

# Alterity, Nation and Identity: Some Musicological Paradoxes \*

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In 2001, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend several months in Australia as a fellow at the University of Melbourne, and three precious weeks to travel through the country's South-East in a camper van. This is where, according to my mother, we found the 'real' Australia: kangaroos, koalas and wombats; endless horizons stretching over dusty, red landscapes; tree-ferns and the Blue Mountains; the Sydney opera house; and Aboriginal culture, or at least what we encountered thereof on our trip. Like any inveterate tourist worth her salt, I went shopping for souvenirs, so that I could take material reminders of this experience home with me. My kangaroo-T-shirt offers memories of sightings in the Grampians, and the little Australian-made koala reminds me of our attempts to see the elusive animals—elusive at least to tourists such as us—while it is small enough to fit into the limited baggage allowance on Qantas airlines.

As a musicologist, I also felt compelled to shop for musical souvenirs. My easy-to-transport booty consisted of two CDs, featuring prominently what I had come—or had been told—to associate with 'Australian' music: the didgeridoo. *Didgeridoo Dreamtime* features 'traditional Aboriginal music' and supports this claim to Australianness by both recording technique (the inclusion of reverberation and environmental sounds to create a 'open space' character) and visual packaging.<sup>1</sup> The CD cover (see Fig. 1) combines a red background overlaid with brownish kangaroos, koalas and kookaburras and, in the foreground, the photograph of an Aboriginal didgeridoo player with traditional face painting; the recording mixes the studio takes of the music with a layer of environmental sounds such as birds, and adds some heavy reverb in order to represent open landscape.

My second CD, *Tribal Offerings*, not only displays rather colourful didgeridoos on its cover; its authenticity is assured to the buyer through its yellow-red trademark claiming a piece of 'indigenous Australia' on the back of the album (see Fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> And even my—in terms of world-music—quite unsophisticated ears can spot the references in the various tracks of this 'blend

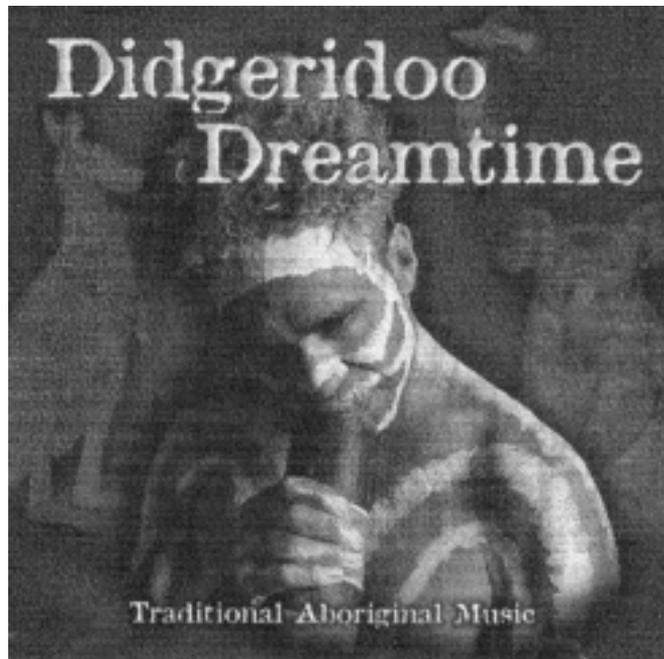
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\* I would like to thank Tim Carter, Michael Christoforidis, Russell Grigg, Kerry Murphy, Richard Taruskin, Philip Vandermeer and Lesley Wright for their comments, criticism, suggestions and help with this article.

<sup>1</sup> *Didgeridoo Dreamtime: Traditional Australian Music*, digitally recorded, mixed, mastered, programmed and produced by Murdo McRae at Murdifications, Brisbane; manufactured and distributed by MRA Entertainment Group, 1999; Hart Records HR 10092.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribal Offerings: A Blend of Didjeridu and World Ethnic Music*, Indigenous Australia, Balmain, n.d., IA2035D.

**Figure 1.** Cover of *Didgeridoo Dreamtime: Traditional Australian Music* (Hart Records, HR 10092, 1999). Reproduced with permission.



of didgeridoo and world ethnic music,' most definitely in the unmistakable sounds of the solo guitar at the beginning of 'El occaso del Amor,' subtitled as 'Passions of Flamenco & Didjeridu,' and in the sonorities of a jazz combo in 'Labyrinth,' that is 'Cool Jazz, Hot Didjeridu.' In the latter, the didgeridoo serves as drone to a 1950s-style jazz opening, a kind of exotic colouring rather familiar from the use of similar musical signifiers in Western music, from Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* to Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

My souvenirs are not rare artefacts but mass-produced commodities aimed at the ever-increasing tourist market. The object's market price is carefully calculated in order to maximise profit margins whether by exploiters of 'cultural' tourism or by the musicians themselves. Indeed, these souvenirs tell us not only about the side of supply, that is, issues of appropriation and identity as displayed in Australia, but maybe even more about the side of demand: after all, stuffed koalas and didgeridoo recordings correspond to some of my preconceived European ideas of Australianness and allow me to confirm them in the form of such tourist souvenirs.<sup>3</sup> I could take them home and say: this is what Australia is like.

