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## Review-Article Ferneyhough Hero: Scholarship as Promotion

BY IAN PACE\*

Since the early 1970s, and especially following the premiere of *Transit* (1972–5) in March 1975 at the Royan Festival, there has been a steady stream of scholarly and other writings on Brian Ferneyhough and his music.<sup>1</sup> This can be divided loosely into a range of categories: aesthetic, descriptive, or compositionally focused work often written by composers;<sup>2</sup> sketch-based studies (especially the work of Richard Toop and Cordula Pätzold);<sup>3</sup> explorations of Ferneyhough's work in notation and performance;<sup>4</sup> and wider reflections on issues of 'complexity', often including other composers as well as Ferneyhough.<sup>5</sup> The first book-length work devoted to Ferneyhough appeared

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<sup>1</sup> I look at the history of writing on Ferneyhough in detail in 'Brian Ferneyhough: A Critical Overview of the Literature', published online at *Search: Journal for New Music and Culture* (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> For example Michael Finnissy, 'Ferneyhough's Sonatas', *Tempo New Series*, 121 (1977), 34-6; James Erber, programme note for Ferneyhough, *Transit* by London Sinfonietta, conducted Elgar Howarth, Decca Headline HEAD 18 (LP); Clytus Gottwald, 'Brian F., oder Von der Metaphysik des Positivismus', *Melos* 44 (1977), 299-308; Klaus K. Hübler, 'Denk-Bilder, bewegt. Eine Annäherung an Brian Ferneyhough', *MusikTexte* 18 (1987), 26-7; Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Vers une musique figurale?', trans. Carlo Russi, in *Contrechamps* 8 (1988), 45-63; François Nicolas, 'Une écoute à l'oeuvre: d'un moment favori dans *La Chute d'Icare*', in *Brian Ferneyhough, textes réunis par Peter Szendy* (Paris, 1999), 27-45 (hereafter 'Szendy, *Ferneyhough*).

<sup>3</sup> Such as Jonathan Harvey, 'Brian Ferneyhough', *The Musical Times*, 120/1639 (1979), 723-8; Alessandro Melchiorre, 'I Labirinti di Ferneyhough: la forza e la forma, la figura e il gesto nell'opera del compositore Inglese', in *I Quaderni della Civica Scuola di Musica. Numerou speciale dedicato a Brian Ferneyhough*, ed. Melchiorre (Milan, 1984), 4-41; Richard Toop, 'On Superscriptio: An Interview with Brian Ferneyhough, and an Analysis', *Contemporary Music Review* 13 (1995), 3-17; 'Brian Ferneyhough's *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*', *Perspectives of New Music* 28/2 (1990), 52-100; 'Brian Ferneyhough's *Etudes Transcendentales: A Composer's Diary (Part 1)*', *EONTA Arts Quarterly* 1/1 (1991), 55-89; "'Prima le Parole...'" – on the sketches for Ferneyhough's *Carceri d'Invenzione I-III*', *Perspectives of New Music* 32/1 (1994); Klaus Lippe, '«Pitch Systems» im Vierten Streichquartett von Brian Ferneyhough', *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung* 13 (Basel, 2000), 54-60; Cordula Pätzold, *Carceri d'Invenzione von Brian Ferneyhough. Analyse der Kompositionstechnik* (Hofheim, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> Such as Kathryn Lukas, 'Cassandra's Dream Song & Unity Capsule', *Contact* 20 (1979), 9-11; Pierre-Yves Artaud, 'Unity Capsule – une explosion de quinze minutes', *Entretemps* 3 (1987), 107-114; Magnus Andersson, 'Brian Ferneyhough: Kurze Schatten II - considerations d'un interprète', *Contrechamps* 8 (1988), 128-138; Steven Schick, 'Developing an Interpretative Context: Learning Brian Ferneyhough's Bone Alphabet', *Perspectives of New Music* 32/1 (1994), 132-54; Roger Marsh, 'Heroic Motives: Roger Marsh Considers the Relation between Sign and Sound in "Complex" Music', *The Musical Times* 135/1812 (1994), 83-6; Christoph Keller, 'Die Ferneyhough-Familie', *Dissonanz* 51 (1997), 34-6; Frank Cox, 'Notes Toward a Performance Practice for Complex Music', in *Polyphony & Complexity*, ed. Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Frank Cox, and Wolfram Schurig (Hofheim, 2002), 70-132; Nicolas Darbon, 'Virtuosité et complexité. L'injouable selon Brian Ferneyhough', *Analyse Musicale* 52, numéro special (Paris, 2005), 96-111; Klaus Lippe, 'Komplexität als Programm für ein Beobachten zweiter Ordnung. Zur (Un)Spielbarkeit der Werke Brian Ferneyhoughs- mit Anmerkungen zu *On Stellar Magnitudes*', in *Ans Licht gebracht. Zur Interpretation Neuer Musik*, ed. Jörn Peter Hiekel (Mainz et al, 2013), 104-21; Paul Archbold, 'Performing Complexity: a pedagogical resource tracing the Arditti Quartet's preparations for the première of Brian Ferneyhough *Sixth String Quartet*', at [http://events.sas.ac.uk/uploads/media/Arditti\\_Ferneyhough\\_project\\_documentation.pdf](http://events.sas.ac.uk/uploads/media/Arditti_Ferneyhough_project_documentation.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2014).

<sup>5</sup> François Nicolas 'Éloge de la complexité', *Entretemps* 3 (1987), 55-68; Richard Toop, 'Four Facets of the "New Complexity"', *Contact* 32 (1988), 4-50; Joël Bons (ed), *Complexity in Music? An Inquiry*

in Italian in 1984, and contained a mixture of Ferneyhough's own writings and a few other writings and interviews.<sup>6</sup> A similarly hybrid approach characterized further publications on Ferneyhough, including issues of *Entretemps* (1987) and *Contrechamps* (1988),<sup>7</sup> the *Collected Writings* (1995),<sup>8</sup> a further French collection of articles and Ferneyhough writings (1999),<sup>9</sup> a dedicated volume of *Musik-Konzepte* (2008),<sup>10</sup> the first single-authored monograph (in French) by Francis Courtot (2009),<sup>11</sup> and Pätzold's published dissertation (2010). A few writers have established more distinctive and striking methods for investigating Ferneyhough's work, especially Ross Feller,<sup>12</sup> Fabián Panisello,<sup>13</sup> and Courtot, each notable for employing a wide range of analytical work without relying upon sketches. Courtot's book was imaginative and independent in its approach, providing an interesting if not unproblematic division of Ferneyhough's oeuvre into five 'periods' (the last of which is too loosely defined) and bringing the work into dialogue with a range of other music and thought – not just that supplied by Ferneyhough. It remains the most important work of its type.

