Music and Latency in Teju Cole’s *Open City*: Presences of the Past

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Abstract:

This article sets out to explore configurations of literary musicality in Teju Cole’s novel *Open City* (2011), showing how intermedial relations between literature and music are linked to the novel’s exploration of transcultural histories of violence. Both supporting but also displacing the larger verbal context, intermedial references in *Open City* produce a surplus of meaning, an unruly remainder, that resists congealing into narrative structure and that gestures toward something else, something latent. Modelled on the form of the fugue, the novel’s contrapuntal structure reveals the disjunctions, latencies and elisions within familiar orders of knowledge, which displace established notions of community, memory and cosmopolitanism. To afford a fuller understanding of the novel’s intermedial poetics, our essay will first provide a brief definition of the concept of intermediality, showing how references to music are connected to concepts of latency, history and atmosphere (Part 2). In Part 3 and Part 4 we will investigate configurations of literary musicality in *Open City*. We argue that the contrapuntal structure of the novel clashes with Julius’s contrapuntal reading of urban spaces and histories, asking readers to rethink the conventionalized opposition between the black diasporic subject and the hegemonic American.

Keywords:

Teju Cole; Open City; Intermediality; Music; Latency; Memory

# Introduction: Dissonant Voices in *Open City*

In Teju Cole’s novel *Open City,* a complex work about migration, transcultural violence, memory and the arts, the narrator-protagonist, Julius, wanders restlessly through the maze-like streets of New York. Upon hitting the corner of Sixty-sixth Street, he notices signs announcing that the big Tower Record store is “going out of business” (Cole, *Open City* 16). Intrigued by the promise of price reductions, Julius enters the music store and before long is captivated by the “music playing overhead” (Cole, *Open City* 16). Almost against his will, he becomes rapt in Gustav Mahler’s late symphony *Das Lied von der Erde,* luring him into “the strange hues of its world” (Cole, *Open City* 16). In a state of “trance” (Cole, *Open City* 17), the narrator-protagonist notes:

On hearing Christa Ludwig’s voice, in the second movement, a song about the loneliness of autumn, I recognized the recording as the famous one conducted by Otto Klemperer in 1964. With that awareness came another: that all I had to do was bide my time, and wait for the emotional core of the work, which Mahler had put in the final movement of the symphony. I sat on one of the hard benches near the listening stations, and sank into reverie, and followed Mahler through drunkenness, longing, bombast, youth (with its fading), and beauty (with its fading). Then came the final movement, “*Der Abschied,*”the Farewell, and Mahler, where he would ordinarily indicate the tempo, had marked it *schwer*, difficult. The birdsong and beauty, the complaints and high-jinks of the preceding movements, had all been supplanted by a different mood, a stronger, surer mood. It was as though the lights had, without warning, come blazing into my eyes. (Cole, *Open City* 17)

Impressing itself deeply upon Julius’s memory, the epic symphony, composed in the most painful period of Mahler’s life, becomes a site of “new intensity” (Cole, *Open City* 17), of affect and excess, causing a longing to hear more. And yet, though evoking an affective intensity and presence, the translation of music into words also highlights the unbridgeable gap between these modes of signification, giving way to a sense of absence, discontinuity and fragmentation. Uneasily hovering between presence and absence, fulfilment and loss, self and other, the intermedial references to music weave their otherness into the text and introduce a number of dissonances that partially suspend and displace the meaning-making mandate of narrative. In contrast to Julius’s many explicit meditations on history, which testify to his intellectual mastery, the intermedial references that pervade Cole’s novel create a certain “mood” (Cole, *Open City* 17). This distinct atmosphere (*Stimmung*) gestures toward something else, something beyond Julius’s control and existing orders, i.e., something that is there and yet remains latent. Such latent living on, a *sur-vivre* in the Derridean sense, indexes an intractable persistence, a presence of the past that conjures up alternative, largely forgotten histories that haunt and affect subjects “without warning,” as the narrator-protagonist puts it (Cole, *Open City* 17*).*

It is this unruly dynamic created by the interplay between words and music, past and present, sameness and difference that this essay is concerned with. *Open City*, we argue, reconfigures these dichotomies as an open, disjunctive interplay in which conflicting experiences and dissonant voices are bound together to create frequently uncanny echoes and unpredictable resonances. The very structure of the novel enhances this sense of contradictory openness: Modelled on the musical fugue and its contrapuntal organization, the narrative intermingles different, at times conflicting and contrasting voices, sensations and memories (cf. Maver 4). Time and again, Julius’s free-floating thoughts, which occasionally merge into a stream of consciousness, are interrupted by other voices, memories and thoughts.[[1]](#endnote-1) While these bits and pieces resonate with one another, they also produce dissonance, noise and friction, thus entangling readers in a sheer endless “web of echoes, contrasts, and connections between and across different domains,” as Pieter Vermeulen (90) puts it in his fine interpretation. The contrapuntal organization unleashes an excessive remainder that defies unified, coherent and fixed meaning-making to make room for the affective latencies that reveal contradictions immanent in Julius’s narrative. In this sense, we can indeed understand *Open City* as “an examination of the limits … of knowledge” (Cole, “Blind Spot” 383). These limits crystallize in the novel’s poetic and political endorsement of a ‘minor’ ethics which is committed to remembering repressed histories while highlighting the instability and even unreliability of memory.

Published in 2011, Teju Cole’s novel almost immediately became an international success and has spurred a considerable range of scholarly research, dedicated first and foremost to the novel’s originality in narrative mediation and its complex engagement with cosmopolitanism and mass migration in times of an accelerated globalization.[[2]](#endnote-2) As Katherine Hallemeier (2014), Pieter Vermeulen (2015) and Madhu Krishnan (2015) have cogently argued, the novel invites a cosmopolitan reading and yet it does so not by showcasing new forms of conviviality, but – quite to the contrary – by unmasking the shortcomings of cosmopolitanism and unmasking its seemingly ethical momentum as neoliberal “façade” (Krishnan 677). In *Open City*, cosmopolitan attitudes are largely reduced to a “rarified set” of “*aestheticist* … attitudes” (Vermeulen 87) and stylized gestures of a privileged elite, which ultimately fail to address, let alone change, existing inequities.