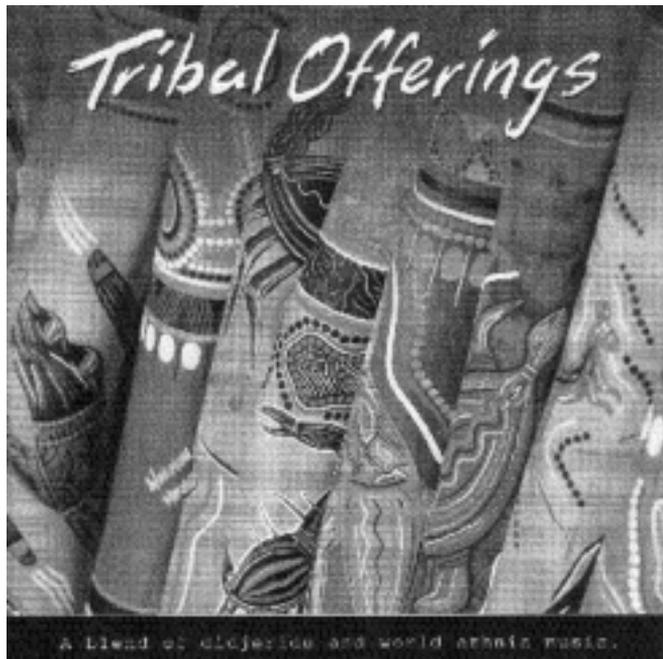
Such reducing of Australian culture to stuffed animals and commercialised world-music echoes with more familiar experiences with respect to my own culture. I felt rather mortified when my husband decided during a recent visit to Germany that listening to the *Volksmusik Wunschkonzert* on German television was an amusing form of obtaining a good dose of native

<sup>3</sup> On the issue of appropriation in Australia, see in particular Rex Butler (ed.), *What is Appropriation?: An Anthology of Critical Writings on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s* (Brisbane and Sydney: Power Publications, 1996). For a summary of issues relating to economic ownership of the didgeridoo, see Aaron Corn, 'The Didjeridu as a Site of Economic Contestation in Arnhem Land,' *Newsletter of The Centre for Studies in Australian Music* 10 (December 1999): 1-4.

German 'culture.' The performance included blond-haired musicians in *Lederhosen* and *Dirndls*, a colourful stage-backdrop of the German Alps, the display of yodelling virtuosity and the sonorities of the Alphorn Trio (that was, in fact, a quartet). This was a true nightmare for any self-respecting German scholar. But, as beer gardens with their Bavarian folk-music tapes show throughout the world (and my recent visit to Bangkok bears witness to this), these kinds of cultural signifiers are very much alive. In addition, decades of American film music, from the majority of the Nazi-hunting spy-thrillers since 1945 to musicals such as *The Sound of Music* (1965), have underscored this image of what autochthonous German music sounds like. Indeed, such products present an unflinching way of indicating Germanness through music in the wider world, maybe even more so than the performance of a Beethoven symphony, where Beethoven's Germanness has tended to be subsumed in favour of a more transnational universalism.<sup>4</sup> And this is valid also for consumption in Germany itself, just as, in the end, the two didgeridoo CDs are not exclusively targeted at the tourist market, but also at buyers and radio stations within Australia.

My two opening examples raise some rather uncomfortable questions about the complex and interrelated problems which emerge from our engaging with nation, identity and music. These questions pertain to various issues linked to our encounter with other as well as own

**Figure 2.** Cover of *Tribal Offerings: A Blend of Didjeridu and World Ethnic Music* (Indigenous Australia, Balmain, IA2035D). Reproduced with permission.



<sup>4</sup> That this claim to universalism needs to be read within the context of German idealism and its nationalist agenda has been discussed in recent work on nineteenth-century song, opera and symphony. See, for example, Cecilia Hopkins Porter, *The Rhine as Musical Metaphor: Cultural Identity in German Romantic Music* (Boston: Northeastern UP, 1996); Hermann Danuser and Herfried Münkler, eds., *Deutsche Meister—Böse Geister: Nationale Selbstfindung in der Musik* (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2001).

cultures, and our assessment of cultural identity both past and present. In his recent article on 'Nationalism' for the revised *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Richard Taruskin maintains that:

Nationalism should not be equated with the possession or display of distinguishing national characteristics—or not, at any rate, until certain questions are asked and at least provisionally answered. The most important ones are, first, who is doing the distinguishing? and second, to what end?<sup>5</sup>

Taruskin's two questions seem to be addressed to his historical objects rather than to the modern scholar. He is in good company. Many of us discuss world music and musical colonialism; we wonder about German or French national identity and music in the diaspora; we address Russianness, Hmongness and 'Italianità'; and we debate Wagnerism, cultural transfer and rejection. But we often forget to ask the very basic questions about the who, why and how with respect to scholarship while we try to explain the what, when and where of such historical and contemporary phenomena. In this text, I would like to take up several of those questions related both to the object of study and the studying subject, for they are inextricably linked in a dialectical relationship of Self and Other both in historical and in present constellations.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, when we address the issue of alterity, nation and music in our studies, we quickly find ourselves in a paradoxical situation: we construct through our very act of deconstruction and analysis the dualities of Self and Other, or subject and object, that we set out to deconstruct in the first place. Thus the dualities that we try to lay bare as constructs become the very fabric of our thought process, and we are trapped in this web as much as are our objects.<sup>7</sup> If we try to negate or diminish the importance of such dualities, however, we cannot show the mechanisms, dangers and consequences of such constructions in history or today.<sup>8</sup> But if we focus on these dualities in our analysis, we remain within their framework and cement them into place. In other words, the challenge lies in avoiding acting like the Lacanian fool whom Slavoj Žižek describes as 'a deconstructionist cultural critic who, by means of his ludic procedures destined

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Taruskin, 'Nationalism,' *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (London: Macmillan, 2000), vol. 17, 689.

