



City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Pace, I. (2007). Book Reviews: Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction by Theodor W. Adorno, Henri Lonitz, Wieland Hoban; Philosophy of New Music by Theodor W. Adorno, Robert Hullot-Hentor; Letters to his Parents by Theodor W. Adorno, Christoph Gödde, Wieland Hoban, Henri Lonitz. *Tempo* (London, 1939): a quarterly review of modern music, 61(242), pp. 61-73. doi: 10.1017/s0040298207000307

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/4734/>

Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0040298207000307>

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to [City Research Online policy](#).

Theodor W. Adorno, *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, edited Henri Lonitz, translated Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, translated, edited, and with an introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

Theodor W. Adorno, *Letters to his Parents*, edited Christoph Gödde and Henri Lonitz, translated Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

After several decades during which English readers have had to put up with only a selection of Adorno's writings, some in very poor translations, much has improved in recent years. Pioneering and acclaimed translations of *Quasi una fantasia* and *Sound Figures* by Rodney Livingstone¹, were joined by the commanding selection *Essays on Music*, edited by Richard Leppert², in all of which a wide selection of Adorno's writings on music were made available in English for the first time, whilst more broadly Adorno scholarship in English has benefited from new translations of *Aesthetic Theory* by Robert Hullot-Kentor³ and the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Edmund Jephcott⁴, whose earlier translation of *Minima Moralia*⁵ has been much admired. Polity Press have been equally active in translating lesser-known Adorno texts from the ongoing series of *Nachgelassene Schriften*⁶, of which less than a third of the planned total have so far been published by Adorno's principal German publisher Suhrkamp. These have included a variety of important philosophical texts and, most significantly for musicians, the collection of Adorno's sometimes fragmentary writings on Beethoven⁷. Some of Adorno's correspondence has also been translated into English; the correspondence with Walter Benjamin⁸ is surely the most significant volume of this type and constitutes a major text on aesthetics in its own right. Also significant is the excellent volume of the correspondence with Berg, which appeared in 2005⁹, which is joined by the new translations from Polity of Adorno's letters to his parents, discussed below, and also the correspondence with Thomas Mann¹⁰, fascinating for those interested in the exchanges that were crucial to the writing of *Doktor Faustus*, for which Adorno advised Mann on the musical content

¹ Theodor W. Adorno, *Quasi una fantasia: Essays on Modern Music*, translated Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992); *Sound Figures*, translated Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

² Theodor W. Adorno. *Essays on Music*, selected, with introduction, commentary, and notes by Richard Leppert, new translations by Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002)

³ Theodor W. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, translated Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone Press, 1997).

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, translated E.F.N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974).

⁶ Theodor W. Adorno. *Nachgelassene Schriften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993-).

⁷ Theodor W. Adorno. *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, edited Rolf Tiedemann, translated Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

⁸ Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence: 1928-1940*, edited Henri Lonitz, translated Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno and Alban Berg, *Correspondence 1925-1935*, edited Henri Lonitz, translated Wieland Hoban (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Theodor W. Adorno and Thomas Mann. *Correspondence 1943-1955*, edited Henri Lonitz, translated Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

(and made a brief appearance as a character himself). Translations of the equally important volumes of correspondence with Max Horkheimer¹¹ and Ernst Křenek¹² should be eagerly awaited by those unable to read them in the original language, but for now there is plenty of new material to be getting on with.

The translations of Hullot-Kentor, Jephcott and Livingstone have been widely acclaimed, now they are joined by those of the bilingual Wieland Hoban, whose deep understanding of Adorno's thought, the philosophical tradition from which he emerges, and the music with which he engages, should qualify him to be an equally important contributor. In an introduction to *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction* he explores the issues facing one translating work so founded upon semantic polyvalency as Adorno's, as well as such issues as the difference in etymological reservoirs in English and German (the latter most often building upon Germanic terms rather than reverting back to Latin and Greek, as is often true of the former), and how this leads to the notorious problems in translating such terms as *Aufhebung*, *Geist* (Hoban translates the latter differently depending upon context), or others such as *Darstellung*, which can mean both 'presentation' and 'representation' simultaneously, and is a fundamental term within a book on performance. Thus he provides a mini-glossary of some of the more difficult terms to translate in order to brief the reader of other resonances they have as well as those that would be supplied by their 'obvious' English meanings, which seems as good a strategy as any.

