethics⁸⁹. Further, the motif of ‘childhood’ that is used as a title in at least one collection of letters starts to gain prominence in later writings that engages with childhood as a figure (or ‘zone’) of potentiality as opacity and indeterminacy.

From Lyotard’s days as a high school teacher, his involvement as a Marxist radical overshadows any discussion of his actions in the classroom. However, Lyotard clearly viewed teaching and his role as a teacher in both practical and ethical terms. In a recollection of Lyotard, Michel Butor recalls Lyotard took a job in a French high school after arriving back from Algeria that he despised (Butor, 2001). Did he not enjoy this job because it was teaching officers’ sons (something the tiring Marxist would have bridled against at any point of his political and academic career)? Was it because the level of intellectual curiosity was muted by the exuberances of adolescence? Was it because these boys challenged his authority? Considering the many anecdotes around Lyotard’s virtuosic debating skills this sounds unlikely. For instance, David Carroll (2000) describes his formidable rhetorical arsenal as lethal and usually invincible. However, if high school teaching was not to his liking, Lyotard certainly relished and honoured the life of the academic “peddling his postmodern wares” (Naas, 2007, p. 177) as a travelling professor and guest speaker until he became too ill to travel.

I have headed this section as a hesitation, not only for the indirect references to education in Lyotard’s oeuvre but also for my use of the notion of the inaudible in this thesis which has

⁸⁸ This metaphor of thinking as the wind comes from Hannah Arendt via Nancy Vansieleghem (2005).

⁸⁹ One of the more provocative examples of this stance is captured in the title ‘Tomb of the Intellectual’ (Lyotard, 1993j).

traversed much of Lyotard's writings. Lyotard's use of the term is not used directly in conjunction with education and this has been both liberating and frustrating. However, I have mobilised this notion in Chapter Three to depict the silent phrase affect as the immemorial dimension of indeterminacy at play on/within/through the political apparatus of modernity. Chapter Four elaborates the mute 'call' of art and painting when stripped down to elements of matter in time and space. In Chapter Five the inaudible covers the zone of infancy as a depiction of what lays outside capture and inscription. Chapter Six positions the inaudible as the powerful dimension to music that moves and excites us, and Chapter Seven draws on Lyotard's plea to extend the inaudible as what is 'at stake' in music as the condition of its existence in contemporary (postmodern) settings. Each of these chapters is a hesitation or new beginning, and each have been an attempt to foreground the pedagogical relevance of the inaudible to conceptions of education, and the relevance this journey of thought might have in educative contexts. Following on from this hesitation, this chapter is a type of resolution to this quandary that has also required another beginning aside from the above Prologue (which I have written in what Lyotard would have described as 'under the law' of his own writing). Of course, 'dissonance' will need to be a necessary part of this (deferred) 'resolution'.

How, then, could the inaudible 'speak' to education? What the preceding chapters have tried to perform is a clearing that has presented the inaudible as a space rich with potentiality and hope through a necessary negation of 'will', consciousness, mastery and certainty. Importantly, negation has been carried over, via Lyotard, to the constitution of the 'self' in which Lyotard draws on Aristotle and Kant in formulating a 'minimal soul', or *anima minima* as described in Chapter Four. This formulation bears directly on my discussion of education, because it is the idea of a minimal self ('soul' in my reading of Lyotard can be interchanged with 'self') that exists only as affected that is what I consider to be the deeply educative and inaudible 'zone' of potentiality in the constitution of the self. Pedagogy as the art of teaching in this context dissolves the hierarchical polarities between 'teacher' and 'learner', and instead deals with the inaudible as the openness to the 'infant' encounter of the event that is the potentiality common to all. This openness, as a criterion for accessing this zone, is in my reading of Lyotard also indicative of a certain disposition and attitude. Lyotard's oft-repeated call that is used in this thesis is to 'lend an ear' to the event, and it is this attitude and *attention* to the inaudible as the hidden power underneath cognisance and what we think we know, that is what I consider to be pertinent to pedagogy. In what follows, I will elaborate this notion of pedagogy as a type of attitude or disposition that celebrates the inaudible as that

which conditions both listening to the event and arriving at the event as the ‘learning’ encounter in education. As such, I do not plan to resolve a distinction between the presumably stable referents of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’. My intention, rather, is to initiate a series of new beginnings that draw on the thesis to this point, in order to sketch some ideas of how the inaudible as an *experience of childhood*, might be conceived in educative settings.

Childhood as Resistance: The Fall of the Wall

You want me to tell you that the music of Bach or Mozart would not have been capable of bringing down the walls of Jericho? Yes, that’s about it ...

Finally, the question of the excluded body (attention: excluded from the field, but present and the more present for its absence: in fact, the body in the margin, omnipresent, found anew) ...

It is at this price, the price of this ascesis, that the *Tonkunst* can make the walls of Jericho fall, the walls of our body, with their demands accredited by custom, and their haste towards early satisfactions (Lyotard, 1991h, p. 180)⁹⁰.