*Open City* tells the story of Julius, a half-Nigerian, half-German psychiatrist at New York City’s Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, who five years after 9/11 roams the streets of New York City – and later Brussels. On his walks, the thirty-something narrator-protagonist encounters a number of different characters and visits a range of cultural institutions, such as museums, monuments, concert halls, memorial exhibitions and internet cafés. Rather than thriving on a well-developed and coherent plot, it is these, mostly haphazard encounters, random visits and aimless walks that give rise to a loose series of ruminations on art, philosophy, geography and history. Step by step, Julius’s thoughts, together with the multiplicity of other voices, stories and memories the text evokes, uncover marginalized histories – largely histories of violence, ranging from the Native American genocide and the transcultural slave trade to the attacks of 9/11 and the Iraq War. Contrary to what the many references to cosmopolitan values might suggest, it is such histories of exploitation that connect New York City to Brussels. The titular ‘open city’ is a far cry from cosmopolitan harmony. Recalling Brussels’ war-time capitulation, openness, in Cole’s novel, indexes violation, betrayal and complicity and thus hints at the other, sinister side of celebratory historical accounts.

Indeed, Julius, himself apparently an epitome of the hybrid narrator-protagonist that features so prominently in contemporary diasporic African writing, sets the frame for the novel’s contrapuntal approach to memory and cosmopolitanism. He at first impresses readers with his immense historical knowledge, his meticulous descriptions of various aesthetic experiences, his sensitivity for global injustices and his sharp analyses of pressing socio-political issues, many of which he unfolds “on the background of a globalized imagination” (Levy and Sznaider 204). As the narrative progresses, however, he becomes increasingly suspicious and his cosmopolitan attitude is gradually unmasked as a shallow, frequently self-aggrandizing posture. While cultivating a sheer endless curiosity for the arts, he remains “magnificently isolated from all loyalties” (Cole, *Open City* 107). Gradually, Julius transforms from an acute “observer of the world around him” into a narrator “marked by a malicious narcissism” (Krishnan 677). Notably, the cultural repression of histories of exploitation is echoed in Julius’s unwillingness to confront his own sinister past: He refuses to acknowledge a rape he is accused of having committed. This shocking revelation, which disqualifies Julius as a reliable narrator and keeper of cultural memory, invites readers to reconsider the facile association of the postcolonial or diasporic subject with histories of oppression (cf. Goyal 66; McKittrick xii).

It is significant that both the novel’s topical concerns as well as its distinct narrative composition are closely linked to references to music and musicality. As a matter of fact, besides the novel’s structural imitation of the musical fugue, the novel abounds with references to various composers of classical music, such as Henry Purcell, Ferruccio Busoni, Gustav Mahler, Franz Schubert, George Frideric Handel, Dmitri Dmitriyevich Shostakovich and Frédéric François Chopin. The novel also repeatedly alludes to Jazz and Jazz musicians – mentioning, e.g., Cannonball Adderley, Chet Baker and Bill Evans. And yet, despite the prominence of music and musicality in *Open City,* the role of these intermedial references has thus far only been given relatively little attention.[[3]](#endnote-3) We argue that a close examination of intermediality is crucial to understanding the distinctive ways in which the novel engages with transcultural histories, memory politics and cosmopolitanism. The references to music evoke the latent, ghostly presence of the past, gesturing toward historical elisions, frictions and potentialities within established orders. To come to a fuller understanding of the intermedial poetics, its affects and effects, our essay will firstly provide a brief definition of the concept of intermediality, showing how references to music in particular are linked to latency and atmosphere (Part 2). In Part 3 and Part 4 we will investigate configurations of literary musicality in *Open City*, illustrating how an engagement with relations between literature and music might add to our understanding of the novel’s multi-layered exploration of history.

# Intermedial References to Music: Figurations of Otherness and Plays of In-Between-ness

Intermedial references in literature exert a contradictory force: they both support and extend but also displace and contradict the larger verbal context, thus producing a surplus of meaning that resists congealing into narrative structure.[[4]](#endnote-4) While opening the verbal text and music to links and connections, intermedial configurations also create fruitful tensions between word and music that allow both to maintain – even showcase – their difference (cf. Neumann). By translating music into words, the verbal form of signification is confronted with an aesthetic and material alternative, a sense of otherness, which reframes the signifying repertoires of language, writing and text. Mimesis here turns into alterity (cf. Taussig), making possible entanglements between seemingly separate entities. Precisely because this play between words and music reveals that one medium cannot simply be translated into another, that there will always remain an untranslatable, unruly remainder that exceeds assimilation, it affirms the *Eigensinn* – the inherent creativity and agency – of mediality. The agency of mediality manifests itself in eventful frictions, in resistant traces that exceed the possibilities of representation and cannot be integrated into existing orders of the sayable or audible (Borsò, “Audiovisionen” 167).

Intermedial research, which in the last 15 years or so has turned into a bourgeoning field in the humanities, has largely been dedicated to verbal-visual configurations, while references to music have received relatively little critical attention.[[5]](#endnote-5) It seems that in a culture that is obsessed with both words and images, the significance of music is almost inevitably underestimated (Storr xii). That music somehow stands out from the other arts and even proves resistant to theorization is often linked to its “unbreachable otherness” (Crapoulet 7), which results from its lack of representational or propositional character, the multidimensionality of rhythm, the unsignifying materiality of sound and voice as well as from its unique investment in atmosphere (Storr 3; Kivy 4; Serres 120). Music, according to Kivy, thrives on “abstract, nonrepresentational, frequently expressive patterns, forms, and perceptual qualities” (Kivy 4), which cannot be contained by discursive orders of knowledge. The materiality of sound in particular counteracts the logic of representation. But this non-representational dimension of music may also have productive effects: Freed from the subordination to discourse and form, the materiality of sound may become a source of potentiality (in the sense of Agamben), i.e., a “material remnant of corporeality” (Borsò, “Threshold” 132) that affects subjects in unpredictable ways and that gives rise to new, yet underdetermined possibilities, attachments and connections.[[6]](#endnote-6) The materiality of sound “acts much like friction in the formation of meaning or noise in communication” (Borsò, “Threshold” 132), turning music into an event that happens but that does not necessarily “happen *to* anything” (Scruton 5) or anybody.