In general, many earlier writers (especially other composers) have constructed their own 'Ferneyhough' in one way or another; quite a number have tended to lack a critical perspective on the work, preferring to treat the composer's own writings, pronouncements, and self-conceptions as near scriptural ontology. They do not usually consider how and why the music might be meaningful to anyone not already fully subscribed to Ferneyhough's particular set of preoccupations, nor do they offer detailed and sustained aural engagement married to analytical technique to articulate this. Lois Fitch's new monograph (a distinct work from her earlier doctoral

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*of its Nature, Motivation and Performability* (Amsterdam, 1990); Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Kundgabe. Komplexismus und der Paradigmenwechsel in der Musik', *MusikTexte* 35 (1990), 20-32; two issues of *Perspectives of New Music* centering upon 'complexity', guest-edited by James Boros (31/1 (1993) and 32/1 (1994)); Ulrich Mosch, 'Musikalische Komplexität', *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 20 (Mainz, 1994), 120-129; Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, 'Complex Music: An Attempt at a Definition', trans. Frank Cox, in *Polyphony & Complexity*, 54-64; Nicolas Darbon, *Brian Ferneyhough et la Nouvelle Complexité* (Notre-Dame de Bliquetuit, 2008); Richard Toop, 'Against a Theory of Musical (New) Complexity', in *Contemporary Music: Theoretical and Philosophical Perspective*, ed. Max Paddison and Irène Deliège (Farnham, 2010), 89-98; Stuart Paul Duncan, 'Re-Complexifying the Function(s) of Notation in the Music of Brian Ferneyhough and the "New Complexity"', *Perspectives of New Music*, 48/1 (Winter 2010), 136-72; and 'To Infinity and Beyond: A Reflection on Notation, 1980s Darmstadt, and Interpretational Approaches to the Music of New Complexity', *Search: Journal for New Music and Culture* 7 (2010), at <http://www.searchnewmusic.org/duncan.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2014); Roderick Hawkins, '(Mis)understanding complexity from *Transit* to Toop: 'New Complexity' in the British Context' (PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> *I Quaderni della Civica Scuola di Musica. Numerou speciale dedicato a Brian Ferneyhough*, edited Alessandro Melchiorre (Milan, 1984).

<sup>7</sup> *Entretemps* 3 (Paris, 1987) and *Contrechamps* 8 (Lausanne, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Brian Ferneyhough, *Collected Writings*, ed. James Boros and Richard Toop (Amsterdam, 1995),

<sup>9</sup> Szendy, *Ferneyhough*.

<sup>10</sup> *Musik-Konzepte. Neue Folge 140. Brian Ferneyhough*, ed. Ulrich Tadday (Munich, 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Francis Courtot, *Brian Ferneyhough: Figures et Dialogues* (Paris, 2009). Courtot's sources are exclusively in French and English, so he does not engage with German texts on Ferneyhough.

<sup>12</sup> Ross Feller, 'Multicursal labyrinths in the work of Brian Ferneyhough' (DMA thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994); 'Slippage and Strata in Brian Ferneyhough's "Terrain"', *Ex tempore* 9/2 (1999), 77-122; 'Strategic Defamiliarization: the process of difficulty in Brian Ferneyhough's music', *The open space magazine* 2 (2000), 197-202.

<sup>13</sup> Fabián Panisello, 'Zum Dritten Streichquartett von Brian Ferneyhough', in *Nähe und Distanz. Nachgedachte Musik der Gegenwart*, ed. Wolfgang Gratzer (Hofheim, 1996), 160-81.

dissertation on Ferneyhough<sup>14</sup>) is an extended contribution to the field, longer and in some ways more comprehensive than that of Courtot.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, rather than addressing the omissions of the existing literature, it reproduces most of the problems and adds some new ones as well.

The volume is organized as a rather old-fashioned 'life and works'. There are eight chapters (265 pages out of a total of 366, excluding bibliography and index) covering all the works, divided as one might with a nineteenth-century composer into solo works, chamber 'concertos', other chamber music, string quartets, the *Time and Motion Study* cycle, *Carceri* cycle, *Shadowtime*, then works for orchestra and large ensemble. These are framed by chapters on biography and notation at the beginning, and aesthetics at the end. Fitch presents a quadripartite division of Ferneyhough's output distinct from that of Courtot: first a 'parametric approach' from early works including *Unity Capsule* and the *Time and Motion Studies*; second a more gesturally oriented period from the 1980s onwards; third a period featuring chamber concertos (*Terrain*, *La Chute d'Icare*, etc.) that involves 'reconfiguring traditional behaviours and distilling into smaller musical "worlds"' (p. 7); and fourth a 'late' period from *Shadowtime* onwards, featuring miniature formal sections, but without traditional forms.<sup>16</sup>

There are certainly a few positive qualities to the book. It includes sections on the entirety of Ferneyhough's catalogue at the time of writing (in a more rounded manner than that provided by Courtot, who is patchy on the later works), and Fitch is the first writer to have surveyed the complete collection of Ferneyhough's sketches at the Paul Sacher Stiftung. This latter dimension brings to the fore inevitable questions of breadth against depth, though. Alessandro Melchiorre, Toop, Pätzold, and Courtot each present a more detailed study of compositional process, with sketch material carefully deciphered in order to elucidate specific compositional techniques (see Toop and Pätzold in particular). Fitch's approach is less detailed and for the most part consists of the reiteration of lists, charts, and verbal remarks. A wider debate on the value of sketch-based methods has only very occasionally intruded upon the field of contemporary music studies,<sup>17</sup> and as I will argue in more detail, this book similarly ignores such methodological debates.

Overall, the book is rather superficial in its engagement and has a tendency to be hagiographic in tone. Indeed, replete with both intentional and poetic fallacies, it exemplifies many of the problems in academic writing on new music. I have found significant problems on practically every page of the book, and can deal with only some of these here. There are five major omissions: a critical attitude to sources (especially those provided by the composer), evidence of developed aural or analytical abilities and wider contextual musical knowledge (save for a small amount about Renaissance music), theoretical models not provided by Ferneyhough, and methodological reflection (issues raised in musicology during the last three decades

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<sup>14</sup> Lois Fitch, 'Brian Ferneyhough: The Logic of the Figure', (PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2004). I give a detailed critique of this unfocused piece of work in my 'Ferneyhough: A Critical Overview'.

<sup>15</sup> Lois Fitch, *Brian Ferneyhough* (Intellect, Bristol, 2013, £28. ISBN 9781783200184). Hereafter 'Fitch, *Ferneyhough*'.

<sup>16</sup> Here her judgement is based on a quotation from Ferneyhough that he moved back towards large-scale form, resulting in his 'drifting toward traditional modes of aural perception', because the listener is able to grasp structural information that was more elusive in earlier works (Thomas Meyer, "Wichtig ist, dass sich der Komponist selbst beim Komponieren unkomponiert": ein Gespräch mit Brian Ferneyhough', *Musik und Ästhetik* 11/42 (2007) 55, cited Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 7).