Taken from the essay ‘Obedience’ that is analysed in Chapter Seven, this fragment depicts the shattering of an anthropological, historicised body in terms of the power of music that transcends understanding and conceptual meaning. As the previous chapter explains, Lyotard called upon a type of obedience and discipline when considering music, which also came in the form of an appeal to imagine the unthought of the ear, so as to imagine and extend new and unknown emotions in and through music. The ‘body’ of music, in this case depicted under the names of Bach and Mozart, does not guarantee this power; often the ‘container’ is empty, having been emptied of its emotive powers through exact repetition (usually in the form of exchange). However, Lyotard here is also giving another warning: the point is not to ‘reanimate’ the human body, not to aim music at the satisfactions of the body primarily, but to continue working with and finding the *inhuman* in music. This is the inaudible dimension that inhabits (some) music when what is being dealt with is the matter of sound in time and space. The inaudible, as the source of inhuman power and affect within this temporal constellation of time and matter, demands a response – it turns the listener into an *addressee* who must answer in some way the call of what the music is asking. However, this response is not ‘ontological’ as such in that, Lyotard reminds us, “no one is asking us anything” (ibid). Rather, listening to the inaudible in this way involves an open disposition to the changing conditions of life, of having the option to create new worlds that shift us from merely hearing

⁹⁰ To avoid clutter I haven’t differentiated between Lyotard, and different voices. The first sentence is accredited by Lyotard to Giacinto Scelsi, and the second section is accredited to François Bayle. The final section is Lyotard.

sounds to glimpsing something wonderful. The response transforms us, forcing a re-orientation of our selves through displacing the ‘familiar’ with the strange. I headed this section as the ‘fall of the wall’ to evoke the erasure of the body as flesh, and as the container to lived conscious time, because I align myself with Lyotard’s stance that this ‘inhuman’ is timeless and bodiless. It is, rather, the radical ‘other’ that provokes a feeling of estrangement from our selves as different from what we think we know. It is a feeling of beginning anew that transcends bodily borders.

The question of the pedagogic value of the inaudible also hinges on the notion of *resistance* to structural configurations in societal, psychical and artistic constructs that either hinder or outright ban ‘remainder’ as indeterminacy. Here, the evocation of the ‘fall of the wall’ is more literal, and refers to a pivotal example in the dissolution of the grand narrative of communism symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Although Lyotard of course formulated the collapse of grand narratives before 1989, his own political and intellectual journey anticipated this political trajectory. However, a point of departure from the ‘story’ of the collapse of the grand narratives was Lyotard’s more subtle argument that the Berlin Wall emblematised the collapse of any alternative ‘world’ to the capitalist system based on development. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, any division between interior and exterior to this system also disintegrated. The collapse of this particular wall meant that there was nothing left with which to define ourselves *against* because “it is no longer possible or necessary to wish for a (radically) better world or to long to revolt, since the world as it currently exists is already a world guided by freedom [that is] a conditional freedom within the system but not with regard to alternative possible systems” (Masschelein, 1998, p. 521). This is a different collapse than that referred to above in relation to Jericho. Whereas in that case Lyotard is urging anthropological walls to fall in order to better receive sound as artistry and affect, the fall Lyotard depicts with the Berlin Wall as a lack of alternative, also bears on thinking the ‘impossible’. Masschelein identifies this as a restriction, in terms of imagination, that only recognises “the attention to the possible” (ibid). Imagining the impossible is possible, as Lyotard describes in the opening epigraph, is abandoned to the repetition of the already-known. In my reading, this also negates the inaudible.

Lyotard is careful to emphasise the perspective of ‘resistance’, and what is now needed, or indeed left, with which to resist the increasingly closed configurations of human existence that ‘forget’ what conditions the possibilities of certainty, mastery, and progress. In Chapter Two I introduce the notion of performativity in detail, as the rule or logic governing the

actualisation of the most efficient performance in a given system of forces. These systems, whether they are ‘living’ or ‘organisational’ as Lyotard explains, require a constant adjustment of their internal composition as energy in order to survive. Lyotard applies this equation to western societies that have evolved through a constant refinement of the performance of their inner structures that result in an ever-more differentiated and complex system. Here is the key paradox: the ‘system’, in whichever manifestation or form it presents itself, requires the most efficient performance that in turn increases and contributes to the further ‘complexification’ of the system. The term that Lyotard uses for this constant drive toward differentiation and complexification is, as we have seen previously, ‘development’. As Smeyers and Masschelein point out, “communication and discussion ... do not interrupt the system so much as provide the most effective means for it to sustain itself” (2000, p. 149), and as such, critique *itself* becomes a necessary component to the differentiation and self-sustaining mechanism of the system overall. Drawing on a particularly Lyotardian platform, the Lyotardian scholar Georges Van Den Abbeele writes of the self-perpetuating dimension of the (post)modern propensity to critique that Lyotard identifies, by asking:

What if the critique of a system were itself encoded as an institutionalised part of the system? It would seem, in fact, that the ways in which we question our world are themselves products of this world. Should we conclude pessimistically, then, that critical thought can never escape its entrapment by that which it supposedly criticizes? (Van Den Abbeele, 1992, p. xiv)

What Van Den Abbeele isolates in this question is the impossibility of critiquing ‘outside’ even the differing conditions of our existence. Rather, every ‘performance’ as action and act merely feeds the increasingly complex constructs of postmodernity. There is no space for an ‘outside’, as even emancipation and progress are judged on their overall performativity within the system (which lends an even more cynical view to the current purpose of the ideals of ‘peace’ and ‘dialogue’ on the globalised world stage). “Be operational (that is commensurable) or disappear!” claims Lyotard, and “Perform – or Else!” McKenzie reiterates in Chapter Two. The point is to continue the drive toward development through furthering complexity and searching for the ‘newest’ most efficient performance. Freedom, or the drive to freedom through critique as the vehicle with which we can define ourselves outside of the conditions of our existence, is illusory:

Emancipation is no longer the task of gaining and imposing liberty from outside. It no longer represents an ideal alternative that can be opposed to reality. Rather, emancipation is taken as one goal among many pursued by the system, an ideal that the system itself endeavours to actualise in most of the

areas it covers, such as work, taxes, marketplace, family, sex, race, school, culture, communication (Lyotard, 1993k, p. 113).