<sup>6</sup> Leo Treitler offers a basic definition of subject and object in his review essay on Joseph Kerman's *Contemplating Music* (1985), 'The Power of Positivist Thinking,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 42 (1989): 390–91. For a more critical engagement with the issues of object and subject in respect to music (grounded, however, in the tradition of Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy), see A. E. Denham, 'The Moving Mirrors of Music: Roger Scruton Resonates with Tradition,' *Music & Letters*, 80 (1999): 411–32.

<sup>7</sup> Leo Treitler develops the issues of dualities as historical construct in his article 'The Politics of Reception: Tailoring the Present as Fulfilment of a Desired Past,' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 117 (1992): 280–98. However, he shows the dualities as exclusively located in the analysing subject and assumes that a change in working hypothesis brings a change in the historical narrative. For a discussion of duality and difference with respect to feminist musicology, see Ruth A. Solie, 'Introduction: "On Difference,"' *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley, Cal., and London: U of California Press, 1993) 1–20. Joan Copjec approaches the problematic issue of duality and difference critically from a Lacanian perspective in the chapter 'Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason,' in her *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 1994) 201–36. I wish to thank Russell Grigg for pointing me towards this book.

<sup>8</sup> Although our solutions might differ, Richard Taruskin's reminder of the Holocaust argument in its current incarnation in China and Afghanistan in his preface to *Defining Russia Musically*, xxviii–xxx, shows what danger can lie in a naïve and solipsistic fetishization of difference and Otherness. See Richard Taruskin, 'Others: A Mythology and a Demurrer (by Way of Preface),' *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997) xi–xxxii.

to “subvert” the existing order, actually serves as its supplement.<sup>9</sup> We thus need to learn to negotiate our scholarly paths within the maze of such paradoxical relationship between Self and Other, us and our object of study.

In order to locate recent debate, I will contrast two positions, both equally problematical with respect to the positioning of subject and object in scholarly work. While on the one hand post-modern deconstruction might allow for discourse analysis (thus, if not subverting historiography, then at least unveiling the position of the Self and the Other in the discourses), it also brings with it the danger of mere solipsistic relativism. In musicology, these plays of interpretation can be found in the vein of post-moderns such as Gary Tomlinson, in particular in his latest endeavour, *Metaphysical Song*.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, some scholars propose retreating back into a neo-positivism as the only safe haven. Instead of an authoritarian master narrative in the name of history, the new master narrative is formulated in the name of hermeneutics, but reduced to a single, ‘true’ and close reading of historical facts, as I would describe Taruskin’s choice in *Defining Russia Musically*.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, however, the subject of inquiry becomes objectified, subjected to the agency of the writer.

In order to address this issue of alterity in musical scholarship, it is a necessary step to reflect on our own paradoxical position within the hermeneutic circle as being both Self and Other. This, to us, fundamental concept of world constitutes the archaeological stratum of the current problem of cultural critique, that is it operates within its structures even though it tries to critique them. Therefore, I will first examine the issue of Self and Other in some of its manifold theoretical dimensions, before asking whose Other it is that we address in music scholarship and how this question may lead to a methodological way forward out of the current antinomies of neo-positivism and post-modernism.

### Others

The ‘Other’ as concept is an integral part of the thought patterns and philosophical traditions of the West, in particular that of transcendental philosophy since Plato.<sup>12</sup> It has been described as the—emphatically—‘not-I’ in the sense of Fichte, and this concept of non-identity has come

<sup>9</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London and New York: Verso, 1997) 45–46. I wish to thank Russell Grigg for bringing this book to my attention.

<sup>10</sup> Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999). See in particular ch. 1: ‘Voices of the Invisible’ 3–8. Ironically, for all his stabbing at post-modern criticism, Tomlinson seems to have problems with this relativist play, and his attempt to ground his interpretations in a rather naïve reading of philosophies seems to be aimed at replacing music-historical ‘facts’ with philosophical pointers rather than frameworks of debate. This is particularly obvious in his discussion of Nietzsche and *Carmen* (109–26).

<sup>11</sup> Although Taruskin offers a brilliant analysis of the problems of relativism in post-modern criticism as solipsistic, he does not go much beyond that rejection in creating other models of approaching a topic as multi-faceted as ‘nationalism.’ His inclusion of Foucauldian archaeology in a close reading of the text (ie, the artwork) may be seen as problematic a solution as is Tomlinson’s relativism. Taruskin’s reversion to positivism as the salvation of a meaningful discourse could be heard as a siren’s call away from the reefs of the hermeneutic sea, but in the end it reclaims readings which contain no-longer-sustainable absolutes steeped in the narrative tradition of a Ranke or Burckhart. This becomes particularly obvious in the exquisitely researched essays of *Defining Russia Musically*, where in a passionate search for historical truth (especially in the chapter ‘Stravinsky and the Subhuman,’ 360–467) Taruskin virtuously uses every scrap of historical evidence to revise the ‘wrong’ (that is, amnesiac) story of Stravinsky’s formalism into a new master narrative of Stravinsky’s anti-semitism. The tone and the structure of argument impose the new narrative as the only one that can be based on the facts presented.