Adorno's thoughts in performance have mostly been known to English readers through the few comments near the end of the essay 'Bach Defended Against His Devotees'¹³, which have often been evoked in debates on the virtues or otherwise of period performance; though there are also various interesting comments on performance in the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*¹⁴ (mostly in terms of the social rituals it entails), and, of particular interest to readers of this journal, in the essay 'New Music, Interpretation, Audience' in *Sound Figures*¹⁵. The appearance of the volume *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*, a collection of Adorno's notes and fragments for a planned comprehensive study of the subject that were recently collected together for the *Nachgelassene Schriften*, provides however a vastly deeper range of Adorno's thought in this respect than in those writings previously available.

The work was planned to be written in collaboration with Rudolf Kolisch; while this collaborative venture never properly occurred, notes taken by Adorno from conversations between the two in the 1950s, when both were teaching at Darmstadt, informed his findings. The book consists first of two sets of notes, the first of which were written during various bouts of concentrated work (interrupted by other projects)

¹¹ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel*, edited Henri Lonitz, four volumes (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994-2006).

¹² Theodor W. Adorno and Ernst Křenek, *Briefwechsel*, edited Wolfgang Rogge (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974).

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Bach Defended Against His Devotees', in *Prisms*, translated by Samuel & Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA, 1967), pp. 133-146.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, translated E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1976).

¹⁵ 'New Music, Interpretation, Audience', in *Sound Figures*, pp. 29-39. In the subsequent essay in this collection, 'The Mastery of the Maestro', pp. 40-53, Adorno is even more scathing on the subject of Toscanini (quite obsessively so!) than in the *Theory of Musical Reproduction*.

between 1946 and 1959. This section encompasses nearly three-quarters of the whole book; the much shorter second set contains a more diffuse selection of notes from before and after this period. Then there is a 50-page draft of the intended work, together with various other short sets of notes from various times in which Adorno outlined the basic themes and the structure of the work. Quite apart from the information contained therein, this form of presentation enables the reader to gain a closer insight into Adorno's working methods, tracing the gestation of his ideas as they take on progressively more integrated forms. Yet none of the sections constitute a final text intended for publication; with this in mind, one should be wary of criticising them on grounds of inconsistency, half-formation of ideas, poor exposition, and so on. Not that the latter is particularly a problem; Adorno's sketches are frequently more deeply thought-through and penetrating than many other writers' finalised publications.

One might assume that the draft, constituting as it does a later stage of development, should be the primary focus for a reader, but I am inclined to believe otherwise. Adorno's quasi-aphoristic and fragmentary style, inspired in part by that of Nietzsche, is well-known from *Minima Moralia*; the large set of notes reads in a similar manner and creates forms of symbiosis which are somewhat more muted in the draft, in which he also tames some of his more radical insights. At one point during these Adorno makes clear the purpose for this study:

It is directed against 2 fronts. On the one hand official musical life, which – as is particularly evident in its most celebrated exponents – became part of the culture industry long ago: galvanized, spirited and culinary, all *at the same time*. Cultivated and barbaric music-making converge. On the other hand the front of abstract negation, the escape to the mensural realm. In the former case a false subjectivism, in the latter the residual theory of truth, the extermination of the subject (*all* forms of objectivism, from Stockhausen to Walcha, really amount to the same thing. The so-called young people protested against the 'exaggerated expressivity' in Eduard's [Steuermann] Schönberg interpretation). – Students of Bloch from East Germany came to me full of enthusiasm: they had never heard anything like it. (p. 111)

It may not be over-reductive to suggest that the phenomena to which Adorno refers correspond roughly to a type of reified late romanticism on one hand, and the objectivism of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* on the other, in terms of either's manifestation in performance aesthetics. That Adorno attempted to negate *both* categories in the 1950s is worth bearing in mind when such a false dichotomy still continues to dominate a lot of superficial debate on performance practice. Earlier in the notes (which are presented chronologically) he refers to a most specific manifestation of this, in the form of the Furtwängler-Toscanini opposition, saying that

'In the Germany of Furtwängler and the Busch Quartet, we had to advocate polemically an ideal of music-making that was, in a certain sense, 'positivistic' (albeit always in the strongest opposition to the 'new functionalists') [whilst] in Toscanini's American one that was 'expressive'; and not only at the theoretical level, but in all nuances of actual reproduction' (p. 39).