However, as Schwab points out in her insightful essay on Beckett and Lyotard, what is important in the drive toward complexity that marks postmodernity is the interventions of the arts and the instances of “minute vibrations of difference that introduce negentropy into an otherwise entropic universe” (Schwab, 2000, p. 67). These tiny differences produced within the realm of aesthetics are in fact crucial to the survival⁹¹ of a system that tends to repeat performances that start to weaken the structures until something ‘new’ emerges to counter this deterioration. Lyotard’s notion of performativity can actually be underpinned within a Freudian framework that uses the death drive (the drive toward death) as the internal logic that drives organic matter to inorganic, and life to death (Lyotard, 1999b). The ‘system’, often referred by Lyotard in terms of the late capitalist order of western developed countries (but also, as pointed out above, any organisational system with its own inner structure), operates in a natural state of entropy in which deterioration and extinction are the inevitable ‘goals’. What halts this deterioration is, if only for a moment, as Schwab points out above, the introduction of complexity as negentropy because the most efficient and ‘clean’ performance is always built on the most complicated premise. Going by this rule, Lyotard can state there is nothing less likely than the work of art, and it is this most unlikely of events that intervenes with a *temporality* that isn’t subsumed by the *free flow* of time on the move, that provides the means for a hesitation of the system toward death and extinction. Lyotard further explains this flow of time:

Freud said that, in the end, time, too – sequential time – must be conceived of as a ‘protective shield’. This would be a time of the complete, of the dense – saturated, and sufficient to the point of satiety – stripped of any modality of possibility (past or future); in short, total in its seriality. Thus non-being is excluded from it, as are inquietude and angst, and, to be sure, the faculty of judgement (Lyotard, 1999f, p. 161).

The pessimism that is often levelled at Lyotard is the result of a seemingly hopeless double bind: the system searches for the best performance, finds it, and then is absorbed (eventually) by the workings of the system itself. “The question I am raising here” Lyotard explains in relation to this supposedly hopeless situation, “is simply this: what else remains as ‘politics’ except resistance to this inhuman?” (Lyotard, 1991e, p. 7). However, it is the notion of one of the two ‘inhuman’ as introduced in Chapter Four that offer Lyotard the hope that is needed

⁹¹ Although I am aware this looks like a contradiction when compared to my use of ‘survival’ at the end of this section, I am differentiating here between a process and a ‘state’.

(even if this too, eventually finds itself co-opted by the system). As we have seen, the first inhuman is the dimension that drives an increasingly technology-driven existence to the inhumane state of separating from all human control and “breaking camp and leaving earth” (Lyotard, 1999b, para. 56). Here is the self-perpetuating logic of performativity that fuels a system whose aims are to continue to develop indefinitely. The second inhuman, if we are to recall Schwab’s minute temporal vibrations of difference, provides the only form of resistance in a system that has no outside but is relentlessly driving itself toward its own death. This inhuman, as Lyotard insists, is radically separated from the corporeal human and exists instead as immaterial matter within the realm of the arts, but can only be called upon through the lens of an area of indeterminacy that ‘inhabits’ what already exists. This clandestine inhabitant is the ‘other’ inhuman, an inhuman that is ‘childish’ in its naïve simplicity and lack of sophistication when contrasted with the ‘knowing’ adult world. Childhood, according to Lyotard, as that which involves all that is not *properly* human, is all that is left with which to resist. If this inhuman childhood is ignored in the technocratic, techno-scientific drive to the other inhuman that pays no heed to justice, then all that can be hoped for in these times marked by this separation, is to live as, merely, *survivors*.

Beyond Survival: Childhood *As If*

How can we transform the functional to the wonderful in education, or put another way, the instrumentalist capture of time to the evanescent instant of the event? It is perhaps no surprise that, in one of his most beautiful passages on childhood Lyotard situates his discussion within the thoughts of Hannah Arendt. Here Lyotard, via Arendt, deals primarily with the ethical response of the ‘survivor’, and the life-depleting forces of survival as the bare conditions of life⁹² bereft of any new and potentially life-affirming qualities. Arendt’s survivor was always of interest to Lyotard, and always this survivor as ‘witness’ was (infamously), for Lyotard, a traitor⁹³. This has been a recurring motif in the thesis, and it is worth reiterating here that for Lyotard, what is powerful and moving in an experience can never hope to be fully ‘captured’, or witnessed; there must always be remainder in order to ‘carry on’ (and have the chance to start anew). The witness must *always* fail⁹⁴. By way of explaining this from a different vantage point, Lyotard mobilises the notion of ‘sensus communis’ taken from Kant as a kind

⁹² This comes from Arendt’s notion of ‘bare biological life’, or *zoe*. (Arendt, 1958, p. 313).

⁹³ It is also important to note that Lyotard held Arendt’s work in very high esteem, but expressed reservations about his knowledge and use of her work, and a certain amount of reluctance with certain aspects of it (Lyotard, 1999f).

