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*Mats Arvidson*

# An Imaginary Musical Road Movie

TRANSMEDIAL SEMIOTIC STRUCTURES  
IN BRAD MEHLDAU'S CONCEPT ALBUM HIGHWAY RIDER

## AN IMAGINARY MUSICAL ROAD MOVIE





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Brad Mehldau's Concept Album *Highway Rider*

MATS ARVIDSON



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AN IMAGINARY MUSICAL ROAD MOVIE: TRANSMEDIAL SEMIOTIC STRUCTURES IN  
BRAD MEHLDAU'S CONCEPT ALBUM *HIGHWAY RIDER*

The idea of 'music alone' as an independent auditory medium expressed in the institutions of today's academia does not resonate with how we listen to and perceive music in everyday life; music is always accompanied with paratexts such as programme notes, LP sleeve images or other types of media. This idea forms the basis for this essay and is used to present a number of issues concerning meaning production: How, where and when is musical meaning produced? To be more specific, this essay deals with how an *intermedial music culture* can be described and analysed through one specific case study. Intermediality arises in the crossings between constructed media borders, which means that different aspects of a specific medium can be transgressed in various ways. Based on the American composer and jazz musician Brad Mehldau's (1970–) most complex instrumental work, the concept album *Highway Rider* (2010), this essay explores how such an album can be understood within an intermedial music culture. It merges formal and structural analysis with cultural, historical, technological and psychoanalytic aspects of music emphasising the role of subjectivity in the production of meaning. By offering a varied and broad theoretical and methodological framework, the author demonstrates ways to approach the work using concepts like transmediality, intermedial reference, meta-reference, iconicity, semiotics, paratext, psychoanalysis and ecological psychology.

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There is one person who has been my companion long before this project's inception and who is likely to continue to 'haunt' me long afterwards, namely composer and jazz musician Brad Mehldau – the main object of this essay. It is said that the subject of research should, as much as possible, remain aloof to the object scrutinised. The point of this I suppose is that the words with which the researcher uses for the analysis must be as analytically intelligible as possible and not contaminated with personal preconceptions. The subject risks to be blinded by his or her own enthusiasm so, instead of informing critical analysis, informs values that are not based on 'objective' facts (evidence) and are rather biased by their personal values. At the same time one can reasonably argue, or at least hope, that the words I use in this essay are dependent on an active-listening process and are necessary in order to make this process sufficiently 'alive' to the potential readers, which otherwise would not be possible. As an interpreter and music analyst it is impossible to not be moved by the music analysed – no matter what kind of music. It is this personal experience that has been part of my own driving force to explore the mystery, or non-mystery, of music's power of meaning production. The music moves me, but how, where, when and why? This essay tries to shed some light on these questions. So, last but not least, thanks to Brad Mehldau for sharing his music and for making the process of music listening not only an emotional but also an intellectual activity.

*Mats Arvidson*

Written at some unknown  
coffee shop in Lund,  
early spring 2016

## Preface: Culture, Materiality and Subjectivity

My research interest over the last decade or so have focused on topics that are on the margin of my own disciplinary field, musicology. At the same time I have always considered the issues I want to explore as musicological. This story has been told many times before and can simply be put into musicologist Nicholas Cook's words, turning philosopher Peter Kivy's dictum upside down: music is *never* alone. Even when you think you are solely listening to music, the word *solely* is filled with content that affects the production of musical meaning. In the foreword of a recently published anthology on music and multimedia, *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia* (2013), Cook wrote the following:

The conception of music as an independent, exclusively auditory medium – what Peter Kivy (1990) calls 'music alone' – was most perfectly realized in the hi-fi culture of the post-war years, above all in the image of music heard on headphones in a darkened room. But the aesthetic aspiration preceded its technological realization. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, concert halls were designed to minimize social interaction and de-emphasize the visual, fostering instead a direct and purely auditory communion between musical work and listener. This is the aesthetic and conceptual order that is still expressed in the institutions of today's academia: music, words, and moving images are the business respectively of departments of musicology, literature, and film studies.<sup>i</sup>

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i. Nicholas Cook, foreword to *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*, ed. Siu-Lan Tan et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), v. See also Nicholas Cook, "Music and Meaning in the Commercials," *Popular Music* 13:1 (1994): 40, and Peter Kivy, *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 14–29.



Cook continued by saying that outside of academia ‘the world moved on,’ and that even during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘when audio-only technology dominated [...] music was received alongside such paratexts as program notes and LP sleeve images.’<sup>ii</sup> In another text Cook wrote about the advent of recording: ‘[when] the enjoyment of music migrated from concert hall [music alone] to sitting room, the programme note was gradually transformed into the text on the back of the record sleeve [and thus became part of a] domestic Gesamtkunstwerk.’<sup>iii</sup> Here emerges an inherent paradox which demands an explanation: How does the idea of music alone fit into our everyday listening practice within which other art and media forms constantly circulate? This question forms the background to the whole essay.

In the book *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (2012), different authors from different disciplinary fields of study present their views on how to study music from a cultural perspective. This book has served as an inspiration for me in how to think about the cultural study of music, especially with regards to the question put forward above. In the introductory chapter musicologist Richard Middleton specifically focuses on the concept of culture and its relevance to the study of music. He points out a few trends, which in different ways has problematized music’s place throughout history and in society today.<sup>iv</sup> Among those trends one finds ethnomusicology, cultural studies and new/critical musicology. Although these trends may appear differently in theory and practice, the concept of culture has had a central place for all of them as well as the idea that music is never alone.

One emerging type of study within these trends, which will be discussed in various ways in the essay, deals with the material culture of music. For instance, communication theorist Will Straw outlines different ways on

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ii. Cook, foreword, v–vi.

iii. Nicholas Cook, “The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or Record Sleeves and Reception,” in *Composition – Performance – Reception: Studies in the Creative Process in Music*, ed. Wyndham Thomas (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 105 and 115.

iv. Richard Middleton, “Introduction: Music Studies and the Idea of Culture,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 1–14.

how to study music's materiality – especially in relation to the so-called material turn: 'What is special about the "material turn," perhaps, is that it allows us to explore a range of questions with particular pertinence to the analysis itself. Some of these have to do with the "thing" status of music itself' (thing theory), such as material forms through which music is received.<sup>v</sup> Straw discusses two aspects which deal with the materiality of music: *Mobility* focuses on that which is outside the musical text, such as different technologies, and *aggregation* deals with 'the gathering up and accumulation in physical and virtual sites.'<sup>vi</sup> With reference to literary scholar and media theorist Friedrich Kittler, Straw puts forward the question on what 'the functions of media' has in these types of aggregations – not least with regards to various recording formats:

As key elements in the material culture of music, formats – like the 78 rpm record, vinyl album, and compact disc – were marked by distinctive sizes, storage capacities, and characteristic relationships between musical and nonmusical information.<sup>vii</sup>

The LP record, for instance, not only provided 'space for elaborate commentary,' it also, as a specific material form, 'carried within it a distinctive protocol of listening.'<sup>viii</sup> This type of protocol emphasises how music is presented to the listener, thus affecting both the listener's signifying practice and how to study this practice. It also means that the material takes another turn towards the study of the performance practice of music listening.<sup>ix</sup> With this in mind, I want to make it clear that the present essay is neither ethnographic nor sociological in any sense but rather theoretic-

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v. Will Straw, "Music and Material Culture," in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 229. As a further example of this emerging type of study can be mentioned Dominik Bartmanski and Ian Woodward, *Vinyl: The Analogue Record in the Digital Age* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015).

vi. Straw, "Music and Material Culture," 233.

vii. Straw, "Music and Material Culture," 233.

viii. Straw, "Music and Material Culture," 234.

ix. Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24–32.

cally based – but theories that are more or less inscribed in an ethnographic and sociological context. This does not make the theories that I will present less relevant for understanding the signifying practice. Several of the theories I undertake are based on existing empirical studies – ethnographic as well as historical. For instance, from a historical perspective we know how recording and playback devices have affected how we consume music, which is expressed by the following somewhat over-simplified but nonetheless important notion: from *social* to *solitary* listening.<sup>x</sup> Moreover, as Cook pointed out, with this particular historical change in mind music listening today has become an important ‘instrument of subjectivity,’<sup>xi</sup> which I interpret as part of the individual listener’s signifying practice in our late-modern, digitized and mediatized society, and this must be thoroughly examined from a theoretical point of view.

Meaning and subjectivity are central concepts within the field of cultural studies. Together they define culture as a signifying practice. By this I, and many others, mean that meaning is not inherent in things, signs or texts, but rather ‘requires human [...] interpretative activity that establishes links from text to meaning.’<sup>xii</sup> This also means that the cultural study of music often involves the study of *language* about music since language is culture-bound and, furthermore, simultaneously links the subject ‘who both hears and speaks.’<sup>xiii</sup> Language constitutes the mediating and interpretative link in the act of meaning production. Subjectivity, however, seems to be a sensitive concept within music analysis through the claims being made about the music; the more complex these claims are, the more they refer to the interpreter’s subjectivity – no matter how contextual the

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x. However one can argue that the simultaneous social listening have increased in the form of music festivals and sing-along events, such as the Swedish ‘Allsång på Skansen.’

xi. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 344.

xii. Fornäs, *Kultur*, 52. My translation. See also Mats Arvidson, “The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies: Questions and Answers,” in *Ideology in Words and Music*, ed. Heidi Hart et al. (Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, 2014), 21.

xiii. Lawrence Kramer, “Subjectivity Unbound: Music, Language, Culture,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 396.

interpretation is and no matter how much evidence the interpretation is based upon (what is evidence anyway, and what is relevant evidence for this specific study?). As musicologist Lawrence Kramer puts it: ‘subjectivity is a socially constructed position made available by the music and occupied to a greater or lesser degree by the listener.’<sup>xiv</sup>

The listener’s signifying practice is additionally created around networks of ‘texts.’ No text or medium works in isolation but is rather always interpreted in relation to other ‘texts,’ thus once again stressing the idea that music is never alone. Music circulates in, around and through different cultural and symbolic systems. This is where intermediality emerges as an important concept within the cultural study of music.<sup>xv</sup> The study of intermediality means that the material thing, sign and the text must be put together: the medium of the CD, and other technological devices, the music itself, and the space for elaborate commentary together creates potentials of meaning for the listener to interpret. Intermediality thus cannot escape subjectivity, which means that the subject’s ontological status should always be present in an intermedial analysis – implied or real. And this is what the following essay is about – ‘the putting together’ within an intermedial music culture.<sup>xvi</sup> The specific purpose will be refined and

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xiv. Kramer, “Subjectivity,” in *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 49.

xv. Fornäs, *Kultur*, 52.

xvi. I have chosen not to give an account of the whole research field of music and media technology. It would, however, be fair to at least highlight what musicologist Arved Ashby wrote about this field: ‘Though the recording has been “serious” music’s main vehicle of currency for at least twenty years now, American musicologists fail to give it or other mass media much ontological recognition beyond documentary functions,’ Ashby, *Absolute Music: Mechanical Reproduction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 1. With this said, he continued, most of the studies rather comes from ‘media theorists or philosophers of aesthetics,’ 1. One consequence of this failure seems to be that ‘the record, CD, and MP3 file have suffered neglect because they can’t be picked up and read as easily and factually as a book,” 2. While there are some truth in this assertion, I would say that there have recently conducted research on recordings of music – not only of popular music, but also classical music. In Sweden, for instance, musicologist Toivo Burlin has studied different recordings of Swedish classical music. See Burlin, *Det imaginära rummet: inspelningspraxis och produktion av konstmusikfonogram i Sverige 1925–1983* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2008). See also Simon Zagorski-Thomas’ article “The Musicology

framed in the introductory chapter, but before that I will present a few words about the specific object under scrutiny.