But there is no doubt that the focus of Adorno's critical attention falls primarily upon the latter approach, increasingly the norm at the time of he was writing; figures he associates with such a tendency include not only Toscanini - in whose rendition of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture, according to Adorno, 'the Paennine goats have eaten up the German forest' (p. 83) - but also Bruno Walter: who, when conducting the Pastoral Symphony, 'plays piano upon the orchestra quite admirably', but because

of insufficient appreciation of the differing possibilities for freedom in an orchestra, rather than a quartet or piano, has ‘something vulgar about his sensibility, a sophistication that strikes the music with a club’ (p. 83), and to a lesser extent Artur Schnabel.

Adorno identifies one of the major problems for the interpreter as being the fact that their acquired habituality (seen as a necessary precondition) becomes ‘broken once more, negated, and sublated by the specific insights arising from each work’ (p. 131). Whilst Adorno believed Schnabel achieved this, he goes on to say that ‘he often did not get beyond an abstract negation of the habitual playing approach’. If, compared to the approaches of these performers, Adorno wrote in his draft that ‘Furtwängler still represents the truth in comparison to the North German school of time-beating. The fact that he sometimes veers off into untruth does not make that latter any truer’, nonetheless he had earlier described, in the context of a reading of Wagner’s essay ‘Über das Dirigieren’, Furtwängler as ‘Wagner’s heir’ (p. 32) and argues that in a recording of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, through an over-adherence to the literal dynamics in the score, Furtwängler manages to obscure some motifs whose context and development are fundamental to the work (pp. 85-86).

Adorno’s analysis here would be more acute if he were to take account of the fact that the instruments, orchestral forces and playing techniques employed by Furtwängler are radically different from those known to Beethoven and that the issues of balance and the consequences of a relatively literal interpretation of the score might be affected by such things (something equally lost on Wagner, leading to his suggestions for modifications to the score of the Ninth Symphony on the basis of hearing new clarity in Liszt’s piano transcription, without considering how what he missed was mostly the result of changes in orchestral practice between the 1820s and the 1860s)¹⁶. However, these examples should indicate how strongly Adorno’s diagnoses mirror his critiques of two different responses to the crisis brought about the unsustainability of the ideals of heroic bourgeois early romanticism; responses manifested most fundamentally in the work of Wagner and Stravinsky. If he is somewhat more sympathetic to the performing tradition deriving in part from Wagner (as manifested by Furtwängler, though in light of the strong influence of his teacher Schenker¹⁷, Furtwängler’s type of musical organicism could be argued to differ somewhat from that of Wagner), this may mirror his sympathy for the Wagnerian traits in mid-period Schoenberg.

Adorno in his notes engaged in an extensive reading of Frederick Dorian’s *The History of Music in Performance*¹⁸, and as such was clearly familiar with what are

¹⁶ For more on this, see David Pickett, ‘Rescoring in Beethoven’s symphonies’ in Robin Stowell (ed) – *Performing Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 205-227, and for the context of Liszt’s transcriptions of Beethoven, my own ‘Conventions, Genres, Practices in the Performance of Liszt’s Piano Music’, in *The Liszt Society Journal* Vol. 31 (2006), pp. 70-103. Adorno himself comments on Wagner’s retouchings as presupposing a level of coherence which ‘thus dissolves the work’ so as to produce ‘the concept of the integral work’ (p. 50).

¹⁷ See Nicholas Cook, ‘The Conductor and the Theorist: Furtwängler, Schenker and the First Movement of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony’ in John Rink (ed), *The Practice of Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 105-125, for a particularly acute and detailed analysis of the manifestations of Schenker’s influence on a range of Furtwängler’s recordings.

¹⁸ Frederick Dorian, *The History of Music in Performance: the art of musical interpretation from the Renaissance to our day* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

today seen as primary historical texts on the subject, including those of Caccini, Frescobaldi, Lully, Muffat, C.P.E. Bach and Quantz, all of which he cites. Much of this only enters the draft on the level of ‘deep background’, though Adorno’s commentaries in the notes clarify the processes he sees at play, especially in terms of changing attitudes towards the relationship between music and text, constructions of music as language leading to the *stilo rappresentivo*, and particularly acute observations on Dorian’s concept of the ‘functional ornament’ which may relate obliquely to some of his views on the eschewal of the ornamental in Stravinsky leading to the totality of a work being of an ornamental nature (and this in turn may have been influenced by Siegfried Kracauer’s writings on the ‘mass ornament’ in Weimar culture¹⁹). But Adorno’s reading of these early texts hardly seems to be integrated into his draft other than in a very broad sense; nor does he seem interested in timbre in earlier music, sticking to the now rather antiquated view that ‘emancipation of timbre’ began with Wagner (p. 98), consistent with the view in his Bach essay that ‘the colouristic dimension of music had hardly been discovered in Bach’s time’²⁰.