⁹⁴ It is also worth noting that Arendt’s ‘survivor’ sprang directly from the stories of those who ‘survived’ extermination in the death camps and who bore the guilt of this survival along with the ethical need to respond and recount these stories.

of 'common sense' that enables mankind the capacity to communicate and feel beauty together. However, Lyotard's conception of what we have in common is deliberately negative in terms of 'capacities' and 'communication'. Rather, what we have in 'common' for Lyotard works negatively in ways that mark us each in our singularity. This commonality is a feeling of a *lack*, of a feeling in time that we are somehow bereft and ill prepared for what we confront together in life. As Schwab explains, Lyotard's opposition to the 'positive' commonality in *sensus communis* is that the feeling of a lack is "anterior to and can therefore not be reduced to communication and pragmatics" (Schwab, 2000, p. 72). This is why the sublime is so important to Lyotard, as it works on the 'minimal soul' through negation, abjection and the threat of death. This threat is 'lived' through the voluptuousness and fullness of meaning and experience, that simultaneously hints at an empty void of nothingness and ultimately, of annihilation. Infused with this lurking menace, the sublime resists communicability through understanding and meaning, it instead induces a state of deprivation "because terror (through many expressions – lack of light, lack of words, lack of sounds) is a feeling of the immanence of death" (Lyotard, 1989a, p. 22). It is in this state of deprivation that I place Lyotard's meaning of infancy in the realms of 'childhood'. It is now time for the passage referred to above to depict the paradoxical qualities of pain, emergence and threat, in this evocation of childhood in the following:

The effect is childhood that knows all about *as if*, all about the pain of impotence and the complaint of being too small, of being there late (compared to others) and (as to its strength) of having arrived early, prematurely – childhood that knows all about broken promises, bitter disappointments, failings, and abandonment, but which also knows all about dreaming, memory, question, invention, obstinacy, listening to the heart, love, and real openness to stories. Childhood is the state of the soul inhabited by something to which no answer is ever given. It is led in its undertakings by an arrogant loyalty to this unknown guest of which it feels itself a hostage. Antigone's childhood. I understand childhood here as obedience to a debt (which we can call a debt of life, of time, of event; a debt of being there in spite of everything), a debt for which only the persistent feeling of respect can save the adult from being no more than a survivor, a creature living on reprieve from annihilation (Lyotard, 1999f, p. 149).

What Lyotard is saying here, and how he says it (even through the muted web of translation) evokes something close to the experience of wonderment and astonishment that constitute an everlasting debt. As the heading suggests however, perhaps the notion of merely surviving is not as foreign to education as we might think, and perhaps the experience of wonderment and astonishment and the lost time associated with these experiences is more a rarity than commonplace occurrence. When bringing in the argument above about the lack of exteriority

in a system that accounts for everything, the special interiority of this childhood that Lyotard evokes in the above quote becomes especially significant. Here is the inside to a system that can provide a temporal piece or fragment of resistance to the drive of development that is found ‘in amongst’ the vestiges of the educational experience as lived time. Critique in education can no longer provide this irreducible space in education, because it can no longer hope to provide the antithesis of the educational system – rather critique itself is embedded within the fabric of the educational system as the very conditions that sustain its inherent structures of ‘order’ and ‘power’ (Vansieleghem, 2010). Further, the experience of childhood above differs from traditional conceptions of ‘the child’ as a ‘learner’ who critiques herself constantly in order to develop her identity, in that even this process of constant questioning falls under the purview of Lyotard’s pervasive principle of development. This time, what is being developed (through critique and constant self-adjustment) is the developmental track to “self-realisation and identity building” (Masschelein, 2001, p. 3) so important to the narrative of educational ‘progress’. Even the journey of self-discovery and self-realisation is put to use as a refinement of performances in the development of the self. Falling under the purview of development, questioning from what we know about ourselves and therefore from this perspective of cognisance, merely repeats what we already know, and is already known. Performativity reigns supreme.

Lyotard’s emphasis that a child is born ‘before’ it can speak and use language as an interlocutor is a point I would like to emphasise in relation to education and the disarming openness that I think is part of the excitement of the learning event. The ability to lose yourself in time, to truly be engaged in an imaginative and magical journey of wonderment and astonishment, is an aspect to education that is often forgotten in order to hurry forward to what the supposed ‘learning outcome’ require. But this time in reverie is resonant with the mute time a child goes through before she can speak. Words are dissolved in the types of communication and engagements a child has with the world, they don’t need them. Rather, a child deals in shapes and pictures, and in sounds that are not chiselled into words. The wide-eyed astonishment at all that is new in the world initiates a type of reception to language and events that is uninhibited and open; the child is both *exposed* to the world and *receptive* in a way that makes this world ‘speak’ in affects. This type of exposure and reception to the event performs a stutter in the continuous flow of time; it transforms ‘time’ from moving to stand still so the world does ‘nothing’ but shine. It is this true openness to stories that Lyotard speaks of, in which we catch our breath in utter enthrall, that is important in education. It is

the willingness to let the walls that are constructed around our world crumble to the ground, where we find the desire to begin a search for a new world we couldn't have predicted existed before we began. A world, perhaps, with a depth and space for shadows.

Childhood, in this Lyotardian vein, starts from the irreducible, from questions that are 'given' from outside what we know. Questions such as: What is this? How do I begin? How do I live with this unknowable? Lyotard calls this questioning in childhood, the "vocation to begin", to work with the feeling of the 'as if' as the starting point without recourse to the 'reality' and the '*what if*' of the adult world. This childhood that works first with 'as if' is an openness to *feel* unbridled joy, but also to feel the sadness and disappointment that is part of the risk of this openness. This is the 'debt' that Lyotard speaks of, when he describes childhood in the following terms of the 'as if', in that "childhood consists in the fact of being and acting as if one could nonetheless pay off the enigma of being there ... of the complex, of the event, not in order to enjoy it, but to transmit it, so that it might be put off, passed on ... it is like a debt of beginning" (Lyotard, 1999f, p. 149). This notion of debt will be returned to in relation to education.