## The Object of Study: Mehldau's *Highway Rider*

The intermedial music culture is so multifaceted in character that it can be studied from a variety of perspectives. In light of this, I have chosen as concrete an object as possible but one which also offers a range of possible perspectives of interpretation, namely the American composer and jazz musician Brad Mehldau's (1970–) *Highway Rider* (2010). Mehldau is one of the most intriguing musicians on the jazz scene today. By working across different genres, such as classical music, jazz music, and popular music, and working with orchestras, trios, duos, and as a soloist, he opens up for different hermeneutic 'windows' into the music he plays and creates. Known for his interpretations of songs by Radiohead ("Exit Music [For A Film]," "Knives Out," "Jigsaw: Falling Into Places") and Nick Drake ("River Man," "Day is Done," "Things Behind the Sun"), and his soundtrack appearances in movies such as Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) and Clint Eastwood's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997), he has often placed himself in a tradition of music history with a focus on both the classical repertoire and popular music. His most recent work, along with drummer Mark Guiliana, *Mehliana: Taming The Dragon* (2014), is an electric duo that brings together electrifying and highly rhythmic music with elements of beat poetry as well as spoken word.<sup>xvii</sup> Furthermore, his collaboration with singer-songwriter Elliot Smith on the one hand and Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter on the other hand clearly demonstrates how Mehldau crosses the borders between different genres. His collaboration with von Otter, for example, resulted in the recording of *Love Songs* (2010), which partly consists of a song cycle composition: five songs with settings of Sara Teasdale's (1884–1933) poems. Moreover, composers and musicians such as Johannes Brahms, Ludwig van

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of Record Production," *Twentieth-Century Music* 4:2 (2008): 189–207.

xvii. *Mehliana: Taming The Dragon* (2014), Nonesuch Records Inc., Warner Music Company.

Beethoven, Robert Schumann, Richard Strauss, John Coltrane and Charles Mingus appear frequently in his own writings about his music as well as philosophers and writers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, Rainer Maria Rilke and Thomas Mann. His series of *The Art of the Trio Recordings*, which consists of five albums (1997–2001), clearly links music history, philosophy and writers.<sup>xviii</sup> Likewise, his fascination with romantic music is evident in several ways, most notably in the piano solo work *Elegiac Cycle* (1999), which consists of nine pieces that are all connected with a specific story about life, death and mortality. Similarly the jazz-oriented *Places* (2000), a work that deals with time, place, longing and memory, comprises of both trio and solo piano music. These two works, together with *Highway Rider*, are characterised as cycles as well as concept albums. *Highway Rider* thereto is inherently multifaceted as it contains a mixture of different styles and genres, which requires flexibility in the process of interpretation. This is what makes this musical work particularly interesting to study.

\*

I call this text an essay since I perceive of it as an attempt to understand a specific object within an intermedial music culture. The text and footnotes work in *concert* with one another and should preferably be read so.

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xviii. The recordings in chronological order are: *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 1 (1997); *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2: *Live at the Village Vanguard* (1997); *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 3: *Songs* (1998); *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 4: *Back at the Vanguard* (1999); *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 5: *Progression* (2001). The recordings were produced by Warner Bros. Records.



## Introduction:

# The LP Record, the Record Sleeve and the Case of Intermediality

In a short text called “Hi-Fi and LP – A New Era,” published in a Swedish journal in 1957 called *Jazzkalendern* (*Jazz Calendar*), the author, Olle Helander, enthusiastically discusses how the new technology of sound reproduction has revolutionised music listening: “The early nineteen fifties marks the beginning of a new era of gramophone technology.”<sup>1</sup> However, it was not only the sound reproduction that revolutionised music listening during this era. The so-called Long-Playing Record had made it possible to listen to complete musical works. 1948 marks the year when Columbia Records introduced the LP record as ‘a response to the unendurable temporal failings of 78s and the accompanying “side-splitting” effects on the sense of musical continuity.’<sup>2</sup> This introduction further ‘propelled hi-fi into the 1950s.’<sup>3</sup> 1958 introduced the first stereo that naturally made the listening experience even more revolutionary.<sup>4</sup> In light of this, one can argue that music had entered history not only as a technological phenomenon but also, as Straw suggests, a ‘thing’ to be studied in various ways.<sup>5</sup>

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1. Olle Helander, “Hi-Fi och LP – en ny tidsålder,” *Jazzkalendern* 58 (1957): 44. My translation of the quote and title.

2. Colin Symes, *Setting the Record Straight: A Material History of Classical Recording* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 41.

3. David L. Morton Jr., *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 145.

4. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 64. See also Alf Björnberg, “Att lära sig lyssna till det fulländade ljudet. Svensk hifi-kultur och förändrade lyssningssätt 1950–1980,” in *Säg det om toner och därtill i ord*, ed. Olle Edström (Stockholm: Carlsson Bokförlag, 2009), 79–112. Here Björnberg analyses the discourse of Swedish Hi-Fi Culture.

5. It could certainly be argued that music as a thing to be studied already began when



Yet what caught my attention in Helander's text was something else. It was the back cover of an album printed on the right hand side in the upper corner of the page with a short but informative text on the left hand side of the printed cover which said that '[t]he LP-covers has developed a new kind of modern art.'<sup>6</sup> The album in question was *Music for Hi-Fi Bugs*, a big band jazz album with originals conducted by jazz composer Pete Rugolo (1915–2011) released in 1956. The back cover had a white background with various bug species printed on it. This, I would say, shows how the technological development of sound reproduction, the medium of the LP record and the development of the artwork of album covers cannot be separated from each other. Historically, in the 1930s Columbia Records had already begun to 'issue some of its 78s with covers [though] it was not until the coming of the LP [...] that covers became a standard element of the disc's narrative architecture.'<sup>7</sup>

Both the technology of sound reproduction and the framing of the music play an important part in the production of meaning. One example which bears relevance to the present study is how the development of the LP record *converges* with a new musical genre. Folk singer Woody Guthrie (1912–1967) is often considered to be one of the first artists to create a so-called concept album in 1940 with the record *Dust Bowl Ballads*.<sup>8</sup> The

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the music became an object for recording. As for instance music columnist Evan Eisenberg says, '[already in] 1877 [the year Thomas Edison filed a patent on sound recording and reproduction] music began to become a *thing*.' *The Recording Angel: Music, Records, and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa*, 2 ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 13. My emphasis.

6. Helander, "Hi-Fi och LP," 45.

7. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 99–100. Here is not the place to write the history of record sleeves but rather to demonstrate the importance it has had for our experience of music. It is customary to ascribe Alex Steinweiss (1917–2011) as the one who made album covers as an important communicative part of the music. As Symes writes: 'Alex Steinweiss [...] helped to pioneer many of the graphic conventions associated with record covers,' 101. See also Richard Osborne, *Vinyl: A History of the Analogue Record* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 161–181. It is worth noting that there is a connection between the relationship of the musical work and record sleeves on the one hand, and the literary work and book cover/bindings on the other hand.

8. See Chapter 2, "Genre as Semiotic Code: What Kind of Genre is *Highway Rider*?" where I discuss the definition of the concept album.

scope for such an early concept album was however limited, as music journalist Gareth Shute suggests:

[T]here was no possibility to carry the theme across to the album artwork. Up until the late 1940s, record packaging was simply a plain slip (a dust cover) with a circular section removed in the centre so the label of the record was visible. If there were images on this slip then it was usually advertising for the record label rather than anything provided by the artist and only classical music and jazz were seen as being worthy package in illustrative sleeves.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the LP record made it possible for music to progress with the cover art and allow it to become an integral part of the concept albums.<sup>10</sup> From a theoretical point of view, this progress is shown, in literary scholar Lars Elleström's words, in how so-called qualifying aspects of media have emerged, and how aesthetic and communicative aspects of media, due to specific historical and social changes, has become accepted in the development of music technology.<sup>11</sup> Elleström distinguishes between three types of media: 1) *basic media*: text, image, sound, sight and hearing; 2) *qualified media*: different types of art and media forms and genres; 3) *technical media*: LP records, TV, Radio and the Internet.<sup>12</sup> This shows a convergence between new ways of listening to music due to the emergence of the LP record and a new way to materially 'package' the music with its adherent visual and verbal communication. It also shows a convergence between different types of materiality, such as between sound waves and three-di-

9. Gareth Shute, *Concept Albums* (USA: Investigations Publishing, 2013), 10–11.

10. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 7–17.

11. Lars Elleström, "The Modalities of Media: A Model for Understanding Intermedial Relations," in *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, ed. Lars Elleström (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 26.

12. Compare Elleström's differentiation between media to media scholar Mikko Lehtonen's in his chapter "Media: One or Many?" in *Intermediality and Media Change*, ed. Juha Herkman et al. (Finland: Tampere University Press, 2012), 31–44. Lehtonen differentiates between: 1) media as substance; 2) media as technology; 3) media as instrumental. Media as substance corresponds with Elleström's basic media, while media as technology deals with the materiality of media, and media as instrumental deals with specific genres for mediation, such as advertising.

mensional objects. However, what is crucial here is that the materiality of the medium cannot be separated from the perception of it. In order to understand how meaning is produced in the experience of music and with the emergence of the concept album, which is the basis for this discussion, it is important to distinguish between what Elleström terms *material*, *sensory*, *spatiotemporal* and *semiotic modality*.<sup>13</sup> For instance, semiotic modality, which is about the qualifying aspects of media, such as those that define the concept album as a specific musical genre, can be transgressed in two ways: 1) through the *combination* and *integration* of basic and/or qualified media; and 2) through the *mediation* and *transformation* of basic and/or qualified media.<sup>14</sup> I propose that the qualifying aspects of the concept album are examples of what transgressions of media borders can look like. I will further qualify these in this essay. However, to prove my point and show the relevance in using these terms, I will now say a few words about the object of the study.