<sup>17</sup> I discuss this in detail in 'Ferneyhough: A Critical Overview'.

are largely ignored). Whilst Fitch does not ignore musical 'works' – in contrast to some scholarship employing more cultural-historical, sociological, and ethnographic approaches – her lack of consideration of *sound*, and thus what might be perceptible to listeners not in possession of scores or sketch materials, is arguably more problematic: most of the book could have been written without listening to the music at all.<sup>18</sup> Fitch's uncritical approach to her subject and insecurity when introducing an independent perspective results in a rather elementary treatment of sources. Thus, the opinions of others are presented in unmediated form (sometimes for long sections), and there is an excessive reliance on quotations from the composer in place of individual engagement with the fabric of the works or the ideas relating to them. Fitch writes in a style that on the surface mimics some of Ferneyhough's own writings and pronouncements, but which avoids his more searching critical questions. This leads to an obfuscatory presentation of some rather basic observations,<sup>19</sup> whose meaning would be relatively obvious to anyone with superficial acquaintance with the scores.<sup>20</sup> Whilst a book that synthesizes existing material for a non-academic audience would be acceptable, this book does not even fit that brief, on account of its rather leaden, jargon-filled prose, ill-focused arguments, and reluctance to encapsulate and communicate the aural experience of the music (surely the most important factor from a non-academic's point of view?).

In 1974, Ferneyhough said about his own work:

I try to write music which is totally hermetically closed within its self, a closed universe within which a person may discard his earlier personality, his earlier preconceptions and absorb these totally illogical sets of presuppositions which I present to him. It's like a labyrinth...<sup>21</sup>

This attitude of societal detachment has a long history, sometimes (in my view most erroneously) attributed to Adorno,<sup>22</sup> and is not challenged by Fitch, whose approach is actually quite defensive. Any consideration of the nature, size, or social demographic of Ferneyhough's audiences is thus ruled out; such fundamentalist faith in this detachment enables the music to become the object of a somewhat mystical cult,

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<sup>18</sup> Having played all of Ferneyhough's piano works, and being able to enter into the most personal of listening with *Firecycle Beta* or *Transit* (for neither of which do I own a score), I would reject the idea that Ferneyhough's work is primarily a type of *Augenmusik*.

<sup>19</sup> Such as the following hugely overwritten statement: 'The sketches from the same period [1967] contain a written note to the effect that the Prometheus myth was 'a stimulus of great significance from the point of view of my own composition', suggesting that self-observation in the process of writing music, simultaneously understood as self-creation through the work, and doubtless a legacy of his auto-didacticism, has been fundamental to his praxis since the beginning' (p. 149).

<sup>20</sup> For example, on *Morte subite* (1990), Fitch writes the piece uses two 'layers' – piccolo and piano, and clarinet and vibraphone (which is obvious from the fact that the score is divided up this way), the first of which uses regular metres, the second 'irrational metres' (5/10, 4/12, etc.) and that 'In cycling each layer through phases, coincidences between the pairs result in the emergence of 'macrorhythm' (Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 145-146), referencing this term to a much longer passage by Ferneyhough himself on the piece (Ferneyhough, 'Duration and Rhythm as Compositional Resources' (1989), in *Collected Writings*, 56-61). Beyond mentioning the most obvious framework of the piece, all Fitch does is to reiterate a tiny part of Ferneyhough's own writing without further explanation or analysis.

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ferneyhough in Stephen Harold Riggins, *The Pleasures of Time: Two Men, A Life* (Toronto, 2003). 137.

<sup>22</sup> Specifically by Richard Taruskin, who portrays Adorno as the end-point of a tradition descending from Moses Mendelssohn, Kant, E.T.A. Hoffmann and Schopenhauer, in 'The Musical Mystique: Defending Classical Music against Its Devotees', in Taruskin, *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2009), 338-9. How this viewpoint can be squared with the fact that Adorno was the author of *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* (Frankfurt, 1962), is anyone's guess.

participation in which can entail the accumulation of cultural and intellectual capital. Fitch quotes approvingly Jonathan Harvey's observation from 1993 that Ferneyhough 'refuses to allow socio-economic pressures of rehearsal time, box-office viability, easy social-role messages and so on to dilute his push to ever greater musical development', in the process implying that to compromise on such things would not only represent a lesser form of activity, but would definitively 'dilute' this 'musical development' (p. 3). She marshals Toop in support of an argument that disdain for Ferneyhough is a manifestation of British anti-intellectualism, and she mentions the protest by Ben Watson and Esther Leslie against *Shadowtime* as if this were part of the same phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> Other factors she cites as sources for criticism are the 'technical difficulty of his music', 'his avowed interest in philosophy and a certain fondness for abstraction' in his verbal expression, and his being 'perceived variously as a philosopher, aesthetician or notational artisan' (p. 3).<sup>24</sup> But the defensiveness loses credibility when she portrays Ferneyhough as a little-known, rather obscure and marginalized figure (p. 5).<sup>25</sup> He was winner of the Ernst von Siemens Prize in 2007, a regular teacher at the Darmstadt summer courses and elsewhere, and his music is performed at most of the major new music festivals – and he has been the subject of eight books, including this one.

In response to apparent criticisms of Ferneyhough's intellectualism, Fitch simply asserts that 'fundamentally he is first and foremost a musician, who quickly channels any discussion into matters musical' (p. 5). But I would suggest that the very use of the term 'matters musical' is a way of bracketing off all questions of wider musical meaning. A little later, Fitch writes that:

Any intention on Ferneyhough's part to create meaning in his work – an intention which can be inferred from various remarks – is not conceived in terms of a particular school or movement that might be seen to legitimize it, such as the now historical phenomenon of 'New Complexity'. Moreover, in invoking 'meaning' Ferneyhough infers no programmatic intention to represent particular emotive states or call upon historically pre-established gestural meanings' (p. 8).

Fitch would hardly be the first writer to conflate emotive representation with programmatic intention (this is common in the writings of Lawrence Kramer, for example<sup>26</sup>), even if she appears to view musical distance from either in a more positive light. Nonetheless, one might ask where such a conflation leaves resolutely anti-programmatic yet far from emotionally detached composers such as Chopin or Brahms. For Fitch, meaning in Ferneyhough's work is generated by the interaction between 'his [Ferneyhough's] musical history' and historical models, and she cites the

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<sup>23</sup> The implication that anyone sceptical about Ferneyhough must be motivated by anti-intellectualism would come as a surprise to any reader of Esther Leslie's own books on Benjamin (*Walter Benjamin: Overcoming Conformism* (London, 2000), and *Walter Benjamin (Critical Lives)* (London, 2007) or Ben Watson's on Frank Zappa (*Frank Zappa: The Negative Dialectics of Poodle Play* (London, 1994)) or on critical readings of popular culture and scholarship via Adorno (*Adorno for Revolutionaries*, ed. Andy Wilson (London, 2011)).