More through-going is his reading of Hugo Riemann’s *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*²¹, of which he presents an extensive mediated engagement in the draft, considering at length the role of musical notation and the history of musical mimesis and its relationship to language. Adorno’s insists upon the non-parallel nature of written and musical language²² (p. 168), then goes on to offer his nuanced critique of Riemann’s attempts at synthesis of the temporal arts (p. 169), his mapping of social hierarchies onto the regulation of temporal relations and conception of notation as forming a ‘disciplinary function’ so as to preclude the ‘subjugated masses’ from ‘modifying customs according to their own expressive needs’ (p. 171), leading to his view of notation as being, by its very nature, ‘The spatialization of something temporal’, thus leading to ‘estrangement and ossification’ (p. 172).

This touches upon the very heart of Adorno’s project, indeed perhaps much of his writing on music: an opposition to reification and the consequent disintegration of the engaged subject, whose subjectivity is made manifest through the continuing development of the immanent properties of musical language and the social processes sedimented therein. It is only by virtue of his remorselessly dialectical approach that he is able to avoid the too-easy pitfall of simply holding up one reified aesthetic category against another, a potential fallacy that many New Musicologists would do well to heed. It is because of such an approach that Adorno, near the beginning of the main set of notes, rightly observes the necessity of avoiding ‘the cliché that one should be faithful to the spirit, not the letter’ (p. 2), a tired rhetorical trope that pervades, for example, many of the writings on performance by Richard Taruskin²³. Nor is Adorno by any means prone to an over-simplistic dichotomy between the

¹⁹ See Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, translated Thomas Levin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

²⁰ Adorno, ‘Bach Defended against his Devotees’, p. 143.

²¹ Hugo Riemann, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1913).

²² This notion was also developed in Adorno’s 1956 essay ‘Music and Language’, in *Quasi una Fantasia*, pp. 1-6.

²³ See, for example, Richard Taruskin, ‘The Limits of Authenticity’, in *Text and Act: Essays on Musica and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 67-82. An extensive critique of this dichotomy will be found in the first chapter of my *Brahms Performance Practice: Documentary and Analytical Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, to be published in 2015).

wishes and conceits of composer and performer, as might be imagined, pointing out that:

Against the ideal of a chemically pure language of music. . . there is an idiom of the *performer*, of Kreisler, d'Albert or Kolisch, and this has a right to seep into the presentation within the mensural thresholds, indeed it has a great deal to do with that subjective element through which the objectivity of sense constitutes itself. The performer often glimpses the sense of the mensural through the medium of his idiom, which then admittedly misses a representation of the sense – it decreases, so to speak. (p. 93)

The ambivalence of the end of the last sentence of the above may reflect the difficulty Adorno has with reconciling some notion of the performer's autonomous subjectivity with the demands of interpretation. At various points in the book, he attempts to articulate the need for a performer not simply to render the work faithfully in terms of the written score, but also to penetrate its very immanent properties, in order not so much to articulate the work's 'spirit' or 'essence' (Adorno's conception comes from a type of 'historical structuralism' rather than anything metaphysical) but rather to inform just how one reads and renders that score, itself a reification. The distinction between this and the approach of some schools of historically-informed performers is crucial: whilst the latter frequently look to render a score in terms of more generalised aspects of style and practice either across a body of a composers' work or more widely in terms of common practices of a time or place (leading Adorno, somewhat unfairly, to claim 'They say Bach, mean Telemann and are secretly in agreement with the regression of musical consciousness')²⁴, Adorno searches for the nuancing of interpretation in terms of the immanent properties of specific works. Unsurprisingly, he considers this negatively, claiming that an 'absolutely correct interpretation, or at least a limited section of correct interpretations' is 'an *idea*' which 'cannot be recognized in its pure state, let alone realized', whilst 'the incorrect kind can always be sensed concretely' (p. 92). One of Adorno's late notes makes a startling observation of the social dimension of the fallacious approaches:

Performing music has an element of talking people into something, convincing them, an element of propaganda about itself, and thus shows its affiliation to the dominant culture industry of today. One could exaggerate and say that any performance of a musical work has the air of being an advertisement for it. (p. 162)

At numerous points elsewhere in the book, Adorno's detailed exegesis of certain performing traits seem to be heading towards this conclusion. A performance by Heifetz, Feuermann and Rubinstein of the Beethoven Trio in B flat Op. 97 is criticised for being 'too beautiful', for smoothing over many aspects of the music, thus losing 'the element of *eruption*' or that of 'disturbance, resistance' but also 'the *dissolution* of the element of resistance in motion' (Adorno's italics) in the coda to the last movement (pp. 75-76). In the slow movement of Schubert's Sonata in A D664, Adorno perceives with great subtlety how Schnabel, by playing it *improvisando*, 'forces the sense of a complete, dynamic totality upon it and subsequently fails to live up to it, thus only making matters worse. . . Is it not *fundamental* to a highly meaningful movement that it should crumble[?]' (p. 80). In Alfred Cortot, who Adorno ferociously calls 'an old Nazi' (no doubt with Cortot's support of the Vichy regime in France in mind), and who 'has the status of a grand old man in Germany in 1957', he finds brought out 'in an exaggerated, over-conspicuous fashion elements

²⁴ Adorno, 'Bach Defended against his Devotees', p. 145.

that one hears anyway. . . A form of false clarity. . . Here, interpretation means: music for idiots' (pp. 140-141).

All this is consistent with Adorno's fundamental belief that 'Music's purpose is not absorption by the industry (through functioning), or to be obscured (through smoothness, harmonization, culinary matters), but rather a determinate resistance through its immanent consistency. This is the real connection between the reproduction theory and my philosophy' (p. 108). Adorno's roots in nineteenth-century romanticism become clear; his valorising of the musically disjunctive, fragmentary, eruptive, against beautifying tendencies on the part of performers, stand in a clear lineage from the Kantian sublime, but given a negative dialectical formation in terms of its opposition to the false totalising and de-subjectivising tendencies of late capitalism and the culture industry. In this sense Adorno is thoroughly at odds with Herderian and Wagnerian (or Schenkerian) organicism. Against the homogenised and superficially pleasing cultural surface of late capitalist society he opposes not some mythical appeal to nature and primitivism (rugged and awe-inspiring though that may be), nor some Stravinskian aristocratic aestheticism, but rather the necessity that one does not hide from (though neither should it fetishize, as would result from an eschewal of continuing immanent development) the very antinomian and disintegrative social forces that are sedimented within musical language itself. To do so is as important for musical performers as for composers or any other artists.

Adorno further adds a psychological dimension, drawing upon his ideas on the Authoritarian Personality after first evoking disparagingly the concept of the musical 'minstrel' (p. 113), when he notes that:

What one calls music-making is generally nothing but ego weakness, a mere surrendering of oneself to the instrument and the idiom. And it is precisely this that obstructs the work (NB the minstrel as the one who is not fully individuated, Slavic, pre-bourgeois nations!). (p. 121)

For all the intemperance of the language (and the questions that might be asked about Adorno's unwillingness to assign full bourgeois subjectivity to the Slavs²⁵, though this should be read as a comment on different states of transition between feudalism and capitalism in the Slavic world and elsewhere, rather than to do with anything ethnic), Adorno's point may be incisive, depending how it is viewed in light of his other comments. The type of 'surrendering' he describes constitutes a disengaged, facile, vain, perhaps narcissistic subjectivity on the part of the performer (these qualities are clearer in light of the earlier outlining of the 'minstrel'), in place of an attempt to bring their subjectivity into a concrete engagement with the work; mannerism, surface style and caprice rather than any more meaningful 'interpretation'. That is a generous reading of Adorno, however; the performer's autonomous subjectivity is alluded to only briefly and in passing in the book, and certainly requires more extensive theorization (it should be pointed out that he eschews the 'minstrel' model in the draft). Whether there is really a place in Adorno's model of performance for a truly dialectical interplay between such a subjectivity (even possibly of a coquettish variety) and the immanent demands of the work, in such a way that might not entail any necessary reconciliation, is deeply unclear and

²⁵ For one critique of this aspect of Adorno's thought, see Charles Rosen, 'Should we Adore Adorno?', in *The New York Review of Books*, October 24th 2002.

perhaps doubtful as a result. If not, then his model would seem to exclude, for example, the possibility that there might be value in a performance of a work by one from a quite different musical background; it is hard to escape the suspicion that Adorno's disdain for Toscanini may thus be affected by the limitations and consequent cultural prejudices of his model. What he would make of Uri Caine's renditions of Beethoven, Schumann or Mahler hardly bears thinking about.