<sup>12</sup> The use of alterity as demarking identity is not an exclusively Western concept, as examples from various tribes and nations of the world bear witness. However, I am restricting myself to discussion of the Western tradition for the simple reason of my own world of research.

to its culmination in the Hegelian construct of dialectics which, according to Adorno's critique, 'develops the difference of the specific from the universal as dictated by the universal,' but which also, through this, impoverishes the 'qualitative multiplicity of experience.'<sup>13</sup> Instead of endless multiplicities, dialectical discipline abstracts these into a system of mutual Othering. The metaphor of the Other (that is, the specific difference from a universally thought subjectivity) is powerful. It provides the necessary outside-boundaries of any individuation and has to be thought of in the creation of differences (*différences*), whether binary or multiple.<sup>14</sup>

In his writings on time and alterity, Emmanuel Lévinas distinguishes a human (and thus existentially experienced) Otherness in the tradition of Freud from that of the 'purely formal and logical alterity by which terms of all multiplicity are distinguished from each other (where each exists already as a keeper of different attributes or, in a multiplicity of equal terms, each is the Other of the Other by fact of its individuation).'<sup>15</sup> This human alterity is transcendent as and for itself (*an und für sich*) by cutting through the differences and by its continuity that is the quality itself of difference; for Lévinas, this existential Otherness is femininity, and I would claim not in a metaphorical sense only. Although Lévinas's text is aiming at offering a philosophical critique of Hegel and Heidegger, it also reveals the deep-seated cultural practice of gendering philosophical concepts in its use of an existentialised, and indeed eroticised, concept of biological sexual difference as metaphor for the interrelation of subject and object—or even of scholar and another 'transcendental subject.'<sup>16</sup> Here Lévinas reproduces the concept of the *λογος* (logos) as masculine (an absolute in Nietzschean terms), and the dark and mysterious, indeed the natural, as feminine.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, however, Lévinas maintains

<sup>13</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 6, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1997) 18: 'Wer der dialektischen Disziplin sich beugt, hat fraglos mit bitterem Opfer an der qualitativen Mannigfaltigkeit der Erfahrung zu zahlen ... Dialektik entfaltet die vom Allgemeinen diktierte Differenz des Besonderen vom Allgemeinen' [my translation in text].

<sup>14</sup> On the issue of Otherness, sign and translation, see Josef Simon, *Philosophie des Zeichens* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1989) esp. 104–10.

<sup>15</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Le Temps et l'autre* (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1979) 14: 'l'altérité purement formelle et logique par laquelle se distinguent les uns des autres les termes de toute multiplicité (où chacun est autre déjà comme porteur d'attributs différents ou, dans une multiplicité de termes égaux, chacun est l'autre de l'autre par son individuation)' [my translation in text].

<sup>16</sup> In terms of music-aesthetic literature, a famous example of this gendered reading of Self and Other can be found in Richard Wagner's *Oper und Drama*, ed. Klaus Kropfinger (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984) 118: 'Die Musik ist die Gebärende, der Dichter der Erzeuger ... *Die Musik ist ein Weib*. Die Nature des Weibes ist die Liebe: aber diese Liebe ist die *empfangende* und in der Empfängnis rückhaltlos *sich hingebende*. Das Weib erhält volle Individualität erst im Moment der Hingebung. Es ist das Wellenmädchen, das seelenlos durch die Wogen seines Elementes dahinrauscht, bis es durch die Liebe eines Mannes erst die Seele empfängt' [emphasis Wagner]. See also Silke Leopold, 'Von der Allgewalt vollsten Hingebungsseifers: Weibs-Bilder in Wagners "Ring,"' *Richard Wagner 'Der Ring des Nibelungen': Ansichten des Mythos*, ed. Udo Bernbach and Dieter Borchmeyer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995) 59–74.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Lévinas, *Le Temps et l'autre*, 79ff: 'Ce qui m'importe dans cette notion du féminin, ce n'est pas seulement l'inconnaissable, mais un mode d'être qui consiste à se dérober à la lumière. Le féminin est dans l'existence un événement différent de celui de la transcendance spatiale ou de l'expression qui vont vers la lumière. C'est une fuite de la lumière ... Le fait d'être réfractaire à notre pouvoir n'est pas une puissance plus grande que la nôtre. C'est l'altérité qui fait toute sa puissance. Son mystère constitue son altérité.' For a feminist critique of this masculinised logocentric approach, see Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989); with respect to science, see Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1991) esp. chapters 5–7 and 11; with respect to discourse analysis, see Nancy Fraser, *Widerspenstige Praktiken: Macht, Diskurs, Geschlecht*, trans. Karin Wördemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1994). For a criticism of the European notion of the subject, see Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998) 4–38.

that we cannot reach or know this Otherness, for the relationship needs distance and difference. If we know the Other, it will be absorbed by the subject and duality disappears, as the Self disappears if it tries to lose itself in the Other.<sup>18</sup> Thus Otherness needs its subject to acknowledge its existence as such, or else the Other will be subsumed in the dialectical process. However, at the same time, the subject needs to face and appropriate itself in the face of other subjectivities (not objects).<sup>19</sup>

This concept of the Other as a competing and continuous, albeit feminised, subject to the Self points towards a further issue within this dialectical relationship, brought up by Freud and put to use by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism: the Other as also a 'surrogate, underground Self.'*<sup>20</sup> In other words: such act of Othering not only acknowledges that this Other shares in our, in gendered terms always masculinised, humanity, but that it also becomes a distorting mirror which reflects back to us what we would like to ignore in ourselves. Thus the Other takes on an essential dialectical function in an exchange which both confirms and defies dominance in a competitive and complex relationship, for continuations and contradictions are placed both within the subject (through the mirroring process) and in the relationship to its Others.<sup>21</sup>

### Whose Other is it Anyway?

Concepts of Others are among the pervasive issues not only in philosophy and psychoanalysis but also in cultural critique, whether by writers examining colonial and national politics such as Edward Said or Tzvetan Todorov, or feminist authors such as H  l  ne Cixous, Luisa Muraro or Judith Butler. They certainly have intruded into the musicological discourses of the last twenty years, and rightly so. Indeed, it is one of the most exciting questions which can be examined in our discipline, and I include here both musicology and ethnomusicology.<sup>22</sup> But as with so

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<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel L  vinas, *Le Temps et l'autre* 19: 'En remontant ainsi    la racine ontologique de la solitude, nous esp  rons entrevoir en quoi cette solitude peut   tre d  pass  e. Disons tout de suite ce que ce d  passement ne sera pas. Il ne sera pas une connaissance, car par la connaissance l'objet, que l'on le veuille ou non, est absorb   par le sujet et la dualit   dispara  t. Il ne sera pas une extase, car, dans l'extase, le sujet s'absorbe dans l'objet et se retrouve dans son unit  . Tous ces rapports aboutissent    la disparition de l'autre.' Here L  vinas's notion of the sublation if not disappearance of the subject in the (feminised) Other echoes fin-de-si  cle notions of the all-consuming *femme fatale*.