First of all, I will consider the basic media of the work of jazz musician Brad Mehldau's *Highway Rider* (text, image and sound). Secondly, I will define the different levels of materiality within the work, which is presented to the listener (record sleeve, Internet and sound recording).<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, I will focus on how these types of media allow the work to qualify as a concept album. Finally, I will show *how the semiotic modality is transgressed*, that is, *how the intermedial relationships emerge in the construction of media borders*: How are the basic media combined and/or integrated? Additionally, in what way can one say that the work is mediated and transformed?

The concept of medium not only plays an important role in how to study the production of meaning, not least musical meaning, but also how *intermedial* relations as part of this meaning production might be understood. Music, specifically the concept album as a qualified medium, therefore must be put into a larger intermedial culture.

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13. Elleström, "The Modalities of Media," 17–24.

14. Elleström, "The Modalities of Media," 28.

15. It should be emphasised that the type of packaging within which *Highway Rider* is mediated is not a vinyl-record (LP) but a CD. In Chapter 4, "Analysis of Two Levels of Materiality" I will describe in detail and analyse the specific packaging of *Highway Rider*.

## Media Convergence, Intermediality and Digital Culture

How I use the concept of convergence is somewhat different from how it is normally used in various kinds of media studies. Media convergence most often refers to the ‘developments in which formerly medium specific content can [...] be distributed and published through various media.’<sup>16</sup> Yet recent studies within media studies have shown some discontent with how the concept of convergence is used. Convergence ‘disguises’ the differences that actually exist between different types of media. The prefix ‘inter-’ in intermediality addresses changes brought by new technology; furthermore it pays attention to historical continuities and contextual differences between various media.<sup>17</sup> As Elleström says: ‘Media [...] are both different and similar, and must be understood as a bridge between medial differences that is founded on medial similarities.’<sup>18</sup> These historical continuities and contextual differences are of particular importance in order to emphasise the digital culture: How does intermediality appear within this culture? In what way does new technologies affect the ways one uses and listens to music? In other words, what kinds of continuities and differences can be discerned? Behind these questions lies an idea that music listening today is radically different compared to the LP-era. One often reads about how the digital culture has revolutionised our everyday lives in the sense that our modes of behaviour have changed during the course of new technologies. A column published in the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* in December 2009 describes the CD as an out-dated technological medium.<sup>19</sup> ‘The Digital Cultural Revolution,’ it says, has made music listening more ‘qualitative’ – as if the CD as a material artefact were not part of the digital culture, which of course it is. However what does this qualitative ‘leap’ in the course of history mean? The columnist argued

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16. Juha Herkman, “Introduction: Intermediality as a Theory and Methodology,” in *Intermediality and Media Change*, ed. Juha Herkman et al. (Finland: Tampere University Press, 2012), 10–11. See also Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

17. Herkman, “Introduction: Intermediality as a Theory and Methodology,” 14.

18. Elleström, “The Modalities of Media,” 12.

19. Hanna Fahl, “Vemodigt farväl till cd-samlingen,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 18, 2009.

that digital music stores like iTunes and Spotify not only have changed our attitudes on what music is but also the way we listen to music.<sup>20</sup> The columnist is not alone in expressing this. Many have thought that the arrival of such stores have meant the ‘death of the album [...] in an age when digital technology has made it just as easy for consumers to purchase only individual tracks they enjoy.’<sup>21</sup> The audience’s apparent reluctance to buy albums is related to issues of cost, convenience, mobility and other distracted ways of listening.<sup>22</sup> Therefore a central question is how the visual and verbal communicative aspects of music appear for the listener today: Have the function of record sleeves become obsolete? As musicologist Arved Ashby says, whereas LP- and CD-recordings can be regarded as ‘containers for sound’ MP3-files are rather ‘non-bottlelike.’<sup>23</sup> The type of technical medium that the music is mediated through – either in the form of a container or in the form of a non-bottle – affects the way one listens to and creates meaning. Straw’s distinction between the two types of materiality – the one that enables mobile listening through new technologies such as MP3-files, compared to the space for elaborate commentaries between musical and non-musical information which LPs and CDs creates – changes with the emergence of digital culture. The spaces for elaborate commentaries move from album covers to other spaces like websites, smartphones, etc. Yet, according to Shute, the ‘death of the album,’ and consequently the ‘death of the concept album,’ only stayed as a threat to the musicians:

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20. In his text “Looking at Records” Philip Auslander makes an interesting reference to Paul Goldstein, professor of law, who in 1994 already predicted that ‘in the near future, recorded music and other entertainment commodities [would] be distributed by means of a system he [called] the “Celestial Jukebox”.’ By this Goldstein meant ‘a technology-packed satellite orbiting thousands of miles above Earth, awaiting a subscriber’s order – like a nickel in the old jukebox, and the punch of a button – to connect him to any number of selections from a vast storehouse via a home or office receiver [...]’. This prophecy has partly been fulfilled through digital playback devices that exist today, such as those mentioned above. See Auslander, “Looking at Records,” *The Drama Review* 45:1 (2001): 77.

21. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 8.

22. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 8.

23. Ashby, *Absolute Music*, 162.

Many musicians were wedded to the idea of releasing albums, often because putting out a collection of songs allowed them to express their full musical range. The idea of releasing an endless string of singles rankled them, especially since it didn't allow for more intricate, multifaceted tracks. The nature of singles is that they have to instantly grab your attention, leaving no potential for a track to be a 'slow grower'.<sup>24</sup>

However discussions about the digital culture often seem to fall flat. Claims which are being made, like in the column above, are too simple to accept. First of all, the word *digital* is usually associated with technology, meaning with ones and zeros. This has created new ways of communicating through and interacting with technical media. However, as media historian Charlie Gere says, it is important to distinguish between digital *technology* and digital *culture*.<sup>25</sup> *Digital* refers not only to the effects and opportunities that technology brings forward but also defines and covers the ways that human being think or rationalise and act in relation to technology, and most importantly to the ways that he or she produces meaning. This means that digital *culture* 'in its present specific form is a historically contingent phenomenon' that goes beyond the technological as such.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, I suggest that the historical contingencies should be seen here as part of the historical continuities and the contextual differences. Media scholar Mikko Lehtonen argued that the digitization of culture, as part of a general mediatisation, intensifies intermediality.<sup>27</sup> One way to understand these cultural processes is to consider digital culture as part of a historical continuation on a *horizontal* level (a continuation which also is contingent), and digital technology as part of contextual differences on a *vertical* level (an intensification of intermediality). The contextual differences are important for understanding how meaning production emerges within the digital culture.

So, in light of this reasoning, how should the concept album as a qualified medium be understood? One aspect that seems particularly promi-

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24. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 156.

25. Charlie Gere, *Digital Culture* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 11–20.

26. Gere, *Digital Culture*, 18.

27. Mikko Lehtonen, "On No Man's Land: Theses on Intermediality," *Nordic Review* 22:1 (2001): 71–84.

nent is how digital technology often enables a return or reuse of previous qualified media by way of *remediating* these in a new media context. By this I do not mean that remediation has not previously been possible; on the contrary, one could see remediation as an aspect of what Elleström terms *media transformations*, and where one media product remediates specific media characteristics from one qualified medium to another qualified medium.<sup>28</sup> Cook's example of how 'the programme note was gradually transformed into the text on the back of the record sleeve' could be seen as one type of such remediation.<sup>29</sup> However, I would say that digital technology has, in Lehtonen's words, intensified the various ways remediation occur between qualified media in ways not previously possible. Remediation is thus something that is particularly prominent within the late-modern digital culture. Although the present study primarily focuses on the material package of the CD (the record sleeve), this is also complemented with how digital technology by way of hyperlinking words with music on a webpage may contribute to a general understanding of the story. In this sense, one may understand the remediating process within the digital culture as part of a music historical continuation though the context may differ.

### Historical Contingencies and Ritual Narratives: Live and Reproduced Music

In his article "Mapping the Narrative in a Digital Album Cover" (2006), media theorist and film maker Patti Tsarouhis argued that the 'culture of listening to commodified music, with its necessary hardware (vinyl/CD/cassette), collectively works to map methods of listening and modes of behaviour, which enable an album's *ritualistic* consumption.'<sup>30</sup> What Tsarouhis has highlighted in relation to this type of consumption, which

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28. Lars Elleström, *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media* (Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke, 2014), 90.

29. Cook, "The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*," 105 and "Preface" to this essay.

30. Patti Tsarouhis, "Mapping the Narrative in a Digital Album Cover," *M/C Journal* 9:1 (2006). My emphasis.

is similar to Straw's idea of aggregation, is how the 'packaging, the physical dimensions and collectable attributes of the record, [has] constructed a ritualistic narrative specific to the vinyl.'<sup>31</sup> From a historical perspective, this notion is quite interesting. Normally, one would perhaps attribute the ritualistic aspect of music listening to the live experience rather than recorded music. For instance cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) attributed the concept of authenticity to the experience of the original artwork: 'In even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence at the place at which it is to be found.'<sup>32</sup> Benjamin mentioned the gramophone record at only one point in a discussion about the photograph's relationship between the original and the technologically reproduced version:

[The technological reproduction] enables the original to meet the recipient halfway, whether in the form of a photograph or in that of a gramophone record. The cathedral leaves its site to be received in the studio of an art lover; the choral work performed in an auditorium or in the open air is enjoyed in a private room.<sup>33</sup>

Even if Benjamin is not completely against the mechanical reproduction (it can have the effect to democratise the work of art) it appears as if the idea of ritualistic narrative is contradictory in character: On the one hand it is ascribed to the here-and-now experience of the original, on the other hand it is ascribed to the materiality that follows the mechanical reproduction of the original. This contradiction becomes all the more interesting; although the here-and-now experience does not exist in the same way when listening to music in a reproduced form, especially improvised music (which is partly the case of Mehldau's music), this does not mean that the ritual narrative disappears.

In light of this historical perspective, one might ask what has happened now as we have moved into yet another type of private room surrounded

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31. Tsarouhis, "Mapping the Narrative in a Digital Album Cover."

32. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction," *Grey Room* 39 (2010): 13.

33. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction," 14.



by a digital culture and where music listening is mainly done via various streaming services like Spotify. Some would perhaps argue that the ritual value has disappeared and been replaced by use value while others would say that the ritual value has become even more important.<sup>34</sup> The simple answer is that the ritual value does not necessarily excludes the use value; on the contrary, the digital might even create unexpected desires – like those ritualistic narratives attributed to the material dimensions of the LP record and the CD. Today one can clearly take notice of such a desire to return to the vinyl-era (LP record). For instance when Apple launched iTunes LP on 9 September 2009 this could be understood as an ‘attempt to revitalize music sales by providing an immersive digital experience complete with detailed art reminiscent of when people used to buy records.’<sup>35</sup> iTunes LP is thus a typical example of remediation/media transformation. Thus it is interesting to reflect on how this return is seen in light of the digital culture. As musicologist Richard Osborne writes: ‘the vinyl recording is providing both a complement and an alternative to digital formats,’ and furthermore that ‘it could be argued that vinyl have been most successful where they have been most complementary.’<sup>36</sup> Here the difference between digital technology and digital culture becomes particularly important; the technology so to speak breeds a desire to ‘restore’ a ritualistic value, that is to say, to a culture that is both a cause and effect of the technological but that is nonetheless part of a digital culture how analogue it may appear to the listener.

My point here is that the specific cultural form within which music is consumed fluctuates through history in sometimes unexpected ways. This is what Gere describes as historical contingency.<sup>37</sup>

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34. This is an old ideology separating performance from recording, live from not live, which nowadays can hardly be accepted. In the last chapter I will discuss this issue in detail to demonstrate the importance of considering both live music and recorded music as two types of performances.

35. Jay Robinson, “Some Notes On iTunes LP,” September 11 (2009).

36. Osborne, *Vinyl*, 183.

37. One example of such a fluctuation (contingency) is how LP covers in the 1980s as part of both marketing strategies and new media expressions moved from still images to moving images. As Osborne said: ‘[w]ithin the arrival of music video and *MTV* numer-

## ‘The Medium is the Message’/‘The Message is in the Medium’: Issues of Form and Content

The discussion so far has mainly focused on form rather than content. The form undoubtedly plays a key role for the listener’s signifying practice. At the same time one should not be blinded by the function of the form as such. It is easy to be misled by the famous formula ‘the medium is the message,’ put forward by media theorist Marshall McLuhan in his *Understanding Media* (1964). Here he argued that, rather than the content, it’s the form of the medium in question which should be the focus of the object of study:

This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves – results from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.<sup>38</sup>

One way of interpreting McLuhan is that the focus should primarily be directed at the way music is packaged or framed due to technological innovations and how music is communicated within digital frameworks. The physical enclosure of the music, the LP cover and its appurtenant record sleeve, within the digital culture can be expanded to also include the Internet as a means for the production of meaning. This extension, or ‘expansion,’ of the framework is especially prominent for the ‘modern’ concept album.<sup>39</sup> Shute speaks of a trend that takes the expansion as a means for creation:

The digital downloading is only one influence on [an] uptake of the concept album and many artists are beginning to see that producing conceptual work also allows them to take advantage of the positive aspects of

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ous LP tracks were being visualized 24-hours a day. It is no coincident that several leading sleeve designers moved into video direction during this period.’ Osborne, *Vinyl*, 175.

38. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1964/1994), 7.

39. The difference between extension and expansion has to do with the difference between *time* and *space*.

digital technology. If they have a central theme then this can be extended across their album artwork, music videos, and websites to give a sense of grandeur to each new release.<sup>40</sup>

However, by not only highlighting different types of framing materially but also how basic media *interact* with qualified and technical media and with the content, I would argue the form is always subordinate to but not separated from its content. The property of the relationship between form and content is not a black box nor a simple container through which music is mediated. This equation would not only be too simplistic but also misguided; the meaning of the form and content as a sign, which is at stake here, is not something innate – it is what one makes of the sign in question in its specific cultural context. So, if one wants to understand the concept album as a specific sign, the form is important but not determinant of the content. Lehtonen formulates a similar argument through suggesting that ‘the message is in the medium’ to emphasise that “pure” contents do not exist.<sup>41</sup> To conclude, what I have partially tried to put forward so far is not only *where* the production of meaning emerges but also *how* this meaning might emerge.

## Digital Aesthetics and Communication: On Empirical Matters

One could argue that the empirical material used for this study is the music of *Highway Rider* and ‘everything’ (within certain limits) that surrounds it, and furthermore that the type of material is unproblematic from a methodological point of view. In the next chapter I will propose and problematize the concept of communication as a core and fundamental starting point for understanding how musical meaning is produced, such

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40. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 172. The positive aspects of digital technology can easily be applied to how Mehlau has constructed his website.

41. Mikko Lehtonen, *The Cultural Analysis of Texts* (London: Sage Publications, 2000), 69. The idea of remediation/media transformation also suggests a critique against McLuhan’s formula since it focuses on the content transformed from one medium to the content of another rather than the form (though form may also be remediated).

as how central it is for describing the specific materiality of the music – in my case a CD. However when communication emerges within a digital framework or digital culture, which is partly the case with this study, the material aspect will always appear problematic – both for the research process and for the recipient of the musical work. Therefore let me once again highlight one of my central points in this introductory chapter and add additional commentary to this. Digital culture in its specific form is a contingent phenomenon that not only goes beyond the technological but also, as a consequence of this reasoning, affects the production of meaning. For instance what happens when a website under scrutiny not only changes its infrastructure but also its information? Similar to a website, as a medium for communication digital media are unstable. Media theorist Klaus Bruhn Jensen says, ‘[t]he material channels of communication set the terms for *who* knows *what* and *when* [and that] the prevalent modes of expression shape *how* people come to know.’<sup>42</sup> If the mode of expression changes – whether through words, images or sounds (the semiotic modality) – and how these relate to each other, this in turn changes how people produce meaning. Furthermore according to Jensen, media represents, ‘vehicles of *information*; they are channels of *communication*; and they are means of both interpersonal and macro-social *action*.’<sup>43</sup> When outlining this media-tripartition Jensen fittingly uses programme music and sound as examples to demonstrate how they can be combined. Information corresponds to “‘program music” that seeks to generate ideas or values in the listener’; communication corresponds to how ‘program music produces [...] some level of understanding’; and action corresponds to how ‘program music reactivates imagined communities, ranging from nationalism to consumerism.’<sup>44</sup> Put into an analytical framework of a website, information, communication and action becomes important parameters. In the words of another media theorist, Niels Brügger, a website can be consid-

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42. Klaus Bruhn Jensen, “Mixed Media: From Digital Aesthetics Towards General Communication Theory,” in *Northern Light: Film and Media Studies Yearbook* 5, ed. Arild Petveit et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2007), 16.

43. Jensen, “Mixed Media,” 16.

44. Jensen, “Mixed Media,” 16.

ered ‘a unit of analysis in its own right,’ and as something ‘that mediates between the general macro level and the specific micro level.’<sup>45</sup> The problem here is not so much that a website can be considered a separate unit of analysis but rather, as Brügger put forward, that it oscillates between fragmentation and coherence thus creating instability. A website as a vehicle of information, a material channel of communication and a mean of action may thus reactivate different imagined communities depending on the level of fragmentation, coherence and its changing infrastructure: It seeks to generate ideas and produce meaning by way of *action*.

During the process of this research project, the communicative context within which *Highway Rider* occurs has changed – not only has Mehldau changed the infrastructure of his website but also the information. However this will neither affect the study in itself nor its main thesis; on the contrary, it proves my point regarding the signifying practice – that meaning is produced through a performative act in relation to the structure of the context within which music is communicated and perceived.<sup>46</sup> Whether the music, so to speak, is ‘sandwiched’ between a physical enclosure, such as a record sleeve, or placed in conjunction with the interface of a website, it is always the performative act of the perceiver that has the upper hand in the production of meaning.

## The Purpose and Outline of the Essay

In light of this introduction it is time to specify the purpose of the essay. It deals primarily with the relationship between the three basic forms of media as defined by Elleström. The purpose is to understand, by way of different analytical perspectives, the American composer and jazz pianist Brad Mehldau’s CD and concept album *Highway Rider* by asking: *How can we understand this album within an intermedial music culture?* This simple question requires a thorough discussion on different theoretical

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45. Niels Brügger, “The Website as Unit Analysis? Bolter and Manovich Revisited,” in *Northern Light: Film and Media Studies Yearbook* 5, ed. Arild Fetveit et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 2007), 75.

46. See footnote 296 in Chapter 4.

aspects on how to approach the work and how the work is related to the larger cultural and historical context within which it is part of. To be more specific: *Highway Rider* is the third part of an exploration of narrative techniques in music with a pronounced cyclic form. These two aspects, narrative and the musical form, will be at the centre of my essay as will a discussion on issues dealing with the concept of signifying practice. I am specifically interested in how the semiotic modality and the qualifying aspects of media are transgressed in different ways, and how these transgressions become important parts in the production of meaning.

The essay is organised through presenting a general theoretical and methodological framework followed by a theoretical discussion on the concept of genre and how this relates to *Highway Rider*; a description and analysis of the poietic and esthetic world of Brad Mehldau; an analysis of two types of materiality (the paratext and the acoustic material traces); a short discussion on the cyclic and narrative aspects of the work within which I will also present a specific way to understand it from a cultural (psychoanalytic) perspective; an analysis of the last two compositions within the context of a symphonic poem; and a final chapter where I critically revisit parts of the whole essay by framing it from the position of the subject listener and further its relevance within the discipline of musicology. The whole essay ends with a short reflection by highlighting two problems that this type of study entails.



## ONE

# Theoretical and Methodological Framework

This essay puts itself into the intersection between a wide variety of scholarly discourses such as musicology, literary, visual, film, cultural and media studies. Its disciplinary base however is musicology framed within an intermedial perspective. These discourses are divided into different sections: 1) intermediality and transmediality; 2) description and function of reference; 3) narrativity in music; 4) the function of the paratext; 5) semiotic analysis as a formal approach to music; and finally 6) music and multi-modal metaphor. The framework should be regarded as tentative and general with the purpose to problematize central theories and methods for an analysis of two types of materiality, which should not be regarded as exhausted but rather qualified and commented upon in the analysis.

## Intermediality and Transmediality

The concept of transmediality is part of the complex field of study called intermedial studies. This field of study has now grown into diverse disciplinary directions that make it difficult, if not impossible, to get an overall coherent picture of it.<sup>47</sup> The purpose of the following passages, however, is not to paint such a picture but rather to discuss a number of key concepts

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47. For a thorough discussion on the relationship between intermedial studies and musicology see my article "Music and Musicology in the Light of Intermediality and Intermedial Studies," *STM-Online* 15 (2012). For a discussion on the sub-field known as Word and Music Studies and its relation to intermedial studies and musicology see my article "The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies," 17–29. For an introduction to intermediality see Claus Clüver, "Intermediality and Interarts Studies," in *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality*, ed. Jens Arvidson et al. (Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, 2007), 19–37.



within the field of intermedial studies. I will place the subsequent discussion on description, reference, narrativity, paratext, semiotics in music and multimodal metaphor within a specific intermedial theoretical framework. To begin with, a discussion of intermediality would be pointless without first considering the concept of medium. Here it would be appropriate to reconnect to the introduction of this essay and to Elleström's model for understanding intermedial relations.