Listening as Attention and Exposure

A baby must see its MOTHER's face as a landscape. Not because its mouth, fingers and gaze move over it as it blindly grasps and sucks, smiles, cries and whimpers. Nor because it is 'in symbiosis' with her ... We should assume, rather, that the face is indescribable for the baby. It will have forgotten it, because it will not have been inscribed ... This mother is a mother who is a timbre 'before' it sounds, who is there 'before' the coordinates of sound, before destiny (Lyotard, 1991, p. 189).

This thesis has concentrated on the inaudible as what gives a 'quality' to how the world 'speaks' to us underneath music and voices in written and spoken forms, as a silent inscription that is felt as an affect. The inaudible in my reading is not the cold silence that I refer to in relation to Lyotard's frustration with Heidegger in Chapter Three. Nor is it the imposition of silence that I also refer to in Chapter Three and Four in relation to extermination and annihilation in the death camps of World War Two. It is the 'mutic' silence of being that I draw upon to talk about music in Chapter Six, in which Lyotard dissolves all that is 'proper' and human into an animality that instead has us all as writhing beasts rubbing up against each other in lament to find solace from the threat of death. The inaudible, then, is a more complex reading of silence that involves a singularity and particularity in a context of being with others in which a type of 'listening' is both a binding

and ethical commonality. The pedagogical implications of listening to the inaudible encompass the area of music in this thesis, because of the dimension of timbre as that which produces the “little sensations” as the artistry in music as organised sound. Timbre, in relation to the discussion of childhood above, requires an unfettered ‘childish’ openness to listening. Timbre is also, in relation to this discussion, the ‘childhood’ of the encounter of this musical event in which matter in time and space penetrates the ‘walls’ of the body and shifts our countenance toward an experience of that which is radically ‘other’, or inhuman. The passage above perhaps best encapsulates and beautifully illustrates the provocation of the ‘other’ in the inaudible in which timbre is the inaudible quality that is felt before it is understood.

What the baby is sensing in the opening excerpt to this section is a type of listening that I think comes close to a pedagogy of listening that exposes the self to the world in the ‘text’, in this instance, of the mother’s face. The mother’s face is depicted as a landscape that can only be sensed as timbre, because of the ‘forgetting’ that is involved in the pure openness and temporality of the face as an event. While Lyotard is mixing the metaphors (between looking and hearing), the orientation to seeing and experiencing in this world of a mother’s face, is the positional orientation that would be required in listening for the inaudible. It is important to note here that I am not suggesting the inaudible can be ‘heard’, in the same way that the baby cannot ‘see’ the mother’s face in any other way than as an affect. I consider this to be a mode, or form of attention in listening that does not try to ‘fill in’ the gaps with understanding or meaning, but rather inhabits this listening as a wondering odyssey exposed to the experience itself. Recalling Chapter Seven, this is the ‘direct access’ to listening that Lyotard accredits the angels, whose direct exposure to sound he uses in relation to what we should aim for in music and continuing the (ethical) task of extending the inaudible.

However, listening, as a form of attention that is both exposed and open to potentiality is perhaps best exemplified in the examples in Chapter Seven through the empty intentionality of the puppets and (more gruesomely) in the body’s openness to the incision of ‘the law’ in Chapter Four. Here I draw on the notion of ‘attention’ that originates from Lyotard’s fellow compatriot Simone Weil, who formulated an attention in which “all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything” (Weil, 2001, p. 62). The puppets, free of thoughts and intentionality, are of course displaying the supreme illustration of a lack of *will* that renders their movements with ‘outer-worldly’ grace. The puppets’ obedience to direct mechanical instruction obeys only the ‘law’ of gravity in which to render the translucency between

puppeteer and the transformative gracefulness of their movements. This mode of attention, following Weil, is a form of stillness of the mind and detachment, with no start or end, no ‘reward’ and no inherent intentionality. The puppets do not project any energy other than simply obeying the instantaneousness of their instructions in a way that results in a being-present without a climactic ‘reason’ for this presence other than for the openness to the ‘command’ of the movements. Roberts (2008) considers this openness as a purposefulness that, in its ‘emptiness’, cultivates the development of the habit and power of attention that sustained concentration requires. For Weil, this is a kind of attention that is *generous*, opening to the command of the outside and returned in a form of *grace* (Weil, 1952). As with the angels, Lyotard’s use of the puppets to portray this kind of attention, is once again to provide an illustration of a mode of *listening* that is totally unencumbered – it is a listening that is ‘purely’ exposed to a reception and the silent command that is asked in response to this reception.

The type of listening to the inaudible that I am trying to formulate involves being exposed and the willingness to be (silently) ‘cut’ into by ‘matter’. The close reading of Lyotard’s analysis of the short story by Kafka is particularly useful in depicting the cut or incision of what Lyotard terms as the ‘law’. In my reading in Chapter Five, I predominantly refer to the law in terms of subjugation to the logic of performativity. However, the cruel incision of the law that I speak of, in educational terms, can also be seen as the affect of knowledge as matter, and the affect of artistry as a matter. Viewed from this perspective, the body mobilises the infant openness to the cut of Kafka’s needle and ‘learns’ this knowledge on the body as an incision and bleeding wound. Although I acknowledge the violence of this ‘fable’ to be extreme, I don’t think it should ever be underestimated just how knowledge ‘acquisition’ affects the self and changes the self. This happens sometimes forcibly, sometimes gently, but *always* brings about a change nonetheless. The attention to what is present in our relation to the world, and the way we are affected by matter in a constellation of time and space within this world is also, I would argue, what particularises and singularises the ‘self’ from others. What Kafka’s torture device symbolises from this angle, is the element of necessary suffering and disquietude that is part of the process of being cut into, of being attentive, by and to matter. In this way, knowledge and thinking must be thought alongside a certain element of pain and suffering in the process of its acquisition, or, as Lyotard disarmingly states, “the unthought hurts because we’re comfortable in what’s

already thought” (1991a, p. 20). Here Lyotard again has us fighting with angels as he did in Chapter Seven, and limping toward the unthought.