<sup>19</sup> According to Hegel, the 'father' of dialectics: 'Die Anerkennung des Selbstbewu  tseins besteht darin, da   jedes dem anderen dasselbe ist, was es selbst [ist], ebendies, f  r das andere zu sein, wei   und somit in dem von ihm verschiedenen sich selbst anschaut ... Jedes hebt sein Anderssein in ihm selbst und im Anderen auf.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Texte zur Prop  deutik, N  rnberger Schriften, Werke*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1969) 78ff.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, quoted in Treitler, 'The Politics of Reception' 290.

<sup>21</sup> Slavoj Zizek quotes a well-known passage from Hegel's *Science of Logic* which exemplifies this point with the help of the archetypal relationship of father and son: 'Father is the other of son, and son the other of father, and each only is the other of the other; and at the same time, the one determination only is in relation to the other ... The father also has an existence of his own apart from the son-relationship, but then he is not father but simple man ... Opposites, therefore, contain contradiction in so far as they are, in the same respect, negatively related to one another or sublate each other and are indifferent to one another.' Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, quoted in translation as *Science of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989) 441; given in Slavoj Zizek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 151.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of the concept of Otherness with respect to anthropology and ethnography, see Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) esp. 1-7 and 13-17. Mason bases his discussion of Otherness in anthropology on a 'classic' in the field: Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983). I wish to thank Philip Vandermeer for bringing these two titles to my attention.

many other critical tools, the seductive sport of 'Othering the Other' without grounding such scholarly practice in its hermeneutic context of dialectics has managed to obscure the basic problem of self-reflection that these strategies necessarily contain. I am referring here to the shop-worn concept of the horizon of consciousness of the scholarly Self and its relationship to the already complex interrelationships of Others as objects in the hermeneutic project as well as in any dialogues ensuing from it.

My two opening stories show what issues are at stake through this paradoxical relationship of Self and Other. To paraphrase Virginia Woolf: whose Other is it anyway? In the Australian story we can discern the following protagonists: tourists and Australians; Aboriginal and other Australians; one tourist (me) among other tourists; a scholar and her subjects or objects; finally a scholar and her audience, in this case comprising both Australians and tourists. All these protagonists are competing for dominance in this process as dialectically related Others. Is the story about Australian identity or that of the tourist or both? Which is conditioning what? Who is reading? Who is interpreting? Indeed, who is whose Other, and who appropriates what? The medial object—stuffed koala and commercialised CD—serves as a material agent and can be invested with various meanings: from betrayal of a cultural heritage to cute souvenir, from musical expression to embarrassing reduction. And yet all of these signifieds are not divorced from the signifier, but are its constituent elements or, even more dangerously, are involuntary traces of its materiality, as Susan McClary has reminded us in her feminist analyses of musical artefacts in *Feminine Endings*.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of this story, we are in a situation where the scholar is more at the periphery than at the centre of the complex web of reciprocal Othering, so long as we leave aside the fundamental limitation of self-consciousness which Anaïs Nin has formulated pointedly in her bon-mot 'We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are.' As a scholar trying to engage with Otherness, nation and music, I can enter into a dialogue with my different subjects—both Australian and tourists, producers and consumers, musicians and listeners, etc. Indeed, I could take on the role of an ethnographer who immerses herself in the social context of her study and who may even receive feedback and active participation in the interpretative work from the object of her description and thus literally be the Other. For his book, *Sound and Sentiment*, Steven Feld could go back to Papua New Guinea and ask members of the Kaluli tribe whether his interpretation reflected reality as they understood it, and their contribution to the project represents an intrinsic part of his—or is it their?—story.<sup>24</sup> In ethnomusicology, this has become a well-known ritual of engaging with Others which, I fear, still needs to address the issue of whose Other it is, but which, at least, turns the Other into a partner, albeit an inferior one, in a dialogue in which the ethnographer is usually the one in the position of the mediator with interpretative power.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1990). See esp. his postscript, 239–68.

<sup>25</sup> As a colleague points out: even in his postscript on dialogic editing, it is still Steven Feld who represents the Kaluli and their reactions to the audience. I worry further about how narcissistic and self-referential such apparently dialogic editing can be. This becomes evident not only in Feld's family-album memorabilia in *Sound and Sentiment* (for example, pp. 242–43), comparable to trophy photographs of nineteenth-century travellers, but also in the introduction to *Music Grooves*, ed. Charles Keil and Steven Feld (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1994), where self-indulgent editorship invites (or rather forces) the reader to 'listen' to their apparently 'authentic' conversations, illustrated with childhood photographs of the editors.