Rather than producing meaning and knowledge, music creates certain moods, i.e., *Stimmungen*. According to Storr (118), music conjures up “moods and passions that we have not yet encountered”; in a similar vein, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht links moods or *Stimmungen* directly to the musicality of sound. Much like music, *Stimmungen*, Gumbrecht argues, affect our senses “without us being able to explain the causality” (Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere* 4). The hearing of sounds involves and even moves our body, causing unpredictable changes in physical sensation. As the hearing of sounds makes possible an “encounter with our physical environment” (Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere* 4), it disrupts the individual’s self-contained interiority. Gumbrecht (*Atmosphere* 4), expounding the different connotations of the German word for mood, notes that *Stimmung* is connected to both the word *Stimme* (voice) and *stimmen* (to tune an instrument) and thus blurs the difference between human and non-human sound. What Gumbrecht suggests is that moods created by music have a productive potential for they draw our attention to hitherto unnoticed aspects of reality and call for new modes of perception and description:

[a]s the tuning of an instrument suggests, specific moods and atmospheres are experienced on a continuum, like musical scales. They present themselves to us as nuances that challenge our powers of discernment and description, as well as the potential of language to capture them. (*Atmosphere* 4)

But while the act of tuning an instrument (*stimmen*) usually makes harmony possible, it may also cause dissonance and friction, i.e., *Unstimmigkeiten*, that evoke experiences, memories and practices that put to the test a community’s ideals, norms and self-understanding.

According to Gumbrecht, the evocation of a specific mood typically gestures toward something that is latent, starting to crystallize but refusing to materialize. Moods or atmospheres are “sources of energy” (*Atmosphere* 4) that operate as a sort of vague, often awkward foreboding, thus creating situations of latency. They evoke the possible, i.e., unactualized layers of meanings, intractable forces and marginalized experiences (Gumbrecht, “Dimensionen” 11). More specifically, latency designates possibilities, connections and alternatives that are immanent in the real – and not opposed to it; it is a force that opens the actual for the possible, showing that the possible is always already inscribed in the actual. Thus opening up a “new set of historical possibilities” (Boxall 81) and accentuating the “shadowed historical persistence” (Boxall 62) of the past, latency troubles chronological continuities between past, present and future. It encodes new temporalities that lay bare the incommensurabilities of our present and that provide an opportunity for new temporal connections to emerge.

What does this admittedly unruly scenario entail for the reading of literary texts? Reading for *Stimmung* and latency, Gumbrecht remarks, “cannot mean ‘deciphering’ atmospheres and moods, for they have no fixed signification … Instead, it means discovering sources of energy in artifacts” (Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere* 18). Intermedial references to music, we argue, are a particularly productive “source of energy.” As outlined above, references to music always and inevitably mark an absent presence, oscillating between words and music, connectivity and difference, sameness and otherness, actuality and potentiality. They enact unpredictable crossings and confront readers with “a tinge of the unexpected” (Massumi 27). The eventful frictions that synaesthetically blend the acoustic and the verbal give the text its distinct atmosphere. They open it to rhythmic transactions, irregular duration and multitemporal pulsations, which gesture toward something that is latent, a possibility immanent in “past realities” (Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere* 14). In this way, intermedial references to music can indeed, in the words of Cole, “trick [us] into divulging truths that we do not know we know” (“Blind Spot” 383).

# The Sonic Fugue and Contrapuntal Readings of Western History in *Open City*

*Open City* begins with a temporal paradox, with an opening that is at the same time a continuation and succession, gesturing to prior events and forestalling “any attribution of originary words or deeds” (Cuddy-Keane 97). This “self-canceling beginning” (Cuddy-Keane 97) catapults readers in *medias res,* as ifinviting them to join the narrator-protagonist on his endless walks: “And so when I began to go on evening walks last fall, I found Morningside Heights an easy place from which to set out into the city” (Cole, *Open City* 3). Julius explains that these walks started as an attempt to break with the monotony of his evenings, which largely consisted of reading, listening to classical radio, “watching bird migrations from [his] apartment” (Cole, *Open City* 3) and eventually falling asleep on the sofa. He makes much of the fact that, when listening to classical music, he “generally avoided American stations” (Cole, *Open City* 4) since their constant commercial breaks interrupted the flow of music. Instead, he turned to classical radio from Europe:

And though I often couldn’t understand the announcers, my comprehension of their languages being poor, the programming always met my evening mood with great exactness. Much of the music was familiar, as I had by this point been an avid listener to classical radio for more than fourteen years, but some of it was new. … I liked the murmur of the announcers, the sounds of those voices speaking calmly from thousands of miles away. … Those disembodied voices remain connected in my mind, even now, with the apparition of migrating geese. (Cole, *Open City* 4–5)

Tellingly, from the very beginning, Julius’s listening to classical music is permeated with a sense of isolation, displacement and even lack. Not only the music of “Beethoven,” “Wagner” and “Shchedrin” (Cole, *Open City* 4) but also the “disembodied” and indecipherable voices from faraway spaces match his “evening mood.” The act of connecting his isolation with the almost ghostly voices of announcers in Europe creates an instable paradox: the global connection builds on disconnection, which is only heightened by the fact that he “couldn’t understand the announcers.” Rather than securing an “aural communion” (Krishnan 681), listening to classical radio stations from Europe is experienced as an act of ‘speaking in tongues,’ which puts language’s semantic intentionality and referentiality under pressure. This act, located at the novel’s beginning, indexes the very limits of communicability and translatability, demarcating where commonality across borders fails. Giorgio Agamben (66) has argued that such speaking in tongues does not consist in the “pure utterance of inarticulate sounds,” i.e., in “words whose meaning I do not understand.” Rather, “[t]o hear such sounds is to know they mean something without knowing exactly what such a ‘something’ might be; in other words, it is to discern an intention to signify that cannot be identified with any particular signification” (Heller-Roazen 594). The frictions between the intention to signify and the failure to understand that intention mark a non-signifying form of communication (Heller-Roazen 594), i.e., a kind of communication that thrives on the materiality of sound rather than the potential meaning of the sign. The very lack of relationship, here enacted by decoupling the signifier from the signified, evokes a socio-politically resonant scenario of alienation and absence that Julius links to processes of migration: “Those disembodied voices,” he stresses, “remain connected in my mind, even now, with the apparition of migrating geese” (Cole, *Open City* 5).