There’s a Monster in the Classroom: Presence and the Inaudible as an ‘Impoverished’ Pedagogy

There’s a monster in the classroom. *It squats quietly in the corners of the room in a gathering of formless energy, “a flatus ... a toothless cavity, a flabby muzzle” (Lyotard, 1997d, p. 224). It works by astigmatism and diffraction, always at the edges of visibility, disappearing from direct gaze but hovering at the limits of sight. It doesn’t sound out words that communicate meaning, rather, it breathes and mutely moans a rattle as a “torpid instrument by which nothingness whispers its horror” (ibid). In contrast to the luminous hope shining through white teeth, glossy hair, and the ‘succulence’ of young flesh (Beckett), the monster darkly seethes with threat, menace and nullity. You can’t touch it, see it, hear it, or smell it. Reach out blindly and grasp it, and it’s gone. It doesn’t care about you, it’s not for you, addressed to you, or about you; it just ‘appears’, sometimes, without ‘notice’. However, for an instant the monster “cleaves” through the thick web of time and “plants [its] claw right into the event” (Lyotard, 2001, p. 64), seizing you round the heart, and forcing you to catch your breath. You don’t know the monster has arrived. It’s only ‘afterwards’ in a feeling of disquietude, anxiety, even shame, that you sense a presence that for a moment took you outside yourself and dissolved the classroom, with its scented veil of PVC glue, paint, dusty books and disinfectant, into some other world. The monster decomposes the world you know of the classroom to something magical, only to drop you back onto the faded yellow and red striped mat the moment you realise you’ve left, with a painful thud. This is the true menace of the monster’s presence: it is where you learn the threat of imminent privation that lives alongside the fullness of the event as the first hint that with life, comes death; with the capacity to feel, lies the threat of annihilation, and that somewhere within this double bind you have a responsibility to remember. The monster signals that “speech, light, sound, life would be absolutely lacking. That’s terror. Suddenly, the threat is lifted, the terror suspended, it’s delight” (Lyotard, 1997a, p. 245). Childish, you strike up an easy accord with the monster and even hope for it to return. But each time you’re too late. The monster’s presence surprises you, catching you ‘unawares’, and you miss it. You do, however, sometimes hear an inaudible command left as a trace that calls to you, asks you, demands of you, to pause and listen, and to respond.*

A pedagogy I am attempting to point towards in this vignette is one that works ‘in the shadows’ cast by what we think we know about education and the acquisition of ‘knowledge’ in terms of a rational, ‘thinking’ self in control and conscious of the world in which she inhabits and creates. This thesis has not dealt with policy changes or educational research in the traditional sense directly, and this approach has been intentional. Apart from a few brief references, I have taken the view there is enough black ink on white paper in these areas to keep everyone busy for a very long time. I am instead interested in what is in the cracks, the shadows, the whirling maelstrom of matter behind the words and information in educational research, and the dark spaces left by what we commonly think are airtight ‘givens’ in education. This isn’t a simple manifesto about learning to listen for things we can’t hear. The aim of this thesis has also been about the pedagogical task of *writing* a mode, what I’ve referred to previously as *écriture*, of relating to the world that is open to mystery and intrigue. Writing a mode implies an active stance, of being involved and present in ways that enrich our lived experience that transcend classroom walls. It is also worth noting that my use of ‘present’ and ‘active’ here differ somewhat from the consciously aware and self-critical subject who slots easily into predetermined and compartmentalised categories of educational achievement and development. Rather, the aim throughout the thesis has been to search for ways of listening and being attentive to the inaudible that might leave open the possibility for unpredictable transformations that defy ‘prescriptions’ and predictions. In this context of the inaudible, writing as *écriture* has pedagogical value in that it provides the means with which to stand aside and resist the logic of performativity and the all-encompassing drive to development in and outside of education.

Listening to the inaudible in education requires an impoverished or ‘poor’ pedagogy as “a poor art: the art of waiting, mobilizing, presenting” (Masschelein, 2010, p. 49). Such an impoverished pedagogy has no overriding method that dictates predetermined rules or destinations as to how you should feel and what, exactly, you should be learning or how you should be teaching. I am instead interested in the artistic dimension to what an impoverished pedagogy would require, particularly in terms of the unfolding temporality in music that Lyotard identifies in Chapter Six and Seven, and the inaudible command he identifies as constitutive of art in Chapter Four. Following this impoverished stance in pedagogy, the writing that I perform in the vignette is intended not merely to describe a scene that might be read as fantastical with its depiction of a monster and magical ‘other’ world. Rather, the writing is *itself* part of what it is I’m responding to in and through my use of Lyotard. This is

a response that involves an ‘interior’ listening to the gesture particular to Lyotard’s writings as a command that asks of me to reshape, re-craft, and continue this gesture in my own ‘writing’. This is a *re-writing* of Lyotard, but also a rewriting of the familiar scene of a classroom that is all of a sudden a very foreign land of unexplained mystery where monsters are free to roam. As such I am asking for a ‘shadowy’, artistic, dimension that ensures an impoverished pedagogy so that space and time can be given over to the ‘marvel’ of being seized by some *thing* (Lyotard would say silently affected, cut into, inscribed upon). This is a pedagogy that calls for you to be attentive in a way that is open to this seizure; even when that openness will necessarily mean a shift from what is comfortable and known to a position that is uncomfortable, unknown and exposed. Such an impoverished and unencumbered pedagogy that leaves you exposed also makes you wait and even celebrates the slow or even static dimensions to reading and writing.