<sup>24</sup> The ways in which this type of intellectualism has recurred in the critical reception in English have been traced in detail by Hawkins, as Fitch acknowledges.

<sup>25</sup> Specifically when she writes 'Both the term "New Complexity" and the critical response to the function of Ferneyhough's notation have been subject to extensive re-evaluation, and one of the principal aims of this book is to continue this reversal of discourses that have contributed (whether unwittingly or not) to the marginalization of the composer' (p. 5).

<sup>26</sup> As in Kramer's *Musical Meaning: Towards a Critical History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2002), and *Why Classical Music Still Matters* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2007). Such a conflation is in my view an ever-present danger when methods drawn from literary study are applied without mediation to the much less obviously representational medium of music.

string quartets in particular as examples of this (pp. 8–9). Here she is at one with various postmodern writers (including Kramer) in privileging meta-musical over sonically generated meaning (perhaps because the former is easier to write about?). But for me this does a profound injustice to Ferneyhough's work, which Fitch's portrayal would render completely inaccessible to those without an intense prior knowledge of the central European musical tradition.<sup>27</sup>

Compared to many of her predecessors (especially Toop and Mahnkopf), Fitch's apparent lack of knowledge of a wider range of post-1945 music limits her capacity to consider the provenance of Ferneyhough's idiom, and how its development might itself have been informed by other contemporary movements. Here, she mentions '1950s and 1960s Darmstadt' and the Second Viennese School (p. 6), but is also keen to relate Ferneyhough to a late Renaissance/early Baroque lineage, including Monteverdi, Giovanni Gabrieli, Purcell, and Tallis (p. 8). These influences are each mentioned by Ferneyhough in a 1977 interview,<sup>28</sup> together with that of Christopher Tye, though Fitch ignores his reference to Sibelius in the same interview. Similarly, any contextualization of Ferneyhough within wider contemporary tendencies ('new complexity/complexism' or otherwise) is almost completely absent except when terms are cited in passing (primarily in the notation chapter). In a passage on *Time and Motion Study III* (pp. 212–17), the limited musical context that she employs means she must resort to such banal statements as '[the work] probably qualifies similarly [as an extreme] in the realm of sheer weirdness' (p. 212), with a brief allusion to Ligeti's *Aventures/Nouvelles Aventures* and Lachenmann's *Les Consolations*. Absent here is an awareness of the wider tradition of new music for multiple voices pioneered by Schola Cantorum Stuttgart under Clytus Gottwald (who commissioned and premiered *Time and Motion Study III*) – a tradition of which Ferneyhough was well aware. (He mentions it in an interview, emphasising the importance of Schnebel, and stressing the lineage of this tradition more from Dada than the Second Viennese School.<sup>29</sup>) Similarly, awareness of other non-canonical post-1945 traditions might help to shed some light on the sources of what I would identify as a relatively florid, even Italianate melodic idiom in many of his earlier works.

The short biographical chapter begins promisingly, supplementing an earlier account by Marc Texier<sup>30</sup> with new information from private correspondence (albeit described in a rather purple manner<sup>31</sup>), but as she reaches Ferneyhough's early adulthood, the narrative deteriorates. There is no mention of Ferneyhough's close

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<sup>27</sup> Here I would contrast my own first exposure to Ferneyhough's work during teenage years, specifically to the Arditti Quartet's first recording of the Second String Quartet (RCA Red Seal RL 70883 (LP)), which from first listening I found captivating and urgent in its rhetoric, dramatic pacing, exploration of sonority and interweaving of lines, and much else.

<sup>28</sup> Ferneyhough, interview with Andrew Clements (1977), in *Collected Writings*, 205.

<sup>29</sup> See Ferneyhough, 'Speaking with Tongues', interview with Paul Driver, in *Collected Writings*, 342. For one consideration of this type of contextualisation of Ferneyhough, see Erin Gee, 'The Notation and Use of the Voice in Non-Semantic Contexts: Phonetic Organization in the Vocal Music of Dieter Schnebel, Brian Ferneyhough, and Georges Aperghis', in *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West*, ed. Christian Utz and Frederick Lau (New York & Oxford, 2013), 175-201. Fitch's passage on an unpublished work of Ferneyhough entitled *Opus Null* (a title from Hans Arp), begun in 1968, also suffers from a lack of wider context of musical-theatre from the time.

<sup>30</sup> Marc Texier, 'Le dernier des modernes', in Szendy, *Ferneyhough*, 9-26.

<sup>31</sup> As when describing Ferneyhough's 'shopping with his mother in unlit, rubble-filled streets peppered with large fenced-off holes and temporary shops, such as those erected on Broadgate's east side from 1947', and lingering in 'yellow fog-filled streets' (p. 17).

friendship (and for a while intense correspondence) with Michael Finnissy during the period when their student years overlapped, nor with other musician contemporaries such as Philip Pilkington or John Taverner<sup>32</sup> – indeed no attempt has been made to interview anyone who knew or worked with Ferneyhough during his career. Ferneyhough's studies with Klaus Huber are passed over very quickly, as are those with Ton de Leeuw in the Netherlands; his studies in Birmingham and London are mentioned in half-sentences. The roles of other individuals in establishing Ferneyhough's name and reputation are omitted, though Fitch does mention a lesser-known source, the memoir of Canadian sociologist and anthropologist Stephen Harold Riggins, who met and interviewed Ferneyhough at Royan in 1974,<sup>33</sup> and mentions his early studies with Klaus Huber and with Goffredo Petrassi (a relationship about which to the best of my knowledge no writer has sought to find out more). The forty years from Ferneyhough's appointment to a teaching position at the Freiburg Musikhochschule in 1973 to the present day occupy just over a page, and read like a publisher's biography, extended with a portentous quote from Ferneyhough on Walter Benjamin that compares the latter's continuing devotion to his work in the face of the Nazi occupation of Paris to his own lack of compromise and societal disengagement, all presented without comment from Fitch (p. 24).

The chapter on notation (pp. 31-62) is one of the most interesting, but it is also problematic. It is heavily reliant, in terms of many of its ideas and citations, on Roderick Hawkins's 2010 dissertation and Stewart Paul Duncan's 2010 articles, which are not always adequately referenced. At the beginning of the section on 'The Narrative of Intellectualism', for example, Fitch reiterates Hawkins's ideas on the construction of the 'intellectual' Ferneyhough in critical reception and the apparent relationship to a construction of 'Darmstadt', using his quotations from Richard Taruskin<sup>34</sup> and Christopher Fox.<sup>35</sup> More explicit engagement with Hawkins's ideas, and deployment of alternative secondary literature to develop the argument, would have been welcome here. On the 'Darmstadt' issue, she writes that 'Ferneyhough's music undoubtedly shares many affinities with Darmstadt serialism, not least his parametric style' (p. 33). Ignoring evidence that the majority of music being played at Darmstadt was non-serial from the outset,<sup>36</sup> she presents the difference by contrasting

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<sup>32</sup> One biographical source mentioning this, not cited by Fitch, is the memoir of Barbados-born painter and education lecturer Paul Dash, who in the late 1960s was friends with composer Oliver Hunt, and recalled meeting other composers and musicians at Hunt's house, including Pilkington, Taverner and Ferneyhough. Paul Dash, *Foreday Morning* (London, 2002), 216-7. Dash recalls hearing 'part of a symphony by him [Ferneyhough] on the radio and was suitably impressed' – what this work might have been, if Dash has recalled correctly, may be anyone's guess.