More complicated still is my German example, where we have a scholar as Self who is not just involved as a more marginal participant—one of the tourists, albeit a musicologist—but, rather, becomes a deeply involved protagonist in the centre of the story in addition to being an observer, a split personality if ever there was one. Here my own—in this case national—identity is at stake in the interpretation: after all, is not this kind of Germanness, represented in the *Volksmusik Wunschkonzert*, part of my identity even in my rejection? And is it not, even more painfully, part of my personal make-up whenever I engage exactly in such questions as national identity? For in this case, I am no longer engaging with music and its performance as a tourist or an ethnographer (an outsider by definition), as with the commercial CD featuring Australianness. Instead of a commodity representing Otherness, this *Volksmusik*-object transgresses and challenges my own self-consciousness. It becomes a mirror of who I am, even if, or rather because, it distorts the image I am used to seeing. The vital distance between Self and Other is endangered here, and the cracks in the self-consciousness are showing.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, I am no longer able to play the role of the ethnomusicologist here, not even one as involved as Steven Feld. The *Volksmusik*-example is a lot more dangerous to me, the scholar, because it lays bare what is implicit in the first story. To repeat Taruskin's questions to history which are now addressed to me as the scholar: 'Who is doing the distinguishing, and to what end?'

### Others Through Time and Space

My two stories have one trait in common. They happened in very recent history, and the protagonists can tell their own competing versions, should they wish to do so. But what happens when we address the past? Much of my work engages with music in the nineteenth century by people historically perceived as Others: French music as Other to German music and vice versa; women's music and music-making as Other to that of men; the nineteenth century as Other to the twenty-first; non-Western music as Other to that of the West. Strategies of Othering often go for the over-kill, as anyone working on these issues can easily demonstrate. Thus writers routinely feminise and orientalise national Others to distinguish these from the simultaneously masculinised Self: the strategy of gendering nations and their music became a commonplace by the late nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> And as Leo Treitler has shown, scholars use the same strategy of Othering when evaluating competing historical objects, in this case forms of Gregorian chant.<sup>28</sup> Treitler illustrates how dualities of North and South, Celtic and Roman, masculine and effeminate, Western and Oriental, and Christian and Semitic were used by nationalist writers to demonstrate that the masculine and Northern version of Gregorian chant was more authentic and worthwhile than its effeminate Roman counterpart. It does not take much imagination to realise that this form of Othering was part of a hermeneutic project which created a genealogy of Northern (and also Protestant) music. It offers a terrifying example of how the writing subject sets the agenda by exploiting dualities and difference or even creating them. Thus the historic layers of Othering receive additional layers of historical narratives

<sup>26</sup> See Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* 77.

<sup>27</sup> See Annegret Fauser, 'Gendering the Nations: the Ideologies of French Discourse on Music (1870–1914),' *Musical Constructions of Nationalism: Essays on the History and Ideology of European Musical Culture, 1800–1945*, ed. Michael Murphy and Harry White (Cork: Cork UP, 2001) 72–103.

<sup>28</sup> Leo Treitler, 'The Politics of Reception'; these issues were re-worked in Leo Treitler: 'Gender and Other Dualities of Music History,' *Musicology and Difference* 23–45.

which create other Others: in this case, Peter Wagner, Bruno Stäblein and Richard Eichenhauer become Others to Leo Treitler, which is all the more poignant as Treitler does not engage here with some intellectual exercise without consequence, but seeks to expose a re-writing of history in the service of Nazi Germany.

Music serves racism very well indeed. After all, it is an art which is semantically fluid and which can be seen as a universal language that allows access to truths more essential than those corrupted by the specificity of words.<sup>29</sup> This becomes rather obvious in one my recent enquiries: the representation of non-Western music at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Because many forms of music have similar elements throughout the world—sound-events that can be described through rhythm, pitch and, for want of better words, harmony—Western visitors could relate this foreign music directly to their own experience. They did not have to learn Javanese to experience the sonorities of a Javanese gamelan. Of course, in the then Western horizon of consciousness the sounds were usually perceived as barbaric, out-of-tune and horrible.<sup>30</sup> But that is not the point. This primitive music, as it was called, also had the advantage of being a form of a sonorous archaeology, as contemporaries explained. By going and listening to the music of Black Africans or the Javanese, Parisians could listen to their own cultural roots which were overcome and refined in the process of civilisation. Julien Tiersot put this enterprise succinctly thus:

[W]e find, in the various sections of the Exposition Universelle, frequent opportunities to study the different musical forms specific to those races who understand art in a very different fashion from ours; and even when these forms should be considered by us as characterising an inferior art, we nevertheless have to pay attention to them, because they show us new aspects of music and are probably infinitely closer to the origins of our art that, today, is so complex and refined.<sup>31</sup>

Here the listening experience transcended the sheer entertainment value of such 'musique pittoresque' and became a mirror which reflected back the achievement of Western music with its sensuous sounds and elegant harmonies. Jules Massenet's version of oriental music in the ballet for *Hérodiade* became thus the true oriental Other for Parisians in 1889, whereas the barbarian sounds were seen as but primitive reflections of such sophistication: here our

<sup>29</sup> Discourse in painting and sculpture changed dramatically with the advent of abstract, non-representative art, and claims hitherto reserved for music became transferred onto this form of art. See, for example, the entries, articles and reproductions in the exhibition catalogue *Vom Klang der Bilder: Die Musik in der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart 1985, edited by Karin von Maur (Munich: Prestel, 1985). Music as 'universal language' is a concept dear to Western philosophy and aesthetics. Its historical grounding can be traced from Plato and Boetius to Eduard Hanslick and beyond, with recent incarnations in Roger Scruton's controversial *The Aesthetics of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). By self-consciously limiting his discussions to Western art, Karol Berger shows how notions of 'what is music' are conditioned by cultural frameworks, even in universalist claims. See Karol Berger: *A Theory of Art* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), esp. 28–39. This contrasts with, in particular, the work of John Blacking, whose ethnomusicological research led him to propose a musical universalism of 'man.'