To a certain extent I need to acknowledge another ‘monster’ in the room. There is quite a heavy use in this thesis of the word ‘terror’ and illusions to, even the necessity for, pain and suffering, deprivation and solitude. While of course I am not advocating a literal application of these qualities to be inflicted onto children as a type of punishment or sadistic ritual, I do however acknowledge the sense of disciplined and sustained attention that is needed to be truly and unflaggingly *attentive*. My point, alongside Lyotard, is this doesn’t happen without a certain degree of suffering and while it shouldn’t be the main focus of education, neither should it be completely ignored. Lyotard talks of the ascetic dimension to the empty intentionality of the puppets, and in more general terms he talks of the necessity to ‘purge’ the self so as to be ‘minimal’, existing only as affected in the manner of the ‘anima minima’ described in Chapter Five. I read this as a plea to stop and breathe and have the freedom and space to wonder and explore in a way that is un-fragmented and sustained and not to react, but to respond to what is being asked of you in a way that is not hampered by predetermined behavioural and cognitive ‘outcomes’. Learning can be painful. It is often accompanied by very intense frustration, and degrees of fear. A pedagogy that asks you to enter into the unknown is one that cannot shy away from this darker aspect of what it means to be *educated* in the sense of *educere*, as a leading out from what you know, and the necessary discomfort this involves. Further, Lyotard qualifies this pain, heavy with the immanence of the threat of death, with the violence inflicted on the self as the process of a violent domestication that is inherent to education. One version of this violence manifests itself in the form of a

subjugation of rules and norms; the other is a violence that is sublime, a heady mixture of pleasure and pain, that doesn't leave you unscathed, but does let you begin again.

The focus throughout the thesis has been on the nominal condition of artistic 'matter' as an immaterial quality that 'works' as an inscription and affect in space and time, and which offers a temporal disjuncture to preconceived or pre-programmed conceptions of time. My focus on the inaudible in art and music particularly, has privileged the importance of listening for what may not be 'heard', but is *present* nonetheless. In keeping with the notion of an impoverished pedagogy that escapes prescription and heavy methodology, the dissolution of recognisable forms to 'formless' (immaterial) matter is a continuation of what Lyotard describes as constitutive of "the imperceptibility of the instant" (Lyotard, 1991g, p. 82). At the start of this section I refer to a monster as the illusive 'presence' in the classroom that arrives, seemingly, in the 'instant'. The use of the term 'monster' draws on this imperceptibility that Lyotard identifies as part of what avant-garde artists and art tried to make 'perceptible' or explicit. By stripping the art form to unrecognisable elements of formless matter, the works "appear to the public of taste to be 'monsters', 'formless' objects, purely 'negative' entities". The same parallel can be made of Lyotard's plea to extend the inaudible in music, that is, to make 'music' unrecognisable in order to preserve the musical. "When the point is to try to present that there is something that is not presentable" Lyotard reminds us, "you have to make presentation suffer" (Lyotard, 1991j, p. 125). I use the 'negative entity' of a monster at the beginning of this section to depict a pedagogy that decomposes and retunes our modes of perception to the un-form of the inaudible as an attentive mode of listening that can 'hear' the monstrous as that which remains elusively unknown and unthought. This is the 'mutic', the nuance, the timbre of matter that "assumes a nearly tactile quality, touching us at the level of something that is utterly familiar but has never been thought" (Schwab, 2000, p. 67). The monster, here, is *presence*, "a marvel, that seizes one, strikes one, and makes one *feel*" (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 97).

What is monstrous in this 'presence' is sublime, in that the pedagogy I am alluding to is one where the negative space, the withdrawal, the shadow, the unknown and unthought, the formless, and the inaudible, are all that we have left in which to work with and to meaningfully engage in a world that absorbs temporality. It is the "imperfections, the distortions of taste, even ugliness" that Lyotard identifies in avant-garde art that provide the shock needed to lift us out of one world to put us at a distance from ourselves to create a different world. "Art does not imitate nature" Lyotard continues, "it creates a world apart..."

one might say in which the monstrous and the formless have their rights because they can be sublime” (Lyotard, 1991m, p. 97). An impoverished pedagogy as one that cultivates attention also works with the sublime as the affect of matter in which an inaudible presence is only ‘registered’ as an affect upon its withdrawal. In education, the positional orientation of opening up to different worlds also alters the subject positions of ‘teacher’ and ‘student’ to that of addressee and receiver of language and affect. A pedagogy that focuses on the withdrawal and sense of loss felt through the sublime shatters any reference to subject identification and instead utilises these feelings of loss and anxiety as the markers of an interiority that instigates a turn inwards. Matter, and the sublime affect of matter can only be ‘felt’ in time and space by a ‘minimal soul’, which has been inscribed by this matter marking the soul as both singular and withdrawn from cognition.