Most of what Adorno has to say, whilst dealing primarily with the standard repertoire (including moderately detailed analyses of the implications for particular works of Beethoven and Schumann, though also those of Schoenberg and Webern), is absolutely relevant for readers of this journal. Adorno cites Kolisch's 'refusal to recognize any difference between traditional and new music' as being 'intimately related to the reproduction theory' (p. 131). But in absolutely no sense should one infer from this what in recent times seems to be an implicit aesthetic of contemporary performance: the rendering of contemporary music in terms of some normative practices drawn from a particular construction of 'tradition' (reified almost as soon as it is conceived) so as to locate such music as closely as possible within that construction, negating its mediatory attributes. If Adorno dismissed the suggestion of one student at Darmstadt that 'in order to bring Beethoven up to date one would have to add new, more spicy harmonies' (p. 98), it was not from any desire to preserve a historical aura around Beethoven's music; rather because of his clear apprehension that the dissonances in Beethoven generate meaning in opposition to the consonances; to spice up the harmonies would diminish this opposition. Similarly, the very inner dialectics of traditional music are what would be muted by its rendering primarily in terms of all-purpose reified style or simply beautiful sonority, as Adorno charges Henze with so doing when conducting Berg's *Lulu* Suite (pp. 149-150). Tradition is invoked by Adorno in terms of its continuing modernity and immediacy (according of course to his particular aesthetic), a long way from offsetting such things in the music of now in the manner I described above. That said, Adorno (and many other writers on performance, including Taruskin) does not really consider how the objectivism he decries may itself have deeper historical roots as well as being able to offer dialectical possibilities at a time when interpretive subjectivities can so easily assume a commodified form. The possible value in playing passages in a piece of Kagel, or of Schumann, in a detached or estranged manner as part of a wider narrative strategy, also seem to be excluded from his model²⁶.

Despite these reservations, the *Theory of Musical Reproduction* is clearly a major addition to the literature on performance, and should be studied in detail by all interested in the subject. Despite being in sketch form, it is certainly one of Adorno's major contributions to music and as I hope to have demonstrated, parallels very clearly his other musically-related work. Of the latter, the best-known to English-speaking readers (and perhaps to anyone other than Adorno scholars), remains the *Philosophy of New Music (Philosophie der neuen Musik)*, happily given a more appropriate title in Hullot-Kentor's new translation. The arguments of this book are well-known and do not need to be rehearsed again here; the old translation by Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster²⁷ was widely criticised as substandard, possibly

²⁶ Adorno does evoke Brechtian *Verfremdung* at one point (p. 98) as a necessary starting point for interpretation, but does not develop this idea in any detail.

²⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, translated Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Sheed and Ward, 1987, first published in English in 1973).

leading to a distorted understanding of the text. Hullot-Kentor is much less literalistic in his translation and demonstrates a clearer understanding of Adorno's basic concepts and the optimum way to render them in English, as the following passage should demonstrate:

Adorno: Der Übergang der musikalischen Organisation an die autonome Subjektivität vollzieht sich vermöge des technischen Prinzips der Durchführung. Zu Anfang im achtzehnten Jahrhundert war sie ein kleiner Teil der Sonate. An den einmal aufgestellten und als seiend hingenommenen Themen erprobte sich subjektive Beleuchtung und Dynamik. Mit Beethoven aber wird die Durchführung, die subjektive Reflexion des Themas, die dessen Schicksal entscheidet, zum Zentrum der gesamten Form. Sie rechtfertigt die Form, auch wo diese als Konvention vorgegeben bleibt, indem sie sie spontan nochmals erzeugt.²⁸

Mitchell and Blomster: The transition of musical organization to autonomous subjectivity is completed by virtue of the technical principle of the development. It was at the beginning, in the eighteenth century, a minor element in sonata-form. Experimentation with subjective illumination and dynamics were conducted with the themes once they had been stated and their existence could be presumed. In Beethoven, however, the development – subjective reflection upon the theme which decides the fate of the theme – becomes the focal point of the entire form. It justifies the form by engendering it anew and spontaneously, even in such cases where the form is nothing more than an assumption of convention.²⁹