<sup>33</sup> Riggins, *The Pleasures of Time*, 135-8. The interview was conducted by Riggins on 26 March 1974.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music Volume 5: The Late Twentieth Century* (New York and Oxford, 2005), 475, cited Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 32-33 and Hawkins, '(Mis)understanding Complexity', 43. Fitch does use the 2010 edition for her reference (though the page is the same).

<sup>35</sup> See Christopher Fox, 'New Complexity', *Grove Music Online*, at [www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51676](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51676) (accessed 16 May 2014), cited Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 33 and Hawkins, '(Mis)understanding Complexity', 10. Hawkins quotes here a longer section from Fox's piece, and draws this into a much more detailed discussion of the concept of 'New Complexity' (beginning at pp. 10-16 and continuing throughout the thesis).

<sup>36</sup> Only briefly for a couple of years in the mid-1950s did dodecaphonic/serial music come to occupy around 50% of the programmes, and then that was largely as a result of ample numbers of performances of Second Viennese School works. This subject is discussed in my own paper 'The Cold War in Germany as Ideological Weapon for Anti-Modernists', first given at Radical Music History Conference, Sibelius Academy, Helsinki, 8 December 2011. The programmes for the Darmstädter Ferienkurse from 1946 to 1966 have long been easily available in Gianmorio Borio and Hermann

the work of Ferneyhough with ‘a reduced or restricted role for the performer in music produced by the Darmstadt School’ (p. 34). Fitch cites only John Butt (via Duncan)<sup>37</sup> and Nicholas Cook<sup>38</sup> in support of this characterisation of the ‘Darmstadt School’, rather than experts on the Darmstadt courses and associated composers. To be fair, this construction of notation and performance resembles that presented in a very different context by Frank Cox (and is no better substantiated there),<sup>39</sup> but it also disregards the indeterminate elements that were adopted by various composers working in Darmstadt from the late 1950s onwards (though she mentions works such as Stockhausen’s *Plus-Minus* soon afterwards (p. 39)). Ultimately, all that Fitch is saying is that the relationship between notation and performance is problematic, stating that ‘Much of what follows may be read as a dialogue with Duncan’s ideas’ (p. 56, n. 24). In fact what results is hardly a ‘dialogue’: her own observations are often superficial – pointing to the use of long beams joining detached notes in the *Icon* section of *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*, and the fact that various titles draw upon sources from the visual arts or from images (p. 49). She does note that an approach taken by the Arditti Quartet and Steve Schick, involving reworking of the pulse to make a piece more manageable, contravenes Ferneyhough’s wishes (or rather, cites Schick explicitly saying so), then mentions the objections made by Roger Marsh of notational redundancy,<sup>40</sup> but she does not draw any real conclusions. Instead, she asserts that ‘The discourse returns squarely to the question of accuracy, which Ferneyhough has never demanded; but Marsh’s perspective does undermine *fidelity* to the notation, on which Ferneyhough does insist’ (p. 42). She then simply defines fidelity with a quotation from Ferneyhough:

[T]he formulation of a conscious selection-procedure in respect of the order in which the units of interpretational information contained in the score are surveyed and, as an extension of this choice, a determination of the combination of elements (strata) which are to be assigned preferential status at any given stage of the realization process. [...] Omitting information (whether voluntarily or involuntarily): is this not the ultimate recognition of *priorities*?<sup>41</sup>

I believe this can be expressed more simply: the score includes more information than a performer can ever focus upon wholly at any one time, so they work on different things at different times, developing a sense of priorities, whilst allowing for a margin of error. To a large extent this is true of performance in general, and Fitch’s rather

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Danuser (eds), *Im Zenit der Moderne. Die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik Darmstadt 1946-1966, Band 3: Dokumentation* (Frieburg im Briesgau, 1997), 513-638 and online at [www.internationales-musikinstitut.de/images/stories/PDF/Darmstaedter\\_Ferienkurse\\_1946-1966.pdf](http://www.internationales-musikinstitut.de/images/stories/PDF/Darmstaedter_Ferienkurse_1946-1966.pdf) (accessed 16 May 2014).

<sup>37</sup> John Butt, ‘Performance on Paper: Rewriting the Story of Notational Progress’, in *Acting on the Past, Historical Performance Across the Disciplines*, ed. Mark Franko and Annete Richards (Hanover: NH, 2000), 137-155, cited in Duncan, ‘To Infinity and Beyond’, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Nicholas Cook, ‘Between Process and Product; Music and/as Performance’, *Music Theory Online* 7/2 (2001), at [www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html](http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html) (accessed 16 May 2014).

<sup>39</sup> Cox, ‘Notes Toward a Performance Practice for Complex Music’. For a critique of this and the historical model it entails (though without reference to Cox), see my own ‘Notation, Time and the Performer’s Relationship to the Score’, in *Unfolding Time: Studies in Temporality in Twentieth-Century Music*, edited Darla Crispin (Leuven, 2009), 151-4.

<sup>40</sup> Marsh, ‘Heroic Motives’. This article contains detailed transcriptions of recordings of Ferneyhough works and argues that the results could be notated in a much simpler manner. Similar approaches can be found in Keller, ‘Die Ferneyhough-Familie’, and Lippe, ‘Komplexität als Programm für ein Beobachten zweiter Ordnung’.

<sup>41</sup> Ferneyhough, ‘Aspects of Notational and Compositional Practice’, in *Collected Writings*, 4, cited in Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 36.

grand statement that ‘There are two “performers” – the rehearsal performer and the concert performer, a distinction that captures the effort and proactivity demanded of the realizer’ (pp. 36–7) merely frames in rhetorical terms the unremarkable idea that practice is not the same as performance. Toop (quoted by Fitch) puts it more subtly, saying ‘interpretation consists, to some extent, of different intelligent failures to reproduce a central text’<sup>42</sup> – but what is being *reproduced*? A *written* text is being realized as a *sonic* event, hardly a case of a mere reproduction.