The type of pedagogy that acknowledges the inaudible as a disjuncture in time, in which there is room for the presence of ‘monsters’, is neither spontaneous nor shallow. What I am trying to articulate is a pedagogy that is impoverished in that it pays no recourse to the end ‘result’ whether that be a learning destination, for some kind of profit, or for measuring and monitoring ‘performances’ or ‘progress’. There is no methodology to follow, and no rules to break. Rather, an impoverished pedagogy shifts the positional orientation from one that focuses on ends to that of merely learning to *receive* language like an infant as a series of beginnings. If Lyotard’s use of anamnesis is to be taken into account in what we mean by a constant series of beginnings (through a feeling of ‘as if’ as explained in the previous section) then what returns in each beginning is the *promise* of the gesture, that there is always a ‘next phrase’ even if what this phrase might be seems impossible to predict. However, I don’t intend this formulation of an impoverished pedagogy to advocate an easy relativism and eclecticism in which an ‘anything goes’ ethos dominates over deep thinking. What is certainly not ‘poor’ about a pedagogy that follows no rules is the rigorous re-crafting and refining that is involved in the implosion of form that listening to the inaudible necessitates. Rather than “the period of slackening” (1984a, p. 71) that Lyotard identifies as both a symptom and cause in postmodernity, this re-crafting of matter has a musical value in that it is tied to a temporal unfolding in time and space. An impoverished pedagogy in this regard may not have instructions and rules, but as Masschelein (2010) points out, it is *generous* in that it gives the time and space in which to think in a way that is undisturbed, sustained, and attentive. Schwab gracefully articulates this process in terms of dissolving the world we know through artistic approaches so new worlds are created, in the following:

Undoing the very conventions through which we organize our perception of the world, this ‘poetry’ exposes us to an ontological abyss, generating the vertiginous mental spirals, the delirious void ... Far from being pre-symbolic or pre-linguistic, this artistic practice or poetics utterly relies on craft, while undoing the history of its conventional uses. It relies on the texture of the written word, the architecture of space, the intricacies of coloration and timbre (Schwab, 2000, p. 69).

While Schwab is referring to Lyotard here in broader artistic terms than purely pedagogical, this quote articulates what I refer to as the ‘vertigo’ of the last phrase in the opening epigraph to this chapter. Here is the dissolution of the world in which we recognise and understand meaning and form, to the nominal ‘deprived’ world consisting only of matter. Texture, timbre, I’ll add nuance, are the poetry or musicality that Lyotard isolates as the qualities that escape capture and determination. Instead, these qualities perform a displacement in what can be pre-determined and calculated, programmed and predicted. “Indeterminacy exercises a gentler violence over the determinate” Lyotard explains (1991, p. 184), and it is the elusive and fleeting presence of such artistic qualities that ensure what we think we know will always be subject to doubt. It is such resistance to notions of certainty and mastery, previously called the ‘law’ in Chapter Five, that position education as a crucial site in which to provide the resistance to a system that is built on certainty and the accompanying performativity that is required for such certainty. Listening to the inaudible disrupts the linearity of performativity, and in education allows for an area of indeterminacy to emerge in which to start again.

Final Conclusions: Music, Pedagogy, and Writing the Inaudible

If you think you’re describing thought when you describe a selecting and tabulating of data, you’re silencing truth. Because data aren’t given, but givable, and selection isn’t choice. Thinking, like writing or painting, is almost no more than letting a givable come towards you (Lyotard, 1991a, p. 18).

This thesis has been an attempt to let a ‘givable’ come towards me. Beginning as a critique that primarily drew on Lyotard’s notion of performativity, the thesis then set out to offer an exploration of the inaudible as the space and emergence of an indeterminate zone that *affects* and *excites*, and which defies programmatic or prescribed destinations and ends. While certainly inspired by what it is that is musical in music, the thesis traversed alternative sites aside from music in the realms of art and politics that led to a discussion of the pedagogical significance of the inaudible as a temporal quality in which something ‘other’ is present. Talk of ‘diffracted traces’, ‘puppets’, ‘writhing beasts’, and my own creation of a classroom ‘monster’ have been part of a methodological stance that has involved ‘rewriting’ Lyotard as

a process of ‘working through’, and necessarily, starting anew. Here, the fleeting, ungraspable, temporal dimension to the inaudible has been reworked, imbued with indeterminacy, into the fabric of my text and celebrated as a deeply pedagogical instance of hope and renewal.

What is at stake in education is clearing a space for thinking that, for a moment, has no use and no functionality, no purpose and no destination. Thinking, when described as letting a ‘givable’ come towards you, necessitates an emptying of the soul that enables a type of listening to an inaudible presence that arrives outside of cognition. Lyotard shows the importance of art in creating this space, and the importance of music in identifying and extending the inaudible within this space. This requires a pedagogy that is attentive, that is quiet and unhurried, that offers stillness and that is open and prepared to wait; in short, that offers a total contrast to the crowded and busy mode of living that is characteristic of developed societies and the busy performativity inherent to them. This thesis has tried to articulate, through writing, both the characteristics and importance of this space and the importance of feeling there is a remainder that feeds thought toward the unknowable. A pedagogy that is unencumbered, impoverished ‘enough’ to listen for the inaudible, reminds us that education grounded in notions of certainty, efficiency, and progress, runs the risk of forgetting that the condition for the *possibility* of knowledge, is the mute, inarticulacy of the unknown. The inaudible needs our attention to listen and to not forget this debt, so as to take a risk in a shadow, and to start anew.

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