Classical music, in the novel’s opening passages, persistently alludes to a beyond, to other spaces, other cultures and other languages; it is intertwined with traveling, transport and migration. And yet, significantly, rather than encapsulating connectivity, these acts of transport bring to the fore a deeper structure of loss, alienation and solitude that grips Julius’s diasporic subjectivity. As if to compensate for his isolation, Julius starts reading the words in his books out loud, “with [himself] as [his] audience” (Cole, *Open City* 6), step by step transforming the monologic structure of his narrative into a network of voices: “I noticed the odd way my voice mingled with the murmur of the French, German, or Dutch radio announcers, or with the thin texture of the violin strings of the orchestrates” (Cole, *Open City* 5). As he inscribes his voice into the texture of the music and the announcements, Julius’s discourse comes to resemble what he calls a “sonic fugue” (Cole, *Open City* 5).

As is well-known, the fugue, literally meaning flight or escape, is a contrapuntal style of composition that brings together two or more different voices which “enter imitatively one after the other, each ‘giving chase’ to the preceding voice” (Latham n.pag.) and co-existing in a tonal pattern of dissonance and consonance. Figuring prominently in the work of a range of different, largely classical 18th- and 19th-century composers, such as Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, the tonal fugue is a genuinely polyphonic form, following a clearly defined pattern. It builds on one theme which is introduced by the first voice and subsequently imitated by a second voice, usually in a different pitch. This compositional procedure is repeated with the entry of each new voice, typically yielding “an alternating sequence of subject and answer” (Latham n.pag.). Because each voice will eventually counter the newly entering voice, the fugue is generally considered the most emblematic form of imitative counterpoint (cf. Ratner). In counterpoint, each voice reaches out for another voice, both accepting and displacing its primacy (cf. Adorno 145-69). The result is, as Edward Said remarks in *Music at its Limits*, a polyphonic verticality that unsettles hierarchical patterns:

In counterpoint, a melody is always in the process of being repeated by one or another voice; the result is horizontal, rather than vertical music. Any series of notes is thus capable of an infinite set of transformations, as the series (or melody or subject) is taken up first by one voice then by another, the voices always continuing to sound against, as well as with, all the others. (Said, *Music* 5)

Another way to say this might be that the fugue’s contrapuntal composition fosters entanglement and interconnectedness, without glossing over the singularity of the particular.[[7]](#endnote-7)

The contrapuntal principle underlies the novel’s approach to history. For “[m]ore than anything else,” Julius is a contrapuntal “reader” (Goyal 66) of urban spaces, histories, politics, the arts and many other cultural phenomena. Indeed, the novel’s most salient characteristic are its abrupt shifts from Julius’s sophisticated reflection of the monuments of civilization to the excavating of repressed histories of violence lying underneath (cf. Vermeulen 93). Time and again, Julius uses the disruptive potential inherent in the latent resources of the past to inscribe into the metropolitan icons of New York and Brussels invisibilized acts of exploitation and violence. When wandering through the maze-like streets of New York, he realizes that the grand “office buildings, shops, streets, diners, pharmacies, all the endless hum of quotidian commerce and government” (Cole, *Open City* 220) were once the site of an African burial ground. In a similar way, Julius uncovers the histories of migrants buried under the pompous World Trade Center and, in so doing, evokes the close links between colonialism, transcultural violence and global capitalism – links that underline the primacy of capitalist interests over cosmopolitan ideals. When the narrator travels to Belgium and excavates the country’s colonial histories of exploitation, hidden under the grandeur of metropolitan streets, New York’s subaltern histories suddenly begin to resonate with those of Brussels. Julius’s contrapuntal readings of time and space establish the fragile but haunting presence of erased histories, now present only “as a trace” (Cole, *Open City* 54). In registering these traces, the contrapuntal narrative gradually replaces the linear, progressive time of globalization with deep time (Dimock), i.e., an alternative, multi-layered temporality, which spans the distance between centuries and continents.

Much of the novel’s aesthetic complexity and socio-political ambiguity resides in the fact that Julius’s contrapuntal reading of time and space is itself embedded in the dense contrapuntal structure characteristic of the fugue. Significantly, this structure defies Julius’s control and step by step sheds a different light on his critical ruminations. The stories and voices of other characters crisscross Julius’s seemingly homodiegetic narrative in frequently unbridled and unpredictable ways: of Dr. Saito, his mentor and former professor whom he irregularly meets to discuss literature and the arts; of Saidu, a refugee from Liberia; of Pierre, a Haitian shoe-polisher; of his ex-girlfriend Nadège; of Dr. Maillotte, with whom be becomes acquainted on his flight to Brussels; of Farouq, an African immigrant Julius meets in Brussels, and the latter’s friend Khalil. Jointly, they produce a dense web of echoes, an echo-chamber *sensu* Roland Barthes, which pervasively displaces notions of a single voice and unified self. The occasional absence of quotation marks (cf. Vermeulen 94) adds to this sense of dissolution since it becomes at times impossible to clearly distinguish between the narrator and the characters. As different voices intermingle and narrative hierarchies are blurred, conventional notions of the novel as a privileged site for the exploration of subjectivity, interiority and “the realities of psychic life” (Vermeulen 94) lose their validity. Though the “contest between voices” (Wolf 31) invites a number of possible connections between seemingly unrelated characters, times, and spaces and allows actualized historical narratives to resonate with latent experiences, *Open City* refutes the possibility of a unifying narrative voice that could establish relations between characters unknown to each other. The deeper socio-political significance of this strategy lies in the novel’s questioning of conventional understandings of the self and community. If Cole’s novel does imagine a community, this community is one “without unity” (Culler 32), a community that is built on difference, friction and traumatic proximity, but not on ‘natural,’ genealogical relations.