The source material Fitch uses to support her point about the relationship between notation and performance is the same as that used by Duncan (unattributed at this point): namely work by Roger Heaton and Alex Ross;<sup>43</sup> and she also appears to use an unattributed 2004 article by Nicholas Cook<sup>44</sup> (pp. 30–5). This points to a rather lazy approach to source material and an unwillingness to offer new arguments and reasoning. Similar instances appear throughout the central body of the book. The passage on *Terrain* (pp. 104–7) summarizes aspects of Feller (though more clearly referenced).<sup>45</sup> On *Adagissimo*, Fitch writes that ‘The sharp contrast between the material of the two pairs of instruments is a result of complex prolational processes which are very audible, texturally speaking’ (p. 146), which merely condenses Ferneyhough’s own note in the score rather than offering a new insight.<sup>46</sup> Where there are no sketches available, as for *Allgebrach*, *Incipits*, or *On Stellar Magnitudes*, nor existing writings to paraphrase, her sections are more brief and strained (occasionally relying on other preparatory materials, as with *Incipits*), consisting of elementary observations, some of which might apply equally to other pieces. I would be most interested to read a genuine attempt to account for the unique sensuous and expressive qualities of favourite pieces such as *Epicycle*, *Firecycle Beta*, and *Transit*, but all there is to be found here is a reiteration of what is most easily observable in the sketches.<sup>47</sup>

In the context of *Lemma-Icon-Epigram*, she writes:

[I]t is worth noting that the psychological aspect of a performer’s reckoning with Ferneyhough’s notation – a mental sorting, in effect, through the presentation of multiple parametric ‘interfering’ layers – which precipitated physical ingenuity in the 1970s is recast in the following decade. From 1980, the prevalence of the gesture in the musical discourse foregrounds ‘tendential lines of force’, [41. See Ferneyhough’s discussion of ‘lines of force’ in Ferneyhough, *Collected Writings*, 288] and the ‘psychologising of interpretive reaction’ is generally concentrated in these to the extent that they become graspable for both performer and listener as dynamic shapes. (p. 73)

In this tortuous prose, Fitch appears to be saying that there are interactions, some of them clashing, between different parametric layers, in Ferneyhough’s 1970s works,

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<sup>42</sup> Ferneyhough interview with Richard Toop (1983), in *Collected Writings*, 269, cited in Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 38.

<sup>43</sup> Roger Heaton, Questionnaire response in *Complexity in Music?*, 26; Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2007), 522.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Cook, ‘In Praise of Symbolic Poverty’, in *Managing as Designing*, ed. Fred Collopy and Richard J. Boland Jr (Stanford, CA, 2004), 88.

<sup>45</sup> As in Feller, ‘Slippage and Strata’, itself an adaptation of Chapter 4 of Feller’s dissertation (Feller, ‘Multicursal labyrinths’, 73–168).

<sup>46</sup> ‘The work employs complex prolational techniques on several levels. The processual strata are also distinguished in timbre and texture. The ensemble is clearly divided into two groups, with the two violins playing rapid, florid gestures, and the viola and cello playing more melodically linear material’; Brian Ferneyhough, *Adagissimo* (London, Frankfurt, & New York, n.d.), 4.

<sup>47</sup> Fitch does mention a ‘transcendent luminosity’ at points in *La terre*, which entails ‘an eruption of loud, declamatory sound’ (p. 312), and is similar to the use of the trumpets in the final sections of *Transit*, but this appears simply taken from a comment in the sketches.

and somehow (how?) these resemble something coming out of gestures. But how do performers and listeners grasp ‘tendential lines of force’ (indeed, can one be so sure that they do so)? Ferneyhough himself writes that these are ‘flowing in various directions all the time’ and that they ‘validate individual gestures in respect of their predecessors or successors’.<sup>48</sup> This extensively metaphorical (poetic?) characterisation needs to be backed up if claims are to be made in terms of performers and listeners (personally, having played the piece a great many times, usually from memory, and recorded it twice, I would be more than a little interested to know). All Fitch offers is the fact that in bar 35 of the piece there is a series of gestures that are divided between the hands, and connected together by a longer beam.<sup>49</sup> None of this is remarkable to anyone who has played a fair amount of contemporary piano music (such an essentially practical division between the hands can be found in Stockhausen’s *Klavierstück IX* or Boulez’s *Structures II*, and countless other works), but Fitch makes a meal of it:

The beams signal the importance of rhythmic detail in particular, the graphic effect on the eye – and thus on the performer’s attention to precision – of rests breaking the continuity (as in bar 5) is enhanced by the beams’ contrastingly black objectivity. The sudden vacillation between left- and right-hand pitches prefigures the very particular notation of ‘interruptive polyphony’ later in the decade, in *Trittico* and *Mnemosyne*. Similar psychologizing of rhythmic notation is also a feature in the guitar solo *Kurze Schatten II*. (p. 73)

Or in plainer English: the notation is very ‘black’, and the gestures run continuously without a break, unlike elsewhere. As for the claim of ‘interruptive polyphony’, there is nothing in this bar to suggest that the division of hands derives from any other consideration than what is most practical for the pianist.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, Fitch misses much more audibly obvious details of this bar: the use of a *pppp tenuto* dyad headed with *f* at the beginning of each phrase (delineated with increasing *crescendi*), and how this comes into conflict with other subdivisions in terms of rhythmic groupings or lengths of groups (which might amount to Ferneyhough’s ‘tendential lines of force’), leading to a type of information overload, at which point Ferneyhough shifts to a different type of material, lines to chords (a type of process which recurs at many points in the piece). Most of the rest of Fitch’s comments on the piece (pp. 82–5) simply paraphrase what Toop or Ferneyhough himself have said, with little grasp of the aural content;<sup>51</sup> her discussion of *Kurze Schatten II* (pp. 85–9) repeats similar problems.

A more stimulating passage is the discussion of a series of works (including *Missa Brevis*, *Two Marian Motets*, *Dum transisset*, *In nomine a 3*, and *O Lux*) that are related to English and other Renaissance and early Baroque music – here she

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<sup>48</sup> Ferneyhough, interview with Richard Toop, in *Collected Writings*, 288.

<sup>49</sup> A long beam had been used throughout *Unity Capsule*, which Fitch does point out, but this particular notational idiosyncrasy (convenience?) is not really comparable to the selective use of such beaming in this piano work.

<sup>50</sup> There is one dyad notated for the left hand – a *c#*’’/’*d#*’’ – which I actually take with the right, but this is my own idiosyncrasy; many others would find it more practical to take it with the left.