Hullot-Kentor: Musical organization is passed to autonomous subjectivity by virtue of the technical principles of development. At the start, in the eighteenth century, development was a small part of the sonata. Once themes were stated and adequately established in the music, they were modified by subjective illumination and dynamism. In Beethoven, however, development, the subjective reflection of the theme that decides its fate, becomes the center of the form altogether. It justifies the form, even when it is conventionally pre-determined, by producing it anew, spontaneously.³⁰

Hullot-Kentor avoids the clumsiness of Mitchell and Blomster's excessive beholdenness to a German sentence structure (complete with unnecessary definite articles in English), exploits the alternative translation of *Dynamik* as 'dynamism' to clarify further what is clearly meant (rather than musical dynamics), avoids careless repetition of a noun within a phrase, conceives phrases as wholes rather than one word at a time, and so on. When a relatively straightforward passage such as this is rendered all the more fluent and readable in such a manner, the benefits in terms of the exposition of Adorno's more complex ideas seem most palpable. Common prejudices from English readers concerning Adorno's overwrought and stiff sentences would be less likely in the context of this translation. However, some might argue that Hullot-Kentor has a tendency to smooth over and over-informalise Adorno's rather more high-flown tone, which cannot be entirely separated from the content represented. Adorno's clear conception of this work as inextricably linked to the arguments in his and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* should be borne in mind, including for those primarily interested in his musical writings; a reading of the latter greatly facilitates comprehension of the former.

For all the many criticisms that have been made of the *Philosophy of New Music* from its publication to the present day, especially in terms of the hostility to Stravinsky, the book remains a haunting presence, easier to curtly dismiss than ultimately to ignore. Adorno undoubtedly understood and appreciated the elemental power of Stravinsky's

²⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik, Gesammelte Schriften* Bd. 12 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 57-58.

²⁹ *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 55.

³⁰ *Philosophy of New Music*, p. 46.

work, but at a time when the world had witnessed the power of the mass spectacle to seduce, cajole and manipulate large numbers of people (as is still the case in slightly different manifestations), often with barbaric motives, he simply could not accept this phenomenon at face value. The model of continually developing, non-ossified and engaged subjectivity that he praised above all in mid-period Schoenberg may represent something of an overly Germanocentric set of priorities, but its polar opposite (bearing in mind that negation can itself betoken a high degree of indebtedness) in the form of objectivism, appeal to the mythical, ahistorical and primal remains a force that can be disturbing. Is it really so wrong to question the very nature of a listening (and viewing) experience that is tied into the ritualistic sacrifice of a young girl whose own subjectivity is given no obvious musical representation, as Adorno acutely observed? And might not the type of awe-struck fascination towards a mythical spectacle (and the equally mythical self-fashioned personality of the artistic creator sometimes contained therein), itself in part the result of manipulation using quite transparent techniques, say something about attitudes of submission, deference and ego weakness that are equally important concerns in an age of the cult of celebrity, fundamentalist religion of many varieties, resurgent nationalism, and a vastly more powerful culture industry than Adorno witnessed? In light of Stephen Walsh's recent observations that, in terms of the actual man (which Adorno gleaned principally from the music) 'Much of what Adorno said about Stravinsky strikes one as true, or at least plausible', there is every reason to reconsider the veracity of Adorno's much-maligned perspectives on this still-problematic figure³¹.

After being removed from his position at the Institute of Social Research at Frankfurt University in 1933, on account of his Jewish father, Adorno first accepted a demotion from his earlier German status of lecturer to 'advanced student' at Merton College, Oxford in 1934. Three years later, Max Horkheimer was able to offer him a position at the relocated Institute at Columbia University, where Adorno moved in 1938. As war approached in 1939, Adorno's parents also fled their home country (after Oscar Wiesgrund's offices had been ransacked and his wife Maria Calvelli-Adorno was interned). After a long stay in Cuba, finally able to move to the USA in 1940. The *Letters to his Parents* cover the period from their move to Cuba, through the war years, Oscar's death in 1946, up until a year before Maria's death in February 1952. She died in New York, but by this time Adorno was no longer in the country, having returned triumphantly to Frankfurt in 1949. There is not a huge amount in this volume specifically appertaining to music, but reading it should also affect common perceptions of the man and how this might bear upon his work. Of course it is a major fallacy to read any intellectual's work primarily in terms of his biography or constructions of his personality; however, when perceptions in this respect may already have negatively affected reception of the work, there is something to be gained from any information that might mitigate such tendencies.