Many of the stories that make their way into Julius’s narrative provide a counterpoint to western ideals of cosmopolitan hospitality and ethics, which Kwame Appiah (2015) describes in *Cosmopolitanism – Ethics in a World of Strangers*. Saidu’s painful account of the civil war in Liberia, in which most of his family was killed, his escape to the US and his detention in Queens, for instance, first and foremost indicates the limits of cosmopolitanism. But importantly, these stories provide counterpoints to Julius’s cultivated knowingness. More often than not, Julius fails to respond to the stories others share with him, and instead of showing sympathetic engagement he remains detached from the people he encounters and who reach out for him. When Julius’s next-door neighbor tells him about his wife’s death five months earlier, he has to admit: “I had known nothing in the weeks when her husband mourned, nothing when I had nodded to him in greeting with headphones in my ears” (Cole, *Open City* 21). Music does not enable but thwart connectivity, and while replacing the single narrative perspective with multiple voices might index plurality and polyvocality, it primarily reveals Julius’s incapacity to think along relational terms. Moreover, Julius is unable or unwilling to critically assess the validity of the political ideas and loyalties other characters voice. Among the most disturbing voices in the novel are those of Farouq and Khalil, two North African migrants whom Julius meets in Brussels and with whom he discusses urgent political topics like the conflict between Israel and Palestine and Islamophobia in the wake of 9/11. Though Julius is impressed by Farouq’s immense knowledge of contemporary politics and his familiarity with the theories of Paul de Man, Edward Said, Tahar Ben Jalloun and Walter Benjamin, he lacks any understanding for Farouq’s passionate language: “the victimized Other: how strange, I thought, that he used an expression like that in a casual conversation” (Cole, *Open City* 105). This is a kind of language in which the division between political and personal allegiances, which Julius vehemently upholds, collapses. When Khalil rehearses some fairly stereotypical, politically disquieting notions about Hamas, Israel and American foreign policies and bluntly expresses his sympathies for the 9/11 attacks, Julius fails to respond to this kind of radical thinking in any meaningful way. He muses whether “having no causes, … being magnificently isolated from all loyalties” (Cole, *Open City* 107) might be the better alternative to the rage felt by Farouq and Khalil.

More than once, then, Julius loses control over “the fugue of voices” (Cole, *Open City* 216) and either remains unaffected or lets them go unchallenged. As these voices introduce “noises from far off” (Cole, *Open City* 22) and ‘give chase’ to the dominant voice, they reveal Julius’s affective distance, his unwillingness to commit. The many counterpoints which remain unanswered, eliciting neither response nor resonance, persistently exceed the fugue’s well-ordered structure and interrupt its rhythmic flow, opening it for contingency, inconsequentiality and atonality.[[8]](#endnote-8) It seems that the western model of the fugue, with its rigidly defined principles and its carefully balanced interplay between dissonance and consonance is hardly capable of sustaining the multiplicity of competing voices and disquieting accounts evoking the inequalities in a globalized world. In *Open City*, tensions and frictions prevail, with hardly any possibility of release. In this process, the very contrapuntal structuring, including the principle of polyphony, becomes shallow and inconsequential, if not ethically suspect. Vermeulen (92) is right when noting: “The novel can be read as a catalogue of failed attempts to live up to the expectation of achieved polyphonic form.” Though the counterpoint and polyphony make room for difference, multiplicity and plurality, they hardly establish connections *across* difference. What prevails is a constant background noise, which does not so much index socio-cultural plurality, but *Unstimmigkeit*, i.e., dissonance, within contemporary political and normative orders. Importantly, by accentuating the limits of the contrapuntal form, the novel also compels us to reconsider facile assumptions about difference, polyphony and hybridity that underwrite much contemporary critical theory and are all too often celebrated as the backbone of cosmopolitan conviviality.

The novel’s musicalization consistently counters Julius’s ‘reading’ of the city, an act, which, broadly speaking, presupposes a decipherable surface, i.e., a surface that can be read. The contrapuntal structure even puts to the test the idea of being a ‘reader’ of cities, stories and other people. Rather than trying to read meaning into what we perceive, the novel’s intermediality challenges readers to accept a certain indeterminacy, unpredictability and unreliability. The contrapuntal structure and the concomitant musicalization of the narrative do not “resolve into meaning” (Cole, *Open City* 22) and resist integration into a linear, chronologically ordered narrative. What they create is a distinctive rhythm that unsettles the concept of space as “a synchronous surface” and uncovers its “diachronic constitution” (Haverkamp 12). This networked and multi-layered space bears the traces of the unactualized past, a past with yet unknown potential for the present and future. “[E]ach one of those past moments,” Julius notes at one point, “was present now” (Cole, *Open City* 54).

Giving rise to feedback loops, spiraling and disruption, one might best describe the rhythm of latency as an “idiorrhythm.” According to Roland Barthes the idiorrhythm is “transitory” and “fleeting” (35); it emerges in “the interstices, the fugitivity of the code” (Barthes 7) and allows “for imperfection, for a supplement, a lack, an *idios*: what doesn’t fit the structure, or would have to be made to fit” (35). In *Open City*, this idiorrhythm arises from the constant changes in narrative tempo. While some chapters are dominated by long descriptions of, e.g., the visual arts and architecture and thus unfold in a relaxed, unhurried manner, others perform rapid cuts and hectically jump from one episode or impression to the next, introducing “a potentially infinite series of submovements punctuated by jerks” (Massumi 40). Time and again, the narrative circles back through different variations of a specific motif before morphing into the fluidities of rhythmic extemporization. And while some chapters start in *media res* and have no obvious connection to the preceding chapter, others begin where the previous chapter ended and establish a sense of continuity. The changes in rhythm create the nagging feeling of a constantly deferred conclusion: They point toward a conclusion, which must however remain unreachable according to the dynamic of the idiorrhythm.

Laying bare possible, forgotten and repressed experiences, the novel’s contrapuntal organization appears to reflect what Edward Said calls a ‘contrapuntal analysis.’ To counter hegemonic, unified versions of the past, Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, asserts that “we must be able to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others” (*Culture* 36). That is to say that the contrapuntal analysis, which Said expressly links to the contrapuntal principle in western classical music, makes it possible to read the imperial archive and related identitarian narratives against the grain. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that *Open City* only partly confirms this claim. Though its contrapuntal structure links diverse and seemingly unrelated experiences and reconfigures history from the perspective of its immanent otherness, the novel also shows that some experiences, spaces and people resist being read. Latent history, a spectral presence “across centuries” (Cole, *Open City* 221), remain largely unintelligible and inaudible within “the structural logic of language” (Gilbert n.pag.). But it is not only the very readability of experiences, histories, spaces and persons that *Open City* calls into question, but also the notion of a privileged reader. Who, after all, could claim the right to read history in an ethically sound manner?