<sup>30</sup> For a short list of negative Western reactions to Javanese music in 1889, see Anik Devriès, 'Les Musiques d'extrême-orient à l'Exposition Universelle de 1889,' *Cahiers Debussy* 1 (1977): 25–37.

<sup>31</sup> Julien Tiersot, 'Promenades musicales à l'Exposition,' *Le Ménestrel* 26 May 1889: 165: '[N]ous trouvons dans les diverses sections de l'Exposition universelle mainte occasion d'étudier les formes musicales propres à des races chez lesquelles l'art est compris d'une façon très différente de la nôtre; et lors même que ces formes devraient être considérées par nous comme caractériser un art inférieur, il n'en faudrait pas moins leur prêter attention, car elles nous montrent des aspects nouveaux de la musique, et, très vraisemblablement, sont infiniment plus proches des origines que notre art aujourd'hui si complexe et si raffiné.'

usual concept of authenticity is turned on its head, to say the least.<sup>32</sup> But not only through its position in the Exposition Universelle was non-Western music shown as inadequate; it was also music that could not speak for itself in this context. It needed mediators such as Julien Tiersot in order to become some kind of music to Parisian ears and not just exotic noise. More than anything else, this mediating approach confirmed the colonialist enterprise of objectifying the 'Other' and subjugating it to a Western view of the world.<sup>33</sup>

These documents of reception, historical data and historiographic discourses present the scholar with an array of issues in need of interpretation. Where then do I as the mediating subject enter the equation, and who are my Others? I am Other to this entire field of music-making and reception, but there is no dialogue with the protagonists, for the music is mute, all of my witnesses are dead and most of them remain nameless.<sup>34</sup> Are they then just texts in need of interpretation, subjected to my whims as a creative reader in the sense of Bakhtin? But then, I am not engaging with, say, Shakespeare but with voids; I cannot reach any Others because there are none. Or at least, there are only some, and these are, without exception, part of literate cultures. Photographs and descriptions might offer some mediated reflections, but the music and voices in the centre of this enquiry are silent. Thus what I encounter are mediated fragments of a silenced past, where I am Other to the mediator while being mediator and Other to the object of my study. In the end, my only hope is to tell the stories of my own frustrated attempts of reaching Others through time and space, but not *without* taking these Others as a reality that may, however, never become real, as Žižek has shown so convincingly in *The Plague of Fantasies*.

The dialogue with a subjectified past which Carl Dahlhaus demanded in his *Foundations of Music History* is but illusion.<sup>35</sup> However, historical projects need this chimera of a dialogue with the past in order to justify our interpretative work. Why else would we do it—unless the object of the enterprise is solitary pleasure? We imagine the voices from the past when we try to create history; we enter into an illusory debate with our objects and turn them into subjects in our heads and in our writings. We need this deception of intersubjectivity, the fantasy of relating to historical figures and their actions, the fallacy of an exchange through time and space. This is most obvious in biographical projects, where we set out to get to know the—usually dead—person and come to think of her (or him) as someone familiar. But we can detect this need of reciprocity in less obvious projects such as musical analysis, where we try to enter into a dialogue with texts such as the score of Brahms's Piano Quintet in F minor. Usually, our work with the past of Western music sits in the middle ground between ethnographic immediacy and solitary imagination: we try to understand some phenomenon

<sup>32</sup> Annegret Fauser, 'World Fair—World Music: Musical Politics in 1889 Paris,' *Nineteenth-Century Music: Selected Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference*, ed. Jim Samson and Bennett Zon (London and Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 181–225.

<sup>33</sup> Timothy Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,' *Colonialism and Culture*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1995) 289–317, shows in more general terms to what extent this was deliberate.

<sup>34</sup> For a short but poignant analysis of the silencing and thus absence of women with respect to nineteenth-century music, see Katharine Ellis, 'The Fair Sax: Women, Brass-Playing and the Instrument Trade in 1860s Paris,' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 124 (1999): 222ff.

<sup>35</sup> Even the fantasy of a dialogical historiography with respect to music needs the 'historical data,' as revealed in Carl Dahlhaus's chapter 'Historische Hermeneutik,' in *Grundlagen der Musikgeschichte* (Köln: Musikverlag Hans Gerig, 1977) 120.

of the past—a genre, a musical institution, an aesthetic issue such as absolute music—where the passed-on material allows us to listen to the individual voices of those involved. We base the ethical justification of our work on a responsibility towards these interlocutors from the grave. And even the so-called ‘death of the author’ is but another fallacy, because the texts that we create will still take reception-history and webs of reading into account: the subject is only displaced.

### Only Paradoxes to Offer

At this point we have reached the centre of the hermeneutic circle of Othering, where questions engender more questions, and answers are scarce, and what remains is the searching for a solution to this paradoxical relationship of Self and Other in the hermeneutic project of deconstructing the dialects of Othering. In fairy tales and *opera seria*, this is the moment when the *deus ex machina* provides resolution and a ‘happy ending.’<sup>36</sup> But, and this is where fairy tale and reality part company, paradoxes do not have solutions. It is in their nature to deprive us of the benign gods and leave us with the eternal desire for—in Lacanian terms—the big Other. The famous semantic paradox of the Liar may serve as a case in point:

[C]onsider the man who simply says, ‘What I am now saying is false.’ Is what he says true or false? The problem is that if he speaks truly, he is truly saying that what he says is false, and so he is speaking falsely; but if he is speaking falsely, then, since this is just what he says he is doing, he must be speaking truly. So if what he says is false, it is true; and if it is true, it is false.<sup>37</sup>

Thus my scholarly dilemma could neither be solved by a goddess, even a theatrical one, nor I am a contender to the role of the *dea ex machina*, offering ready-made solutions to a ‘most ingenious paradox.’ This would be preposterous, to say the least. In the end, these remarks mainly have one function, that of raising awareness to questions arising from some burning problems in current musicology, in particular that of meaningful dialogue both with our subjects of enquiry and with each other.