Adorno clearly had a very happy, devoted, and relaxed relationship with his parents. He repeatedly refers with childish affection to himself and them in terms of hippopotamuses, after a particular animal called Rose he saw in Central Park Zoo (whereas his wife, Gretel, is the 'giraffe'). That such a loving, happy tone is maintained throughout is all the more noteworthy in light of the worrying times they

³¹ Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: The Second Exile, France and America, 1934-1971* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p. 237.

were living in. Naturally, Adorno was continually preoccupied by the progress of the war (making prescient observations at various stage about how things were likely to turn out) and the fate of the Jewish people, as well as making wry comments on, for example, the role of the British and the existence of Nazi sympathies within that country. Horrified after the fall of France in 1940, Adorno made some attempts to bring Walter Benjamin from that country to the US, but these were unsuccessful (oddly no correspondence to Adorno's parents (some may have been lost, of course) deals with Benjamin's death, other than a passing mention of a memorial issue from the Institute³²).

Upon Adorno's move to Los Angeles, the letters paint a colourful picture of life amongst the expatriate community - describing, for example, being guests with Thomas Mann on a Tuesday, entertaining the Brechts and film director William Deiterle on a Thursday, then meeting with the Eislers a few days later (pp. 144-145). Relationships between this individuals all seem to be cordial (he praises a 'beautiful poem' of Brecht at one point (p. 106), and there is little that would suggest the two's later estrangement). Adorno's work with Horkheimer on the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (the two of them visiting the cinema to research the culture industry), with Eisler on *Composing for the Films*, and his own on the *Philosophy of New Music*, is alluded to in various places, as well as his studies into anti-semitism and the authoritarian personality, commissioned by the American Jewish Committee, who were terrified of the possibility of fascism surfacing in the USA. A few letters mention his collaborations with Thomas Mann, who was deeply struck by the passages he saw from the *Philosophy of New Music*, but of course far more information on this (and the rift with Schoenberg) can be found in the Adorno-Mann correspondence volume.

Throughout, the contrast between the clear-headedness of the Adorno as he goes about his life as an exile (far from the dark pessimism of *Minima Moralia*) and the intense seriousness of the subjects about which he was writing, is most striking. This is not to deny how intensely world events preyed upon his mind – he even said that 'the 50% goy in me feels somehow responsible for the Jewish persecution' (p. 248); just that the model of a tortured individual, wrenching out terminally bleak diagnoses of contemporary society from the depths of his wretchedness, is far from the case. Indeed, were it not for what seems to be Adorno's relaxed and warm nature, together with that natural confidence that stems from a happy family background (something that can be perceived when listening to recordings of his talks), the intensity and focus of his writings might have been somewhat diminished.

All who are interested in Adorno, or in musical sociology in general, should definitely read each of these books. The *Theory of Musical Reproduction* in particular constitutes a major step in the study of performance as a *sociological* phenomenon, laying the grounds for much fruitful further research and investigation. Whilst much Adorno is now available in good English translations, especially welcome would be a new translation, or at least a re-issue, of the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, one of Adorno's most accessible works on music (and amply demonstrating his often

³² For Adorno's grief-stricken reaction to his friend's suicide, see Stefan Müller-Doohm, *Adorno: A Biography*, translated Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005), pp. 262-264. As with their other translations, Polity Press gave a huge service to English readers by releasing this monumental biography in translation just two years after its German publication.

caustic wit, such as when outlining taxonomies of listeners), which has been out-of-print for some time and of which copies are now scarce - as well as a much-needed new translation of *Negative Dialectics*. There still remain numerous untranslated essays on music in the *Gesammelte Schriften*, including important pieces on twentieth-century music such as those on Ravel and Sibelius, or Adorno's multiple writings on Bartók. A new collection of musical essays in this respect would encompass a quite substantial volume which would complement that of Leppert. But in the meantime, there is every reason for Adorno scholarship in English to move onto a new level, with the availability of a range of rich sources that will enable much more subtle engagements than some of those which have been possible in the past.