# Classical Western Music, African Repercussions and the Dissociative Fugue – ‘The *Unfug* of the Code’

Julius’s contemplation of the repressed histories of colonialism, economic exploitation and transatlantic slavery which have gone into the making of contemporary New York and Brussels sparks his wish to understand his own part in these histories. Hence, he states: “I wanted to find the line that connected me to my own part in these stories. Somewhere close to the water, holding tight to what he knew of life, the boy had, with a sharp clack, again gone aloft” (Cole, *Open City* 59). What is remarkable about this statement is not only Julius’s wish for connection, which is at odds with his usual, deliberately detached and unaffected perspective; it is also noteworthy for its abrupt change in pronoun. The pronoun ‘he’ creates a network of possible references: it might refer to one of the skateboarders Julius has just watched or to John Brewster’s “painting of a child holding a bird on a blue thread” (Cole, *Open City* 38) that caught his attention in the American Folk Art Museum (cf. Vermeulen 97). However, it seems more plausible that the third-person pronoun refers to Julius himself and signals his dissociation from his past, a general alienation that grips his diasporic subjectivity. Tellingly, Julius, who is almost obsessed with uncovering collective histories, reveals little about his personal past. It is only through the dense network of intermedial references to music that Julius’s troubled past is conjured up, registering experiences that resist the orders of the ‘sayable.’

Julius’s Nigerian childhood, upbringing and scholarly education are steeped in colonial history and its persistent post-colonial repercussions. Julius lost his Nigerian Yoruban father at the age of 14; he is peculiarly estranged from his German-born mother, who, even after her husband’s death, feels closely connected to Nigeria. His rejection of his mother spurs his wish to leave his family home behind and to join a military school in Zaria. The military school only deepens Julius’s estrangement from Nigeria. His classmates perceive him as the ‘other,’ a “foreigner” (Cole, *Open City* 83) even. It is also here, in the military context of a colonial educational system designed to extol western culture, where Julius first becomes acquainted with classical music. He experiences this contact as highly unsatisfactory since the music lessons “never involved any listening to music, or the use of instruments, and our musical education was composed of memorized facts: Handel’s birth date, Bach’s birth date, the titles of Schubert lieder” (Cole, *Open City* 82). The crippling over-identification with colonial culture evidently leaves little room for an appraisal of local music; it recalls the Manichean divisions that lie at the heart of colonialism (cf. Krishnan 688) and that reverberate in Julius’s rejection of his Nigerian roots, in a suppression of his post/colonial difference. Julius eventually turns his back on Nigeria and moves to the US, where he struggles hard to leave his past behind and to enact what Krishnan calls “the total eradication of history under the auspices of colonial cleaving” (688). Mired in isolation and alienation, his memories of Africa mainly produce gaps, blank spaces and discontinuities: “The past, if there is such a thing, is mostly empty space, great expanses of nothing. … Nigeria was like that for me: mostly forgotten” (Cole, *Open City* 155). As if to overcome the physical and psychic splits that underlie his post/colonial subjectivity, it is in New York where he becomes “an avid listener” (Cole, *Open City* 4) to classical music and develops a dislike of jazz.

According to Cameron Fae Bushnell, classical western music is closely linked to empire and imperial efforts to subsume the heterogeneity of colonial knowledges under unifying Eurocentric structures. Western music, Bushnell maintains, “operates as a metonym for a totalizing system based in European culture” (3) and moreover functions as a “symbol for empire, its attitudes, structures, and systems of order” (11). Bushnell notes that classical western music can be traced back to ancient Greece, where it underwrote “cultural notions of ‘greatness’” (12) and eventually became “universally emblematic of cultural superiority” (12). To be sure, Bushnell’s statement is somewhat too sweeping as it glosses over the great diversity of classical western music and ignores the potential disruptions and creative transformations that are introduced once western music is transferred into colonial contexts. Such creative appropriations trouble efforts of construing empires ‘in terms of sameness’ as they frequently inscribe a sense of local difference into colonial models. And yet, Bushnell has a point when arguing that classical western music formed an integral part of the colonial educational system, designed to propel the “civilization” (12) of the colonized and to showcase the presumed superiority of the West. Arguably, Julius’s nagging feeling of unbelongingness and his sense of alienation go hand in hand with his endorsement of western music and his concomitant rejection of jazz music, a type of music which is thick with histories of transatlantic slavery, but also with socio-political resistance and cultural revitalization. His ostentatious reveling in classical western music and his dislike of jazz might indeed express Julius’s desire to become absorbed by hegemonic, western and non-black subjectivities (cf. Goyal 66). But *Open City* might just as well challenge facile ethnocentric understandings of identification, including the stereotypical link between racial heritage and cultural preference. If indeed, *Open City* is an “African book,” as Cole (“Interview” n.pag.) claims, then this sense of Africanness clearly transgresses older frames of black solidarity and ethnic heritage to usher in more ambiguous forms of identification (cf. Goyal 68). In this way, the novel alerts to the perils of identity politics, which reduces subjects (including authors) to representatives of a social group.

Paralleling the efforts of western cultures to conceal their complicity with violence and exploitation, Julius’s dissociation from his Nigerian past crystallizes in his denial of his role as Moji’s violator. In this context, it is useful to remember that, for Julius, Moji is closely associated with Nigeria; just as his homeland, his “friend, or rather an acquaintance” is “long forgotten” (Cole, *Open City* 156). *Open City* once again draws on the contrapuntal principle to dramatize the dynamic of accusation and denial, remembering and forgetting, yielding a dissonant polyphony that is characteristic of the novel’s engagement with history. Before Moji, who meets Julius at a party in New York, accuses him of having raped her years ago back in Nigeria, Julius, in his typical self-complacent sophistication, contemplates how subjects uphold a sense of normalcy. According to him, such a sense of normalcy first and foremost aims at psychic self-preservation and the construction of a ‘usable past,’ which involves constant re-interpretations of wrongdoings:

Each person must, on some level, take himself as the calibration point for normalcy, must assume that the room of his own mind is not, cannot be, entirely opaque to him. Perhaps this is what we mean by sanity: that, whatever our self-admitted eccentricities might be, we are not the villains of our own stories. In fact, it is quite the contrary: we play, and only play, the hero and in the swirl of other people’s stories, insofar as those stories concern us at all, we are never less than heroic. … From my point of view, thinking about the story of my life, even without claiming any especially heightened sense of ethics, I am satisfied that I have hewed close to the good. (Cole, *Open City* 243)