Let me finish my text by introducing one more form of Othering while I am trying to escape the problem by finding a formula that works for me. When I read through recent literature, I heard seductive siren calls offering me the magic recipe if only I would listen. But those voices were contradictory. Some solutions were radical like the one of Italian feminist Luisa Muraro who identifies the reason for our current misery in the dominant discourse embodied in our language itself.<sup>38</sup> Her way out lies in the Utopia of a new language of the

<sup>36</sup> Leo Treitler found his own *deus ex machina* in Nino Pirotta, whom he presented as the scholar to overcome the limitations of positivism through the integration of subjectivity in his writings. See Treitler, ‘The Power of Positivist Thinking’ 387–88.

<sup>37</sup> R.M. Sainsbury, *Paradoxes*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 1.

<sup>38</sup> For Muraro’s concept (clearly influenced by Derrida) that language is itself the culprit through embodying the power in its mediating effort, see for example her *L’ordine simbolico della madre* (Milan: Editori Riuniti, n.d.) 76ff: ‘La nostra cultura ha un consapevolezza crescente della necessità della mediazione; forse è la sua caratteristica principale. Nella nostra cultura cresce la consapevolezza che quello che ci comunichiamo è un prodotto simbolico, risultato di una serie di operazioni di codifica e decodifica alle quali partecipiamo con un ruolo meno attivo e meno grande di quello che ci sembra ... Questa maniera di pensare non è ridicibile ad una semplice presa di visione dello stato delle cose. È una presa di coscienza ed interagisce di conseguenza con il suo oggetto; di fatto io vedo che interagisce nel senso di renderlo più vero di quello che è.’ I wish to thank Suzanne Cusick for making this text available to me.

mother, which resists traditional masculine language patterns. For me that is tempting, far more than Tomlinson's supercilious relativism with its gratuitous rejection of historical foundation, or Taruskin's return to a master narrative disguised as 'close reading.' But where does Muraro leave me with in terms of communication with the Others who embody, as I do, the dominant discourse through our acculturation in a logo-centric Western environment? As Derrida has so convincingly shown, in discourse we *are* our own language, we are not Other to it. A different but equally tempting solution might lie in Judith Butler's Wittgensteinesque 'project of an unbounded performative game of constructing multiple subject positions which subvert every fixed identity.'<sup>39</sup> Could that be appropriated in the far more modest project of historical musicological inquiry and allow us to use the game to distance ourselves from ourselves while at the same time positioning our historical Others on the game board? After all, if the play includes the subject as much as the (former) historical object, an illusion of equality in discourse might offer perspectives which can do justice to the Other.

My own answer to Muraro and Butler is negative. I am neither aiming for Utopia, nor do I want to construct alternative identities in endless games, but I do remain 'openly and avowedly political' in my quest to give voices to my (albeit unreachable) subjects of inquiry.<sup>40</sup> Through my semantic paradoxical formulation, the resistance of the Other in its various guises comes to the foreground, and this includes the Self as Other in the process of musicological discourse, in particular when addressing history. Thus for me the possibility of dialogues with Otherness lies neither in the post-modern negation of history nor in the positivist acceptance of one (albeit revisionist) master narrative based on historical data. I would call for something which one might term *post-modern positivism*, a multiple history, but one that does not gratuitously do away with the Other as a reality above and beyond our scholarly fantasy.

I can best show this point through a scholarly fantasy of my own. My two scholars—Tomlinson and Taruskin—meet the Liar in the paradox. Tomlinson, the post-modernist, could not care less whether the liar speaks the truth; it is his own game of interpretation, of creating connections and solutions that counts. I can imagine them going off together, having a drink and a good laugh, enjoying the pleasure of the unfolding hermeneutic play. In contrast, Taruskin, the neo-positivist, does care whether the liar speaks truly or falsely. He will try hard for a solution, through close reading, inquisition and any other means that might allow him to bring to light the full meaning of the paradox. But without acknowledging his own and the Other's complex relationship of closeness and distance he will fail.<sup>41</sup> Because his interpretation aims for the one true master narrative which will represent the Other truly (or expose the liar, as in the case of Taruskin's re-interpretation of Stravinsky), his is an approach that bears considerable personal risk. After all we can never reach the Other. However, in the thick web

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<sup>39</sup> I am borrowing Zizek's to-the-point formulation from his *Tarrying with the Negative* (365), but do not agree with the subsequent conclusion that the project fails because of its ludic aspect as such.

<sup>40</sup> See Suzanne Cusick, 'Gender, Musicology, and Feminism,' *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 484.

<sup>41</sup> Taruskin's approach to history, especially in such texts as his recent discussion of the Boston Opera's cancelling of a performance of John Adam's opera *The Death of Klinghoffer* in the *New York Times* (9 December 2001), reveal that his narrative is not a dialogical engagement with historical Others, but a forceful creation of a master narrative which demands action accordingly. Whether changes to a musical text or self-censorship, it is this legitimisation through historical fact which marks his position more than anything else as that of the scholar in search of an absolute of historical truth.

of competing stories that we weave from the historical facts we can allow the other voice to be heard, even if it is our own. I guess that our post-modern positivist will get the best of both worlds. My point is neither flippant nor cynical. She will engage with historical facts, issues of truth, historical contexts, documents of reception in all their varieties, but in the end she is aware of the precarious futility of ever reaching more than a personal interpretation at the various stages of this inquiry. She will expose the Liar but will also try and leave enough space to go off with him and have a drink as well.