As briefly discussed, Elleström makes a distinction between three types of media, and moreover he makes clear that the materiality of media, regardless of the type, cannot be separated from the perception of them. In the introductory chapter I also discuss how the semiotic modality could be transgressed in different ways in order to show how intermedial relationships emerge in the construction of media borders. Here I will now develop some of these intermedial concepts in relation to the specific work under scrutiny.

Elleström has discussed four types of modality (mentioned in the introduction) exemplified as follows: 1) *material modality*: 'The latent corporeal interface of the medium, where the senses meet the material.' This could be flat surfaces, three-dimensional objects or sound waves; 2) *sensory modality*: 'The physical and mental acts of perceiving the interface of the medium through the sense faculties,' such as hearing/listening to music; 3) *spatiotemporal modality*: 'The structuring of the sensorial perception of the material interface into experiences and conceptions of space and time;' this for instance could be the experience of time/temporality when listening to music or creating a virtual space when watching a photograph;<sup>48</sup> 4) *semiotic modality*: 'The creation of meaning in the spatiotemporally conceived medium by way of different sorts of thinking and sign interpretation,' such as the symbolic, iconic and indexical signs in words, images and sounds/music (combined, integrated or transformed).<sup>49</sup> In different ways

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48. The concept of time is somewhat problematic when it comes to studying the semiotics of music; sometimes one distinguishes between natural time and cultural time – or between time and temporality. See Chapter 4, "Analysis of Two Levels of Materiality" ("Section V: Alone and Together"), where I discuss these two different concepts of time.

49. Elleström, "The Modalities of Media," 36. One of the advantages of Elleström's model is that he leaves the frame of interpretation open depending on the type of media

these four types of modality will subsequently be apparent in this essay, though not always as clearly articulated as above since they tend to merge into each other depending on type of medium (genre). In addition to these modalities, the qualifying aspects of media (also mentioned in the introduction) must be taken into consideration. According to Elleström, intermediality arises in the crossing of constructed media borders, which means that the modal and the qualifying aspects of media can be transgressed through combination and integration or through mediation and transformation. In light of this rather complex framework, I want to focus on these two types of transgressions.

Literary scholar Hans Lund, inspired by Áron Kibédi Varga among others, established a typology of intermedial relationships showing how the two types of transgressions can be manifested. Lund differentiates between three types of basic media: combined, integrated and transformed media. Simply put, combined media may either be media that co-exist on the same surface (it could be the front cover of a record sleeve showing a photograph and a title), or different media that refer to each other from isolated positions (music and title). Integration means media in symbiosis, such as intermedial iconicity; integrated media cannot be separated without the work falling apart (a typical example is visual poetry). Finally, transformation means how, for instance, instrumental music portrays verbal stories in tones (such as programme music like symphonic/tone poems).<sup>50</sup> The key issue within this context is how Mehldau's musical work relates to the various intermedial relationships. However, it is pointless at this stage to describe all the various intermedial relations within Elleström and Lund's respective theoretical frameworks that could be applied to Mehldau's work for the simple reason that all of the information about the work is not yet available. Instead these will be discussed where appropriate in the analysis, with the exception of two concepts that need special attention, namely *representation* and *transmediality*.

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under scrutiny. The phrase 'different sorts of thinking' encourages creativity. The openness applies to the qualifying aspects.

50. Hans Lund, "Medier i samspel," in *Intermedialitet. Ord, bild och ton i samspel*, ed. Hans Lund (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002), 9–22.

Musicologist Siglind Bruhn has been engaged with the study of musical representation in a number of works – not least what she calls musical ekphrasis. The concept of ekphrasis, or better yet the *practice* of ekphrasis, has been discussed now for more than a half a century – primarily within the discourse of comparative literature.<sup>51</sup> One of the definitions of modern ekphrasis that has served as a basis for further discussions and definitions is literary scholar James A. W. Heffernan's 'verbal representation of visual representation.'<sup>52</sup> Ekphrasis thus belongs to the category of transformation. Furthermore, the concept has been and still is debated with regards to its expansion into other areas besides the relationships between image and text. One such area is the relationship between music and text.<sup>53</sup> Both musical ekphrasis and programme music belong to the same category (transformation) in the sense that both claim to tell a story or paint a picture in tones.<sup>54</sup> However, there is one difference between these two,

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51. I am thinking of Leo Spitzer who in 1955 reintroduced the concept of the literary discourse and, as Claus Clüver says, 'studies of verbal representations of visual representations have [since then] become a major area of word-and-image studies.' Clüver, "Intermediality and Interarts Studies," 23. In this context it should be noted that ekphrasis as a concept has been discussed much earlier. Through historical studies Ruth Webb has traced the concept to the first century of CE. See Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2009), 14.

52. James A. W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words. The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1993), 2–3. See also Hans Lund, "Litterär ekfras," in *Intermedialitet. Ord, bild och ton i samspel*, ed. Hans Lund (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002), 185.

53. See for instance Lydia Goehr, "How to Do More With Words. Two Views on (Musical) Ekphrasis," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 50:4 (2010): 407. Goehr however seems to make the classic mistake of talking about musical ekphrasis when in fact it concerns musicalization of fiction – for instance when she discusses Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*: 'Mann's novel produces an ekphrastic chain but where, now, the works, writers, composers, and philosophers connected are not all "real". As is well documented, the fact that Mann connected *notational* or *projected* works – Leverkühn's *The Lamentation of Dr Faustus* – to actually existing works by Krenek, Busoni, Beethoven, Pfitzner, and Schoenberg annoyed Schoenberg enormously. What was imagined was all too real.' For information of the concept of musicalization see Werner Wolf, *Musicalization of Fiction: A Study in the Theory and History of Intermediality* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999).

54. To say that musical ekphrasis and programme music belong to the category of transformation should be problematized more than has been done. Typologies of intermedial

which is important to bear in mind when I move into the analysis of Mehldau's musical work. Whereas musical ekphrasis, at least according to Bruhn, 'narrates or paints a fictional reality created by *an artist other than the composer* of the music,' in the case of programme music it is the composer who creates the fictional reality.<sup>55</sup> This particular view rules out *Highway Rider* as a possible musical ekphrasis. At the same time musical ekphrasis and programme music can generate the same effect, namely to conjure a mental image for the listener of what the music is trying to describe or depict. This will hopefully be clear in the analysis. In such cases it might be better to speak of the more general concept of media transformation unless, of course, one wants to make a point of either of the two concepts.

In light of this, there are other ways to 'categorise' the intermedial relations of such a work. Within the field of musical representation, a musical work may sometimes either be categorised as an intra- or extracompositional intermedial work.<sup>56</sup> Intracompositional intermediality most often occurs as implicit references or intermedial imitations. This is the case with programme music and means that the sign referred to within the musical structure must carry some degree of iconicity.<sup>57</sup> Extracompositional intermediality deals with so-called transmedial semiotic structures within the musical structure, such as narrative and description but also genre and style. These two different forms of intermediality can further be specified in the words of literary scholar

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relations of the kind that I have presented here is likely to be considered as hermetically sealed even if the intention was the opposite. One must therefore always ask what is it that is transformed? In the present essay the concept of transmediality seems to be more adequate since it focuses on aspects that can appear in different forms of media whether or not they have been transformed from one medium to another.

55. Siglind Bruhn, *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting* (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2000), 29.

56. For a critical study on representation in music see philosopher Roger Scruton, "Representation in Music," *Philosophy* 51:197 (1976): 273–87. For Scruton, representation is a property 'that does not belong to music,' or to be more specific: 'Anything that we could envisage as a semantic interpretation of music (a theory of "musical truth") would deprive music of precisely the aesthetic aims of which we admire it, turning it instead into a clumsy code,' 274.

57. To show how the various intermedial concepts often overlap in terms of their application, Lund's concept of integrated media, such as intermedial iconicity, is similar to Wolf's variant of intracompositional intermediality, such as intermedial imitations.

Werner Wolf who says, ‘while music is a medium, narrative [as well as description, genre and style] is a “transmedial” semiotic structure that can be realised in many media.’<sup>58</sup> Thus intracompositional features deals with the medium-specific while the extra-compositional features are not medium-specific even though they often coincide. The narrative and description as two transmedial features will be the subject of the next two sections. Before entering these features, however, it is important to emphasise that the concept of transmediality used and defined by Wolf is somewhat different than of media scholar Henry Jenkins’ definition. Jenkins uses the concept in relation to the digital culture as in convergence culture and transmedia storytelling:

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.<sup>59</sup>

Accordingly this is *not* the way I use the concepts of transmediality and narrative in the following essay. Rather, *Highway Rider* is but *one* story, though using different types of media in order to tell that specific story: basic media in terms of sound, words and images; technical media in terms of the recording medium and the material package of the CD; and qualified media in terms of different types of genre. Thus the story is not dispersed across different channels or mediums in the same sense as Jenkins defines the concept of transmedia storytelling.

### Description and Function of Reference

To say that description is a transmedial phenomenon means that it goes beyond verbal media. From a theoretical point of view description simultaneously shares elements with narrative and opposes it.<sup>60</sup> As Wolf writes:

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58. Werner Wolf, “Music and Narrative,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 324.

59. Henry Jenkins, “Transmedia Storytelling and Entertainment: An Annotated Syllabus,” *Continuum: Journal of Media & Culture Studies* 24:6 (2010): 944.

60. Werner Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation: General

Description [...] has obviously a referential function, but employs reference in a special way which permits the identification of the object or phenomenon that is meant.<sup>61</sup>

What is at stake here, among other things, are the content-related features in descriptions as opposed to the narrative, that is, whether there are typical contents or objects in descriptions compared to the narrative. Both description and narrative can be real and fictional, and both focus on concrete phenomena. Yet there are some content-related features that clearly lie outside the domain of the descriptive, such as ‘the motivated action, notably the overcoming of an obstacle and the transgression of borders, morals and otherwise.’<sup>62</sup> The motivated action is closely related to causality and teleology, which leads to specific actions or decisions.<sup>63</sup> I will further outline this definition in the next section when I discuss narrativity in music; for the moment it is enough to bear this difference in mind, and to realise that description and narrative are two transmedial semiotic features that, from a methodological point of view, must be dealt with separately.

Since music *seems* to be the least hetero-referential medium when compared to poetry, literature and painting, so this must also be the case for musical description. As a primarily *self*-referential medium one may ask, as Wolf does, what a ‘theme with variations’ might describe – if anything at all.<sup>64</sup> Mehldau’s work deals with this aspect, which makes asking the question particularly interesting and important.<sup>65</sup> The question needs a

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Features and Possibilities of Realization in Painting, Fiction and Music,” in *Description in Literature and Other Media*, ed. Werner Wolf et al. Studies in Intermediality 2 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 5.

61. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 13.

62. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 25.

63. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 24.

64. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 59. ‘Seems to’ is a relative concept since it depends on the type or genre of music. Furthermore, compared to abstract expressionism or action painting, for instance, instrumental music – jazz or otherwise – are no more or less hetero-referential.

65. As will be clear further on in this essay, Mehldau uses a two-part melody that, in various ways, connects the individual compositions in the work to create a sense of coher-

somewhat lengthy detour through a number of theories and methods to get a satisfactory answer. From a historical point of view there are several examples of instrumental music that have a descriptive quality. The quarrel between the advocates of programme music and the symphonic poem and those who discarded this kind of music during the 19<sup>th</sup> century shows that the content-related problem that Wolf theorises was an issue during the time when programme music as a concept emerged. One example of this quarrel is evident in musicologist Carl Dahlhaus' *Esthetics of Music* (1982):

The defence of program music in Karl Franz Brendel's challenging thesis that the symphonic program is the outcome and higher stage of the symphony, set forth in his *Geschichte der Musik*, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, 1867, p. 643, depends on Hegel's esthetics, with its scheme of philosophy of history.<sup>66</sup>

Proponents of programme music saw it as a historical necessity whereas the critics saw it as empirically impossible. Here is not the time to discuss this quarrel in historical terms. Rather, it is the theoretical aspects that I want to emphasise. When Dahlhaus wrote, 'to think that a program is the meaning of a symphonic poem, that the program could decode the music, as if it were a text to cipher,' he stated that this should be regarded as a misunderstanding.<sup>67</sup> From a theoretical point of view the term *content* must therefore be discussed since this sometimes designates 'a subject that exists outside music, at other times an ingredient of the musical work itself.'<sup>68</sup> It is a mistake, Dahlhaus continued, to 'think that Liszt translated poems into music – that he tried to say in another language the same thing as the original text.' It is quite the opposite: 'a subject is no model to be

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ence or unity; it is a theme with variations that has a certain narrative quality in that it gives the listener an experience of something that develops through time. However, as I also will put forward, the descriptive aspects of the music is dependent on the external references rather than the internal.

66. Carl Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 57.

67. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 59.

68. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 59.

imitated but rather a sort of material that the composer elaborates.<sup>69</sup> The content thus emerges *in* the music when the sounding tones and the subject interact.<sup>70</sup> Though the aesthetic aspects should not be confused with the formal features in music analysis, it does say something about the complexities of which will be discussed, namely what counts as musical description on the one hand and musical narrative on the other hand. This needs some clarification.

One way to offer an answer to the question of qualification is through the concept of iconicity as a type of intracompositional intermediality. This, though, might appear a bit confusing, since description as a trans-medial phenomenon belongs to the extracompositional intermediality. However, with regards to Dahlhaus' discussion on the term content – that it can refer to a subject that exists outside music and/or as an ingredient of the musical work itself – it actually makes sense: the content of programme music, I would say, can be both intra- and extracompositional at the same time due to *what* the music describes and *how* it describes it. This conclusion can be interpreted as an implicit criticism of Wolf's distinction between intra- and extracompositional intermediality since it seems to be collapsing into the *sources* of characteristics that become part of the signifying practice. I thus suggest that the two types of intermediality should be understood and used as theoretical tools for interpretation rather than as a description of how the specific media characteristics appear to the recipient.

Wolf differentiates between three types of iconicity that might be helpful for further discussions and for the music analysis as such: *sensory iconicity*, or a variant of this type called *aural mimicry*, meaning imitations of sounds; *diagrammatic iconicity*, such as illustrations of a sunrise by melodies that rises from low to high; *metaphoric illustrations*, or *metaphoric*

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69. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 59.

70. With regards to the discussion on the relationship between musical ekphrasis and programme music, Liszt composed different symphonic poems that could be categorised as either ekphrastic or only representational. For instance, his *Les Préludes* (1848) whose title refers to a text by Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869) is actually a text that had been added onto and after the music was conceived.



*iconicity*, such as high, low, fast, slow, etc.<sup>71</sup> Here it appears somewhat confusing to describe the first type of iconicity as sensory. In my view all are sensorial; they are attributed to what Elleström would consider variations of sensory modality. They are material signs, constituting sound phenomena perceived by our sense of hearing. In defence of Wolf however one can understand what he terms as sensory iconicity in music *only* referring to extra-musical *sounds* and not extra-musical visual impressions or feelings of various kinds – even though these latter types also are sensorial. To clarify my point: it is less about the signifier (expression), such as melody, harmony, rhythm, etc., and more about the signified (content), that is to say, what is being described or referred to – in this case sounds imitating sounds.

Wolf's types of iconicity can be further supplemented and to some extent also qualified with Elleström who makes a differentiation between four types of iconicity. These include *metaphor*, which refers to a relationship between sign and the object via a single common feature, such as low tones representing darkness and which corresponds to Wolf's metaphoric iconicity; *weak diagram*, which refers to a set of signs with internal relationships that *in stylized form* reflect the object's internal relationships, like imitations of extra-musical sounds and which corresponds to Wolf's sensory iconicity; *strong diagram*, which means a set of signs with internal relationships that reflects the object's internal relation *in detail*; and, finally, *image* in which the sign has an greatly developed and full spatial similarity with the object.<sup>72</sup> First of all, these four types should be regarded as degrees of iconicity. Secondly, as far as I am concerned, the last two rarely exist in instrumental music and therefore will not be discussed further in this essay. In addition to these types of iconicity, Elleström speaks of complex cognitive signs that only exist as meaning.<sup>73</sup> The cognitive signs are what the recipient makes when apprehended by the sign(s) in question.

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71. Wolf, "Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation," 62–63.

72. Lars Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik: En intermedial och semiotisk undersökning med speciellt fokus på svenskspråkig lyrik från sent 1900-tal* (Stockholm: Gidlunds Förlag, 2011), 58.

73. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 58.

Therefore it is worthwhile to be reminded that the concept of iconicity belongs to the category of semiotic modality but also, as Elleström points out, that the semiotic is both grounded in sensory and includes cognition.<sup>74</sup>

However these types of iconicity should not be regarded as *already* descriptive. Rather, description ‘also requires attributions that specify some concrete object and [that goes] beyond mere identification.’<sup>75</sup> To illustrate this point Wolf discusses how composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949) in his symphonic poem *Eine Alpensinfonie* (1915) used a ‘simple narrative outline as a framework into which several descriptive scenes are set.’<sup>76</sup> The main questions that should be asked, besides the fact that the second type of intermediality (extracompositional intermediality) has now been presented, are what activates such a narrative framework or ‘cognitive frame,’ and how to recognise a musical description. The narrative and descriptive programme, which means using the medium of words and sometimes images in the framing of the music, such as the paratextual context, offers *one* way into this recognition.<sup>77</sup> I will continue pondering these questions both in the chapter of the material traces of *Highway Rider* and in the discussion on narrativity followed by a discussion of the concept of paratext, thereby drawing attention to the issue of activating such a cognitive frame.

### Narrativity in Music

As it should be clear by now, the distinction between musical descriptions and musical narrative is not as obvious as one might think. According to Wolf, the minimal criteria for a musical composition to be classified as a narrative is whether it shows the presence of a teleological trajectory with a motivated ending and whether it suggests the presence ‘of one experiencing character in an intracompositional possible world.’<sup>78</sup> Narratology, the theory and study of narrative, is most often associated with literary studies

74. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 57.

75. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 65.

76. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 66.

77. There are of course other ways into such a recognition, like stylistic intertextual relationships or personal (social) everyday experiences.

78. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 70.

and thereby with verbal language. However, this is something that in recent decades has been questioned more and more and further causes one to question what a narrative is in first place. In order to discuss whether *music*, particularly *instrumental* music, can be a narrative in the 'same' way as a novel, there must be some kind of agreement on what a narrative might mean in the first place. This agreement is both critical and pragmatic. It is about finding useful tools that realise any purpose better than competing descriptions, and if this means that the concept of a narrative must be revised when applied to music with the purpose of understanding the semantic content of a specific musical work one should do just that.<sup>79</sup> This is the general purpose of the following discussion.

In the introduction to *Narrative Across Media*, literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan says that '[t]he nature of narrative and its relation to language can be conceived in three ways': 1) as a verbal phenomenon; 2) as a language-based form; and 3) as a medium-independent phenomenon.<sup>80</sup> She argues that the definition of narrative should be seen as degrees of narrativity, and furthermore she distinguishes between being a narrative and possessing narrativity, which means that the definition of narrative should not be understood purely as a verbal phenomenon. The difference between narrative and narrativity is that the former 'is an acknowledged story' while the latter 'is the dynamic principle, the teleological impulse'<sup>81</sup> through which the story is presented by the author and interpreted by the reader. In this way, instrumental music may very well be analysed through the concept of narrative. Furthermore, Wolf defines narrative 'as a cognitive frame that can inform a plurality of *signifying practices* in order to meaningfully represent, and make sense of, temporal experience.'<sup>82</sup> Musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez also discusses the concept of narrativity when he confronts the question about whether music can narrate at all, saying that '[i]n contradic-

79. See Richard Rorty's approach to pragmatism in his *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin, 1999), 27.

80. Marie-Laure Ryan, introduction to *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*, ed. Marie-Laure Ryan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 15.

81. Lawrence Kramer, "Musical Narratology: A Theoretical Outline," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 143–144.

82. Wolf, "Music and Narrative," 324.

tion to human language, musical discourse does not strive to convey conceptually clear, logically articulated messages.<sup>83</sup> In comparison to verbal language, when listening to a piece of music as a narrative, Nattiez says that one needs to know the title of the work or some kind of verbal information 'in order to approach the work with the intention of hearing it as a narrative.'<sup>84</sup> If the composer has chosen to write a musical piece with 'explicitly literary titles, this must be because [he has] confidence in music's semantic possibilities.'<sup>85</sup> These are what one might describe as paratextual clues to a specific intermedial understanding. Nattiez further argues and concludes that '[m]usic is not a narrative, but an incitement to make a narrative, to comment, to analyze.'<sup>86</sup> This brings two specific questions to the surface, both of which are seldom raised and bring us to the act of interpretation: First of all, *where* does one find the hermeneutic motivation to understand a specific piece of music as a narrative? Second, *where* does the story/narrative take place? Is it in the mind of the reader/listener, in the music, in the written text that accompanies the music, or somewhere *else*?