The framing is remarkable since it bolsters “a selfish normality” (Wood n.pag.) that bluntly vindicates Julius’s ethical arbitrariness: Because Julius does not “claim… any especially heightened sense of ethics,” he is satisfied that he has mostly “hewed close to the good.” But ethics, as Moji makes clear, does not only involve ‘hewing close to the good’ but also the willingness to remember histories that interfere with individual needs of self-preservation. When Moji confronts him with the knowledge that, at the age of 14, Julius raped her, he acts like he “knew nothing about it, had even forgotten her, to the point of not recognizing her when [they] met again” (Cole, *Open City* 244). The act of dissociating himself from a past that continues to traumatize her, Moji suggests, is itself a manifestation of power and privilege. But instead of responding to Moji’s charge, Julius simply walks away, not without “enjoying the play of light on the river” when the

just risen sun came at the Hudson at such an acute angle that the river gleamed like aluminum roofing. At that moment – and I remember this exactly as though it were being replayed in front of me right now – I thought of how, in his journals, Camus tells a double story concerning Nietzsche and Gaius Mucius Cordus Scaevola, a Roman hero from the sixth century B.C.E. (Cole, *Open City* 246)

While Julius does not even deny the truthfulness of Moji’s story, he refuses to be affected by it and, in an act of “calibration,” turns her charge into just another story. Jointly, Moji’s story of traumatic suffering and Julius’s failure to respond to the ‘pain of others’ (Sontag) produce a “double story” in which the dynamic of point and counterpoint, accusation and denial, turns ethics into a self-complacent solipsism (cf. Wood n.pag.), accentuating the power structures and partiality that underlie the construction of memory. This dense, disjunctive and multilayered temporality, akin to the “speed of the… mental disassociations” (Cole, *Open City* 18), slips through the net of linear chronology and reveals the limits of narrative memory to produce continuity and an ethically meaningful past.

In an interview Cole (“Interview” n.pag.) has noted that a “plausible” (though not openly marked) “framing device for *Open City* is a series of visits by Julius to his psychiatrist.” Indeed, Moji’s accusations shed a different light on the erudite narrator-protagonist. It confirms what Julius’s ostentatious detachment has suggested all along, namely that his incessant walking has a compulsive dimension that intimately connects the novel’s fugue to its counterpoint, the so-called ‘dissociative fugue’ (cf. Vermeulen 102). According to standard definitions (cf. American Psychiatric Association), the dissociative fugue, also known as psychogenic fugue, is characterized by a temporal identity confusion, by breakdowns of memory as well as by a compulsion to wander and travel away from home. Though people suffering from the dissociative fugue outwardly show hardly any signs of illness, the symptoms make it difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate social relationships. Seen from this perspective, the novel’s fugue form is deeply steeped in repression and amnesia. These materialize in Julius’s own ‘dissociative flight’ from his past, which is also his African past, and in his attendant attempts to negate his (post)colonial difference. As suggested by the novel’s poetics, the dissociative fugue is therefore not the opposite but an integral part of the fugue. This, however, also implies that the novel invites us to reconsider other binary divisions and all too easy classifications that structure our thinking, such as the division between normalcy and pathology, cosmopolitanism and violence, remembering and forgetting, postcoloniality and hegemony, Africa and the West. Maybe more than anything else, Cole’s *Open City* teaches us how to listen to the fugitivity of the code and to “trace out a story from what was omitted” (Cole, *Open City* 9): We are asked to surrender to unheard, latent and ambiguous sounds so that a distancing from all too well-known narratives about the nation, community, history and identity becomes possible.

In *Open City*, the structural interdependency between the fugue and the dissociative fugue materializes as a strategy in which the close links between culture and violence are played out. Performatively, it confirms Walter Benjamin’s (256) thesis that “there is no document of civilization that is not simultaneously a document of barbarism.” Julius is indeed blinded by the “overwhelming … light” of western art (Cole, *Open City* 250), but he immediately admits that “even that light was shadowed” (Cole, *Open City* 250). As the fugue and the dissociative fugue are entangled in a transformative pattern of confirmation and negation, *Open City* sets free latencies of the past that haunt cultures as well as individuals, asking them to acknowledge their own unreliability, i.e., their complicity in mechanisms of exploitation and power. This complicity, the novel suggests, does not diminish the obligation to remember, write and rewrite history (Cole, *Open City* 58-59); it does however oblige us to critically assess the stories that we tell about ourselves and others.

In a central passage of the novel, Julius, wandering through Brussels, enters a church in which an “unseen organist” (Cole, *Open City* 138) plays a “Baroque piece” that soon “takes on the spirit of something else” (Cole, *Open City* 138), something that resembles Peter Maxwell Davies’s “O God Abufe.” The piece is made up of “distinctive fugitive notes that sh[o]ot through the musical texture,” creating a melody that is “difficult to catch hold of” (Cole, *Open City* 138) and that elicits a “fractured, scattered feeling” in Julius. It takes Julius a while to realize that the music was not played by an “unseen organist” but “was recorded and piped in through tiny speakers” and that the “source of the fracture in the sound” was “a small yellow vacuum cleaner” (Cole, *Open City* 138). Here, the echo-chamber reveals its intractable, uncanny agency as the “fugitive notes” produce ever new, unpredictable and uncontainable resonances, underlining the unreliability of memory from which to retrieve a solid understanding of the past. As a matter of fact, the peculiar mixture between the sound of high culture and those of machines, between Baroque music and “[t]he high-pitched hum from the machine,” temporarily bring to the fore what Julius calls the “*diabolus in musica”* (Cole, *Open City* 138), the marginalized, latent and unruly otherness immanent in standardized models. But they also point to the extent to which Julius is blinded by the “overwhelming … light” of western music, all too willing to interpret the sound of the vacuum cleaner as “distinctive fugitive notes.” The vacuum cleaner, Julius eventually notices, is pushed by a woman who, “a few weeks before, [he] would have assumed was Congolese” (Cole, *Open City* 138) and whose presence in the Belgium church “might … be a means of escape,” designed to “forget” her past (Cole, *Open City* 140). Evoking escape, refuge, forgetting and migration, but also the limits of knowledge, the “fugitive notes” are a fitting expression of the acts of repression and absences that stabilize seemingly self-contained discourses. As the “fugitive notes” introduce an “irruptive sense of things past” (Cole, *Open City* 138) that trouble any “secure version of the past” (Cole, *Open City* 156), they produce what Anselm Haverkamp calls the “*Unfug* of the code” (166; the German *Unfug* literally means nuisance). According to Haverkamp, the “*Unfug* of the code” is precisely the site where the disturbing presence of latent pasts becomes perceptible (166) and where individuals are temporarily confronted with their sinister, repressed histories.