<sup>51</sup> Fitch writes ‘Like the *Lemma*, the *Icon* is based on metrical loops involving the substitution of so-called ‘irrational’ metres (such as 4/10 or 3/12) for conventional x/8 or x/16 units. This is the first time they feature in Ferneyhough’s output and they create proportional relationships between bar units within a cycle/loop as well as contributing to the overall proportion of one nine-bar cycle relative to the next [68. *Ibid* [Toop, ‘Lemma-Icon-Epigram’], 80]’ (p. 83). Other than saying that Ferneyhough uses unusual time signatures (as he indicates in the preface to the score) and citing Toop, she has said nothing about how these might affect the sounding result.

mentions work by Fabrice Fitch.<sup>52</sup> Drawing on a 1977 interview (given long before most of these works were composed),<sup>53</sup> Fitch alludes to Ferneyhough's difference from the 'onward-rolling, "roots-seeking" tendencies of the neo-medievalists' (p. 139), which she presumes to be 'Britten, Finzi *et al*', but I would imagine to be more likely to be Birtwistle or Maxwell Davies. She begins to discuss Ferneyhough's 'Englishness', but without ever really defining this musically (it seems simply to entail alluding to early English composers); Gottwald's identification of Ferneyhough's distance from European traditions is more informative on this.<sup>54</sup> She notes how Ferneyhough employs Christopher Tye's use of staggered entries of parts, but then falls back on rather woolly statements about evocative movement titles, and noting a contrast between extreme dynamics – hardly unusual in a good deal of contemporary music (she similarly overstates the significance elsewhere of the flexible notated interrelationship between players in the *Four Miniatures* for flute and piano, a common practice at the time the piece was written).

The chapter on the quartets is especially reliant upon Ferneyhough's writings and interviews; she mentions Courtot's work on the pieces, but does not engage with it, nor with the work of most other writers on these pieces such as Melchiorre, Panisello, Lippe, and Mahnkopf. She contrasts the Second Quartet with the Third by noting that the former runs continuously, whilst the latter is in two movements, and makes various claims about gestures in the Third 'turned in on themselves' (paraphrasing Fabrice Fitch's comment that the Third 'seems to turn the material of the *Second* inside-out'<sup>55</sup>), but this is never really substantiated other than by citing some text from Ferneyhough's sketches that suggests a more dark-toned piece<sup>56</sup>. A more rigorous comparison of the developing gestural, pitch, rhythmic, textural, etc. vocabulary in each work and the structural expressive uses to which they are put is avoided, although she does note the preponderance of quiet or silent endings, using this to cast Ferneyhough as a classic German romantic via allusions to secondary literature on Schlegel and Goethe.<sup>57</sup> For the Sixth Quartet, Fitch is able to draw extensively on the documentary produced by Paul Archbold on rehearsing the work,<sup>58</sup> mixed with a mostly descriptive if essentially sound run through the work, with a few pertinent observations of how gestures are related.

<sup>52</sup> Fabrice Fitch, 'Brian Ferneyhough and the *Prima Prattica*', unpublished paper read at Ferneyhough Symposium at Institute of Music Research, London, 23 February, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Ferneyhough, interview with Andrew Clements (1977), in *Collected Writings*, 204-16.

<sup>54</sup> Gottwald, 'Brian F., oder Von der Metaphysik des Positivismus', 300-1.

<sup>55</sup> Fabrice Fitch, 'Brian Ferneyhough', at [www.editionpeters.com/modern.php?composer=FERNEYHOUGH&modern=1](http://www.editionpeters.com/modern.php?composer=FERNEYHOUGH&modern=1) (accessed 16 May 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Specifically 'Empty, cold and desolate./Echoing spaces./Fearful and Exposed/ (Like turning a painting round and seeing only dirty, featureless canvas and a primitive wood frame)' (Ferneyhough, unpublished sketch materials for Third Quartet, cited in Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 172).

<sup>57</sup> Fitch writes that such a recurrence 'possibly denotes the fragmentary in Friedrich Schlegel's sense: each fragment has its particular unity and wholeness, but remains fragmentary insofar as it relates, through opposition, to other fragments' (p. 186, drawing upon Berthold Hoeckner on Schlegel in *Programming the Absolute: Nineteenth-Century German Music and the Hermeneutics of the Moment* (Princeton, NJ, 2002), 6. Similarly, her allusion to Goethe soon afterwards is drawn entirely from a secondary source (here Christina Bashford, 'The String Quartet and Society', in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge, 2003), 4).

<sup>58</sup> Archbold, 'Performing Complexity'. Fitch writes simperingly with regard to Ferneyhough's mention of Ives' Second Quartet on this video, 'Such prompts have been used for years in rehearsals with musicians but where such information has generally remained concealed from public view, the documentary presents a side to the composer firmly at odds with his earlier type-casting as an aloof intellectual' (Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 188-9).

In *Chronos-Aion*, after outlining a few aspects of Henri Bergson's ideas on time,<sup>59</sup> and the two types described by Ferneyhough as 'flowing time' (*Aion*) and 'material-bound time (the temporality of the concrete figure, of abrupt changes of texture, perspective and directionality)' (*Chronos*),<sup>60</sup> she remarks that the two types of time are represented 'near the beginning of the piece, when the listener begins to draw a distinction between an apparently faster, highly figured material and a "frozen" sustained texture', with the first six fragments (relating to numbered figures in the score) representing *Chronos*, the seventh 'the slowest tempo so far, containing only a few long-held tones', announcing *Aion* (p. 318). But, as a listener, I am less convinced by this characterisation: the third section, the most extended of the early ones, has a tempo (quaver 45) only marginally faster than the seventh (quaver 41), and remains exclusively within a lower tessitura (unlike any of the fragments that surround it). It demonstrates a degree of relative stasis or linear growth, and contrasts, to my ears, with the other sections, whilst the seventh also includes some punctuation in the harp, piano, percussion, and lower strings that Fitch neglects to mention. This may of course just reflect a difference of listening priorities, but it seems inappropriate for Fitch to draw such an unambiguous conclusion about the listening experience from the parameters of tempo and density of figuration alone.

The chapter on aesthetics alludes to 'the human condition' and 'timelessness' as key preoccupations of Ferneyhough, and attempts in large measure to cast him as the figure of Walter Benjamin, with all that entails in terms of trivialization of the particularities of Benjamin's historical situation, fixating on the 'Angel of History'. Fitch writes of *Pools of Darkness*, scene 5 of *Shadowtime*, that it

offers a double reading of encounters with history. Benjamin's avatar meets historical figures who interrogate him whilst Ferneyhough surveys numerous historical musical forms, or rather processes (fugato, isorhythm) and techniques (passacaglia, chaconne), none of which has a direct bearing on the form of each 'interrogation' as such (in contradistinction to some of the scenes of Berg's *Wozzeck*). (p. 336)

But for all Ferneyhough's evocation of Benjamin's 'Angel of History' and Fitch's parallel use of history as some type of intellectual game, I believe a more accurate comparison would be one rooted in the possibility that Ferneyhough was confronted with the historical movements of his *own* time: feminism, multiculturalism, the loosening of some class hierarchies in Western society with implications for the position of 'high' culture, the rise of popular culture and the mass media, the consolidation of the United States as the major hegemonic world power (perhaps in the future to be challenged by China) and so on. Many of these developments could be seen to undermine the very figure of the artist as 'great man', never required to do such things as change nappies, deliver children to school, do a fair share of housework, perhaps even make compromises with one's career rather than expecting a partner to be the one to do so. How many teachers cease to be simply fountains of wisdom, but actively engage and interact with students from different backgrounds, with different sets of cultural, social, and political assumptions, the teachers learning much from the process? To present Ferneyhough as Fitch does - as an aloof genius,

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<sup>59</sup> In this case mostly taken from Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (New York, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Ferneyhough, 'Chronos-Aion: Concerto for Ensemble (2008)', at [www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/cd\\_content\\_donaueschinger\\_vol3\\_ing.pdf](http://www.fbbva.es/TLFU/dat/cd_content_donaueschinger_vol3_ing.pdf) (accessed 16 May 2014), cited in Fitch, *Ferneyhough*, 318.

unconcerned by such issues – is to render his historical engagement purely as an abstract philosophical concern, and to remove current times from history.