Within the context of intermediality, the relationship between music and narrative involving instrumental music can be understood in different ways; either, according to Wolf, as a 'borderline case lying somewhere between partial intermedial transpositions and intermedial references,' or 'where a narrative programme has been invented for the purpose, [as an intermedial reference] to an imaginary narrative script.'<sup>87</sup> For *Highway Rider*, there are specific clues that one can find to categorise it as containing intermedial references. To begin with, narrative script means that the text 1) creates a world and populates it with characters; 2) the world re-

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83. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 127. See also Steven Paul Scher, "Melopoeitics Revisited: Reflections on Theorizing Word and Music Studies," in *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field*, ed. Walter Bernhart et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 9–24. Scher brings the same issue to the surface in his article.

84. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 127.

85. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 127. See also Nattiez, "Can One Speak of Narrativity in Music?" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 115:2 (1990): 243.

86. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 128.

87. Wolf, "Music and Narrative," 326.

ferred to by the text must undergo changes of state, which creates a temporal dimension; and 3) the text must allow the reconstruction of an interpretative network of goals, plans, causal relations, and psychological motivations around the narrative event.<sup>88</sup> However, when it comes to instrumental music, this is where the narrative script seems to be problematic. Music does not seem to be narrative in this respect but rather *possess narrativity* and thereby *evokes* the semantic content of such a narrative script.<sup>89</sup> In one sense, this evocation correlates to Nattiez's idea that music through its paratextual clues functions as an incitement to make a narrative.

Moreover, there is another mode of expression, which lies somewhere between description and narrative: music as *drama*. In his article "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," philosopher Jerrold Levinson proposes this as an alternative way to understand an instrumental musical work.<sup>90</sup> Levinson begins by asking the same question as Nattiez and, in terms of answering the question, he differentiates between two types of musical narratives – events that are musical or events that are non-musical:

In other words, one possibility is that music somehow tells a tale of musical events, such as the inversion of a motive, or the arrival of the cadence, or a modulation from B-flat to E-flat. Another is that music somehow tells a tale of non-musical events. Presumably the narratives of interest in music are of the second kind.<sup>91</sup>

With the second type of narrative Levinson suggests a number of possible objects like gestures, actions, expressions and mental states.<sup>92</sup> By musical

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88. Ryan, introduction, 8–9.

89. Ryan, introduction, 9.

90. Jerrold Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," *Mind & Language* 19:4 (2004): 428–441.

91. Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," 429–430.

92. Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," 431. Whether this means that instrumental music can imitate or depict these possible objects depends on cultural conventions or available information like titles. Levinson argues that these objects are suggested rather than represented, which restrict the concept of representation to something other than what I have in mind. I use the concept of representation in line with Elleström,

drama he means that a piece of instrumental music can ‘be assimilated to a play, and thus seen to have an essentially *dramatic character* rather than assimilated to a narrative form like the novel.’<sup>93</sup> With reference to musicologist Fred Everett Maus, Levinson says that ‘[m]usic is [...] “a kind of drama that lacks determinate characters”’.<sup>94</sup> This means that the features that are present in a play, such as the actions of fictional characters, are actions ‘experienced as occurring as they are perceived, and which form a plot, or at least, make some kind of sense as a whole.’<sup>95</sup> In the next section I will move closer to answer the questions of what activates the narrative framework, how to recognise a musical description, and where to find a hermeneutic motivation in order to understand the music as a possible narrative and/or drama.

### The Function of the Paratext

There are two levels of materiality in Mehldau’s *Highway Rider*. There are the acoustic material traces, which will be discussed in the next section. This materiality is most often manifested in the transcription but also in the recording. Then there are the materialities that are enabled by the specific package of the work in question. The package is part of the work, but must be dealt with separately before the analysis of the material traces. The theoretical and methodological framework for my description is literary scholar Gérard Genette’s *Paratexts: Thresholds to Interpretation* (1997).<sup>96</sup> The narrative and, in certain sense, the descriptive frameworks mentioned belong to this second level of materiality. Although Genette’s approach is

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which is something that ‘involves the process of realizing media content through technical media.’ See Lars Elleström, “Adaptation within the field of media transformation,” in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, ed. Jørgen Bruhn et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 116. See also Scruton, “Representation in Music.”

93. Levinson, “Music as Narrative and Music as Drama,” 433.

94. Levinson, “Music as Narrative and Music as Drama,” 433. This is a quotation from Fred Everett Maus’ text “Music as Drama,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988): 72.

95. Levinson, “Music as Narrative and Music as Drama,” 433.

96. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds to Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

the materiality of the book, the concept of the paratext also works to help understand the materiality of music. In fact one might even say that the record sleeve imitated the book:

With its colour front sleeve and black-and-white reverse, the resultant LP package mirrored the design layout of the hardback book jacket. It also shared the same dual protective and promotional purposes. The common standard adopted from book jackets was for the title, author and manufacturing company to be outlined on the front sleeve where they would be accompanied by an appropriate synopsis and maybe a photo of the author; and on the spine there would be details of the title and the author in addition to the manufacturer's details.<sup>97</sup>

According to Genette, the paratext 'is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public.'<sup>98</sup> In relation to music and in terms of musical narrative there is an esthetic process that needs to go 'outside' the music to identify what enables the material traces to become music to its listener (I will come back to the esthetic process in detail in the next section).<sup>99</sup> The paratext can either be found in the so-called 'peritext' such as titles, subtitles, intertitles, visual images, etc., or in the 'epitext,' that is, text which is produced outside of the work in interviews, commentary text, websites, etc. These two also

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97. Osborne, *Vinyl*, 164.

98. Genette, *Paratexts*, 1–2.

99. This is not a misspelling of esthetics or aesthetics. Esthetic is a concept that emphasises the recipient's role in the meeting of the musical work. As far as I know it was first used within a musicological context by semiologist Jean Molino in his text "Musical Fact and the Semiology of Music," *Music Analysis* 9:2 (1990): 113–156, first published in French 1975, and translated into English in 1990 by J. A. Underwood (Molino however refers to Paul Valéry who already in 1945 introduced the concept; see Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 12). The concept is used in conjunction with two other concepts: the *poietic process*, which emphasises the creative act of the composer, and the *neutral level*, that is, the material traces of the poietic process. These three concepts will be further expanded in my essay, though not in the way Molino uses them, but rather as Jean-Jacques Nattiez applies them. See section "Semiotic Analysis as a Formal Approach to Music and Some Notes on Musical Meaning" in this essay.

share a *spatial field* of a specific paratext.<sup>100</sup> In relation to music, the epitext is most often verbal and works as a *communicative act* from the sender (the poietic process) to receiver (the esthetic process). As Genette says, ‘the paratextual element is always subordinate to “its” text, and this functionality determines the essence of its appeal and its existence.’<sup>101</sup> This argument is similar to the one I previously put forward on McLuhan’s emphasis on form rather than content – form as a paratextual element does not determine the semantic content but represents an aspect of it. The illocutionary force of this communicative act plays an important role for the receiver. From a methodological perspective, the paratext functions as a threshold for the hermeneutic interpretation. In much the same way as the description of the material traces of the musical object, in relation to both the poietic and the esthetic processes, it is important to describe the status of the paratextual message.<sup>102</sup> A good starting point for the description is to narrow the paratextual context to the following five questions: *Where is the paratext located?* Is it on the sleeve, dust jacket, the website or elsewhere? *When did the paratext appear?* Was it before or after the publication/release? *How did the paratext appear*, that is, in what mode – verbal and/or visual? *How does the situation of communication look like* – who is communicating to whom? *What is the function of the message?* Is it to put the music into a specific cognitive frame or to inform the listener about the influences of the compositional background? One important aspect that emerges through these questions deals with the choice of formats. In detail Genette discusses different book formats such as how a sheet of paper is folded to end up as ‘leaves’ in a book, the specific symbolic power that a series of

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100. Genette, *Paratexts*, 5. In a chapter called “*Off the Record: Some Notes on the Sleeve*,” Symes discusses the record sleeve’s liner notes as a ‘second order of texts,’ which he terms ‘parerga.’ Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 124. Parerga is a concept that Jacques Derrida explores in detail in his text “The Parergon” in which he elaborates with the supplementary to the work in question (ergon). He writes: ‘A *parergon* is against, beside, and above and beyond the ergon, the work accomplished, the accomplishment of the work. It is not incidental; it is connected to and cooperates in its operation from the outside.’ Jacques Derrida, “The Parergon,” *October* 9 (1979): 20. Derrida’s discussion, in turn, is based on Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* (New York: Hafner Press, 1874/1951).

101. Genette, *Paratexts*, 12.

102. Genette, *Paratexts*, 4.



books may contain, the importance of typesetting, etc.<sup>103</sup> These aspects became equally important for the record sleeve with the emergence of the LP record. Though they still are important within the record industries – as both an aesthetic-communicative and commercial aspect of the medium – the emergence of the Internet has made it possible to widen the paratextual context:

[T]he newer forms of CD are equipped with more extensive and complex forms of paratext, most of which are *on* the record. Moreover, this paratext is seemingly without boundaries, temporal or spatial, and it provides portals to a superabundance of sound and music, to an almost infinitely extended *record* of records.<sup>104</sup>

So, how does this form of paratext work? And moreover what is its purpose? In its unplayed state, the ‘semiotic of the record [...] has made an exigency of textual supplementation.’<sup>105</sup> Its function, besides the obvious protective side, is to provide information about the record. It is part of what Symes calls a ‘narrative architecture,’ and thus becomes an important aspect in the listening process and in the production of musical meaning.<sup>106</sup> The paratextual function is obviously different if it concerns a non-bottle-like recording. In the present study the focus is the CD.

### Semiotic Analysis as a Formal Approach to Music and Some Notes on Musical Meaning

The semiotics of the record in its unplayed state is of course something other than musical semiotics, though they belong to the same paratextual context. They both deal with signs and sign systems. In the following I will discuss one way of formally approaching music; by this I mean the kind of analysis which Cook defines as ‘coding music into symbols and deducing

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103. Genette, *Paratexts*, 17.

104. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 251–252.

105. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 88.

106. Symes, *Setting the Record Straight*, 89.

the musical structure from the pattern these symbols make.<sup>107</sup> However a formal approach can take different paths depending both on the character of the musical work in question and the specific purpose of the analysis. Semiotic analysis is thus one way to analyse music formally, as it deals with the study of signs and their meanings. Cook describes his methodological approach to semiotic analysis as ‘first, chopping [the music] up into units possessing some degree of significance within the piece; and second, analyzing the way in which these are distributed throughout the piece, with a view to discovering the principles that govern this distribution.’<sup>108</sup> Furthermore, compared to other formal approaches to music, such as set-theoretical or Schenkerian analysis, ‘semiotic analysts have closer links with fields of study outside music.’<sup>109</sup> This will be quite apparent in the analysis in which formal and structural aspects merge with cultural aspects. The formal approach to Mehldau’s work is more or less based on Cook’s method of ‘chopping up the music into units,’ which possesses some significance within the piece. However, the specific purpose goes beyond this. I will try to show how the musical units are aligned to *non-musical* features, like the aforementioned transmedial concepts of narrative, description and drama to thereby interpret the semantic content of the work. Therefore I will outline one way to approach music formally, starting with a discussion about the sign. However, the procedure of selecting musical units from *Highway Rider* and the description thereof will be specified in the analysis of the second level of materiality below.