# “Mahler’s Sense of an Ending”: Back to the Beginning

The novel ends as it begins – with a temporal paradox; the ending brings us back to the beginning, namely to Mahler’s music and to the mysteries of bird flight, and yet, the circular structure notwithstanding, the narrative refuses to come full circle. Julius, one year older and barely changed by his confrontation with past atrocities, attends a performance of Mahler’s Ninth Symphony at Carnegie Hall. The one thing that fascinates Julius most about the Austrian Jewish composer is the latter’s “obsession with last things” (Cole, *Open City* 250) and a general “sense of an ending” (Cole, *Open City* 250) that pervades his music. The Ninth Symphony in particular is suffused with the personal disasters Mahler faced in his last years: due to “the vicious politics of anti-Semitic nature” (*Open City* 249) he was “forced out of his directorship at the Vienna Opera” (Cole, *Open City* 249) and eventually migrated to New York; his daughter Maria Anna died of scarlet fever and diphtheria, and Mahler himself was diagnosed with a heart defect. Mahler, Julius muses, “made himself a master of the ends of symphonies, the end of a body of work, and the end of his own life. Even the Ninth wasn’t his very last work; fragments of a Tenth Symphony survive, and it is even more funereal than the preceding works” (Cole, *Open City* 250). But for Julius, Mahler’s music not only evokes a sense of ending and death, both of which self-reflexively frame the narrative’s own poetics of ending. Rather, Mahler’s music is also a kind of music that transcends binary oppositions, moves beyond totalizing structures to forge new, multi-layered connections that might serve as a resource for pluralized modes of ‘world-building’: “Mahler’s music,” Julius notes, “is not white, or black, not old or young, and whether it is even specifically human, rather than in accord with more universal vibrations, is open to question” (Cole, *Open City* 252). It is significant that these musings on Mahler’s music induce Julius, in one of the very rare moments in the novel, to acknowledge his own blackness, which, up to that point, he has struggled to ignore or suppress through his endorsement of hegemonic practices. The fact that this acknowledgement is elicited by Mahler’s music is fitting because the composer’s ambivalence toward his Jewishness parallels Julius’s struggle with his blackness. Scanning the audience in Carnegie Hall, Julius notes: “Almost everyone, as almost always at such concerts, was white. … I am used to it, but it never ceases to surprise me how easy it is to leave the hybridity of the city, and enter into all-white spaces, the homogeneity of which, as far as I can tell, causes no discomfort to the whites in them” (Cole, *Open City* 251-52). Once again, the novel suggests that the potentialities of music, namely its power to communicate new, open and pluralized relations, fail to link up to real-world politics. As long as difference is negated and traumatic pasts are repressed to serve the self-aggrandizing needs of nations and individuals, change toward a more cosmopolitan and ethically more sound society appears impossible.

*Open City* is far from construing a strong, politically effective counter-story that could confirm difference and mobilize marginalized voices to enact liberating resistance to hegemonic practices. Just as music, it has no message and no single point. The novel’s engagement with political atrocities cannot be translated into any form of commitment or clear ideological position. Its refusal to associate arts with political and moral reflexivity geared toward resistance does however not indicate a lack or even failure (cf. Goyal 66). Rather, it has productive implications for it puts emphasis on the very eventfulness of the arts, including acts of reading and listening, prior to and independent from any political lesson, ideology and belief. The novel’s poetics and politics of remembering are pitched in a minor key; they are ambiguous and polyvocal in their political thrust, dissonant in their aesthetics: The contrapuntal principle as well as the frictions between verbal narrative and musicality set free latencies – both in the sense of the historically repressed but also the historically possible –that resist integration into a unified, coherent and meaningful structure and that defy all attempts of creating narrative closure. The “*Unfug* of the code” evokes competing voices and dissonant noises – noises that mark their affective power by gesturing toward the forgotten and the repressed, while underlying the instabilities, contradictions and even biases of any historical narrative. This performative paradox, i.e., the simultaneous construction of a weighty historical narrative and its questioning through the use of an ethically unreliable narrator that abuses the exceptionalism of its hegemonic position as a male, intellectual American, lies at the heart of *Open City*. *Open City* is a polyvocal exploration of the ethical injunction that repressed and marginalized histories need to be remembered even if such acts of remembering might be tainted by the fallacies of memory. The act of remembering in itself does not automatically translate into ethically more sound positions, let alone into a historical consciousness from which a cosmopolitan ethics could be derived.

**Notes**

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1. Not least due to its melancholic tone, its pronounced engagement with the ethics of remembering as well as its innovative play with the generic conventions of the novel, critics have repeatedly compared *Open City* to the works of W.G. Sebald, indeed one of the writers to whom Cole feels indebted (cf. Vermeulen 82). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See, e.g., Hallemeier 2014; Krishnan 2015; Vermeulen 2015; Gehrmann 2016; Oniwe 2016; Hartwiger 2016. Most of these contributions deal with the novel’s ambivalent exploration of cosmopolitanism, paying specific attention to Julius’s knowledgeable but unaffected perspective. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Only Vermeulen (91–94) pays closer attention to the musical fugue form and its contrapuntal principle of composition; Maver (2013) briefly mentions the novel’s engagement with the fugue. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Working as a writer, photographer, photography critic and art historian, Cole is eager to probe new interrelations, transfers and passages between words, images and sounds and consistently works towards hybridizing media. Intermediality is thus a consistent feature of his work. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. There are of course exceptions to the rule, such as the fine studies by Wolf (1999), Bushnell (2013) and Hoene (2015). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. While many scholars link the specificity of music to its connection to emotions (Storr 3; Levinson 11), we argue that music has a capacity to affect. Whereas emotions can typically be codified, classified and named, affect is best understood as a potent, yet underdetermined intensity (Massumi 24-25; Vermeulen 7) that “passes through but also beyond personal feelings” (Terada 110). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Despite its relatively strict formal rules, which potentially confirm the rationalizing gestures of western modernity, it is thanks to this horizontal structure that the fugue is often considered a dialogic and pluralizing form. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. We understand atonality in the broad sense, i.e., as a lack of a tonal center. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)