The book would have benefitted from rigorous editing, or even rewriting. It appears from the introduction to have been written mostly in 2012–13 and published shortly afterwards, but something of this scope requires time and care, and a considerably more developed range of knowledge and critical acuity. The hagiography of contemporary composers is a more widespread problem, which has been diagnosed recently by Björn Heile:

Scholarship on new music typically suffers from its lack of critical perspective. PhD theses are written, articles and books published and whole careers made on the basis of work that does little more than trace the stated intentions of the composer in question in their work. The process could be described as bargain basement hermeneutics: study the composer's so-called influences, his or her own pronouncements and look at the work with these things in mind – something will no doubt be found. As a result, the scholar becomes the composer's spokesperson, dutifully explaining how the master would want their work to be understood – which, evidently, is the only way of correctly interpreting it. There are many reasons for the predominance of this approach. New music scholars are often dependent on the goodwill of their subjects: one critical remark and you may find yourself frozen out from access to the person, their work and other materials, and from speaking and writing engagements – there are a number of (in)famous examples. [...] There is a fine line between scholarship and PR, and some so-called journals are more akin to trade magazines. Finally, the tried-and-tested method delivers results with ease: it's relatively simple to fill any space needed with material that will appear informative and well-founded; no-one is likely to complain.<sup>61</sup>

Nothing in Fitch's book suggests to me that she has even considered why this approach might be problematic. I cannot imagine this situation being acceptable in most other fields of serious musicological study – imagine writing about Wagner's music filled out with quotes from his own writings with no critical reflection! Even to take Stockhausen's lack of acknowledgement of the extent to which he drew upon ideas already developed by various American 'experimental' composers,<sup>62</sup> or the work of Marshall McLuhan and others,<sup>63</sup> is now considered naïve at the very least.

What does exist in terms of a critical discourse around new music/modernism (at least in English-language scholarship) consists mainly of sweeping generalisations from those identifying themselves with postmodernism or the 'New Musicology' (and occasionally ethnomusicology), often portraying modernist music as occupying a hegemonic situation of prestige, in opposition to which is set their own work and ideas; rarely does one find any sustained engagement with specific musical works.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Björn Heile, 'Un pezzo ... di una grandissima serietà e con una grandissima emozione ... e con elementi totalmente bruti': aesthetic and socio-political considerations and the failure of their integration in Mauricio Kagel's work post-1968', keynote paper given at conference 'La "musique absolue avec la scène": Mauricio Kagel', Nice, 25 April 2014. My thanks to Björn Heile for making the text of this paper available to me. I had earlier made similar arguments in my 'Musicology is not Musical PR' (25 August 2013), at <http://ianpace.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/musicology-is-not-musical-pr/> (accessed 8 May 2014), as has the composer Lauren Redhead whilst with reference to a Ferneyhough Symposium in London in February 2011, in 'Where/When is the Avant Garde?' (February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2011), at <http://weblog.laurenredhead.eu/post/3524737478/where-when-is-the-avant-garde> (accessed 8 May 2014).

<sup>62</sup> See Peter Niklas Wilson, 'Stockhausen, der Epigone? Karlheinz Stockhausen und die amerikanische Avantgarde', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 49/5 (1988), 6-11.

<sup>63</sup> See Björn Heile, 'Weltmusik and the Globalization of New Music', in *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music*, ed. Heile (Farnham, 2009), 105-8.

<sup>64</sup> Some examples of the large numbers of writings exhibiting this tendency would be Susan McClary, 'Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Composition', *Cultural Critique*, 12 (1988), 57-81, and her *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2000),

Little of this type of work deals specifically with Ferneyhough; just occasionally one can find an intelligent piece of writing by an author sympathetic to and knowledgeable about Ferneyhough's music whilst still prepared to entertain alternative perspectives to the composer's self-presentation.<sup>65</sup>

Many aspects of Ferneyhough's work remain relatively unexamined through the literature: the extent to which his aesthetics and approach might be considered conservative compared to others, how his work relates to experimental literary traditions, what might be the fundamental elements of his gestural language, what led to a re-engagement in later works with tonal and other historical musical elements, his use of timbre, and also his paintings and poetry. Another, and better, book in English considering the breadth of Ferneyhough's output (perhaps by Feller?), would be extremely welcome.

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134-52; Rose Rosengard Subotnick, 'The Challenge of Contemporary Music', in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis, 1991), 265-93; Robin Hartwell, 'Postmodernism and art music,' in *The Last Post: Music after Modernism* ed. Simon Miller (Manchester, 1993), 27-51; Catherine Parsons Smith, '"A Distinguishing Virility": Feminism and Modernism in American Art Music', in (eds), *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music*, ed. Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou, with a foreword by Susan McClary (Urbana and Chicago, 1994), 90-106; Lawrence Kramer, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1995), 5-13 and *Musical Meaning*, 258-87; Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley, 1995); Derek B. Scott, 'Postmodernism and Music', in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Simm (New York & London, 2001), 182-93; and Hettie Malcomson, 'Composing Individuals: Ethnographic Reflections on Success and Prestige in the British New Music Network', *twentieth-century music*, 10/1 (2013), 115-36. For critiques of some of this body of work, see in particular Joseph N. Straus, 'The Myth of Serial "Tyranny" in the 1950s and 1960s', *The Musical Quarterly*, 83/3 (1999), 301-43, Björn Heile, 'Darmstadt as Other: British and American Responses to Musical Modernism', *twentieth-century music*, 1/2 (2004), 161-78; and Paul Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism* (Cambridge, 2012), ix-xx, 3-42. The first category of works in question are somewhat different in nature from earlier anti-modernist polemics such as Henry Pleasants, *The Agony of Modern Music* (New York, 1955) and later ones such as Samuel Lipman, *Music after Modernism* (New York, 1979) or Fred Lerdahl, *Tonal Pitch Space* (New York & Oxford, 2001), which are in large measure predicated upon the idea of modernist music's being at odds with 'natural' listening such as is supplied by tonality.

<sup>65</sup> Larson Powell, 'The Experience of Complexity: The Critical Discussion Concerning Brian Ferneyhough', review of *Musik-Konzepte 140: Brian Ferneyhough*, at [www.searchnewmusic.org/powell\\_review.pdf](http://www.searchnewmusic.org/powell_review.pdf) (accessed 5 May 2014).