Applying semiotic analysis to instrumental music is complex. To begin with, what is a sign? According to Ferdinand de Saussure, a sign consists of a sound-image called a signifier or expression and a concept called signified or content. The sound-image is ‘the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses,’ whereas the content is an abstract entity.<sup>110</sup> Nattiez, among others, criticises Saussure’s definition

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107. Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 116.

108. Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, 151.

109. Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, 151.

110. Saussure quoted in Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 4. The passage in its entirety reads: ‘The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-im-

for being too static, that its value occurs within a system ‘by opposition to and difference from other signs in the same system.’<sup>111</sup> Instead, he takes his starting point in Charles Sanders Peirce’s so-called semiological tripartition of representamen, object and interpretant, and develops a theoretical framework for music analysis. Sometimes, though, representamen and object are replaced by Saussure’s two concepts of signifier and signified, where the interpretant is the sign that unites these two terms (or the effect the sign has on the recipient). I will primarily use the concepts of signifier and signified in the respect. Furthermore the interpretant may function as a representamen for a new sign.<sup>112</sup> Elleström further qualifies Peirce’s theory by saying that ‘signs are always being created and occurs in the interpreter,’ and that a sign has external as well as internal aspects that are also defined as signs.<sup>113</sup> Elleström takes notice of how Peirce ‘describes the relationship between the external and the internal as to “representamen,” the external sign, “addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates [Peirce] call the *interpretant* of the first sign”.’<sup>114</sup> This is in line with how Nattiez seems to understand Peirce, namely the idea that the ‘thing to which the sign refers is [...] contained within the *lived experience* of the sign’s users.’<sup>115</sup> Closely related to this idea lies the concept of meaning, and here I quote Nattiez’s general definition of meaning:

An object of any kind takes on meaning for an individual apprehending that object, as soon as that individual places the object in relation to areas

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age. The latter is not the material sound, purely physical thing, but the psychological imprint of the sound, the impression that it makes on our senses. The sound-image is sensory, and if I happen to call it “material” it is only in that sense, and by way of opposing it to the other term of the association, the concept, which is generally more abstract,’ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistic* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 67.

111. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 5.

112. Robert Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony: A Study in Musical Semiotics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 4. See also Raymond Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Chur: Harvard Academic 1992), 193–219.

113. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 55. My translation.

114. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 55.

115. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 7–8.

of his lived experience – that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experience of the world.<sup>116</sup>

By object Nattiez means any words, concepts, concrete or abstract things, individual behaviours and social facts. This means that the sign in question may take on different meanings depending on the individual's lived experience. Here it seems appropriate to go back to Elleström's category of complex cognitive signs, which, as I argued, are what the recipient is making when apprehended by the sign(s) in question. This is just another way to put Nattiez' discussion on meaning into the intermedial agenda.

Furthermore, the meaning of an object exists for both the receiver as well as the producer. This is very important for Nattiez's further outlining of the semiology of music and for my analysis. However, before continuing, I want to stress the reason why it is important to discuss the concept of meaning. It deals with a specific idea of what culture is and how to study this culture. I want to place this essay within an *intermedial* music culture, meaning that music as a medium for communication, in one way or another, always relates to other art and media forms; therefore musical meaning is always changing. This is also one reason why I find Nattiez's idea of meaning production useful. Though he never uses the concept of intermediality, his approach for studying music fits well into this *idea* of an intermedial music culture.<sup>117</sup> The claim that musical meaning is changing also questions whether one should either decipher the meaning in music and/

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116. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 9.

117. My interpretation and use of Nattiez' theory can be understood as both erroneous and misguided. I am fully aware of the criticism which individuals such as Raymond Monelle lodged against Nattiez, not to mention his critique that Nattiez gives an impression of 'positivistic rationalism.' This is perhaps most clearly shown in his description of the so-called neutral level (the 'immanent' musical work) in which he seems to ignore the informants. My study has nothing to do with positivistic rationalism. This may be conceived as somewhat contradictory in relation to both Nattiez's theory and the idea of an intermedial music culture. I do have, however, a rather pragmatic approach regarding the use of theories and methodologies. As long as one can motivate one's choice of theoretical framework and show an awareness of the shortcomings of the theories then I would argue that they could be useful for the specific purpose. See Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

or in relation to some kind of extra-musical feature. However, this seems to be the wrong way to respond to such a question in the first place. Even in such cases where music is instrumental and not immediately accompanied by text, it still generates some kind of meaning. In agreement with Cook, I suggest that the question seems to forget the fact that meaning is grounded in communication, and that any analysis of musical meaning must begin within the context which communication takes place.<sup>118</sup> The context may occur both within a general (historical) and specific (listening environment) discourse of music, and take different forms.<sup>119</sup> This also means that the question of musical meaning must start with analysing the possible relevant discourses for communication. The different paratextual contexts discussed in the previous section is one method of motivating the relevant discourse, another is by studying similar works within the same genre.

According to Nattiez, meaning 'is the *constructive* assignment of a web of interpretants to a particular *form*, i.e., meaning is constructed by that assignment.'<sup>120</sup> The assignment is further made either by a producer or a receiver or both. Here he differentiates between: a) a *poietic process*: the process of creation; b) an *esthetic process*: the receiver assigning one or many meanings to the form, and c) a *trace*: the symbolic form embodied in a physicality and materiality 'accessible to the five senses.'<sup>121</sup> Again I find it

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<sup>118</sup> Nicholas Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 261.

<sup>119</sup> One could, of course, term the historical as a diachronic perspective and the specific listening environment as a synchronic perspective. However, this would require a more detailed exploration of what these concepts imply in intermedial terms. When Elleström makes use of these two concepts they are framed within different types of intermedial relations (media transformation and combined and integrated media). I would say that this use is somewhat problematic since the equivalence of the diachronic with media transformation rules out the historical perspective. Lehtonen, as we have seen, makes use of horizontal and vertical intertextualities transgressing media boundaries. In Lehtonen's view, the horizontal deals with transformations of different kinds whereas the vertical deals with combinations of different kinds. What is important, though, is that Lehtonen's use includes historical and societal processes, which are more sympathetic in character. See Elleström, *Media Transformation* and Lehtonen, "On No Man's Land."

<sup>120</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 11.

<sup>121</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 12. In my study, I limit the senses to the study of

appropriate to reconnect with the section on intermediality and transmediality and relate Nattiez's discussion of the symbolic form to Elleström's discussion on the concept of the medium.<sup>122</sup> Elleström's aim was to provide a theoretical framework which would explain and describe how different media are related to each other. For Elleström it is important that the materiality of the specific medium cannot be distinguished from the perception of it – thus the connection to Nattiez's discussion of the symbolic form embodied in a materiality accessible to the five senses. The symbolic form of the material modality, I would argue, should here be equated with Elleström's categories of material, sensorial, spatiotemporal and semiotic modality.<sup>123</sup> However what seems to be missing in Elleström's model is the poietic process of the trace; to make a proper analysis, the creative process must be considered in one way or another.<sup>124</sup> In Chapter 3 I will deal with the creative process behind Mehldau's musical work.

Nattiez calls the trace (the symbolic form embodied in materiality) the neutral level since it is the result from the poietic process.<sup>125</sup> This tripartition forms the semiological programme for analysing music. Though semiology is not, as Nattiez clearly states, the sciences of communication, the symbolic form (the neutral level), the process of creation (the poietic process), and the point of departure in the process of reception (the esthetic process), fit neatly into a communicative framework for a music analysis. Cook's view on how musical meaning is produced, for instance, makes this evident. In light of this Nattiez asks how to reconcile 'hermeneutic description, the analysis of the neutral level, and a material trace, with the web of interpretants' on music.<sup>126</sup> He suggests that the different dimensions (or levels) should be kept separated when analysing music. The analysis of

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sight and hearing.

122. Elleström, "The Modalities of Media," 11–48.

123. Elleström, "The Modalities of Media," 14–22.

124. I am quite aware of the problematic aspect of the intention of the work, which is not always possible to detect. See section "The Study of Language about Music: Subjectivity and the Implied Listener."

125. The description of the neutral level is nothing but neutral. See Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 4–5; 9–10.

126. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 28.

the neutral level is descriptive whereas the poietic and the esthetic analysis are explicatory. To conclude: the purpose of studying music semiotically is to show ‘the existence of music as a “symbolic form”,’<sup>127</sup> and to show that these symbols demand interpretation in a strong hermeneutic sense, meaning that the knowledge which the interpretation is based upon expect to be ‘transformed in being used.’<sup>128</sup>

Furthermore, Nattiez argues, it is important to have some agreement on how to define music. Music is neither reducible to the physical mode of existence nor to a mode of being. Rather, ‘there is no analysis except that which is *written*, that to which has material presence,’ which means that “the work exists at the horizon of all its possible rewritings”.<sup>129</sup> From this he concludes that the work’s being is located somewhere between ‘its symbolic components’: ‘as a total musical fact; as poietic strategies, a resultant trace, and esthetic strategies unleashed by that trace.’<sup>130</sup> Now, the reason why I am discussing the concept of music has to do with the specific musical piece to be analysed. Mehldau’s *Highway Rider* is placed between strict composition and improvisation, which may cause problems for the analytical perspective – at least if the quotation below becomes the departing point for the analysis:

[T]he thing that ensues from the composer’s creative act is the score; the score is the thing that renders the work performable and recognizable as an entity.<sup>131</sup>

Yet what about music that is *not* manifested as a score: Where does the poietic process end, and where does the esthetic process begin in the case of Mehldau’s *Highway Rider*? One answer may be found in the completion of the *performance*. This answer, however, requires further questions such

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127. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 34.

128. Lawrence Kramer, “Hermeneutics,” in *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 2. See Arvidson, “The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies,” 26.

129. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 70.

130. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 70.

131. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 71.

as what *kind* of performance is to be analysed: Is it a live performance, a recorded live performance or simply a recorded performance? These issues are of particular importance for the analysis that follows in Chapter 4, “Analysis of Two Levels of Materiality,” and something I will discuss in detail in the last chapter.

The semiology of interpretation involves many symbolic forms, such as the musician and the conductor. The conductor’s realisations of the music, e.g., are symbolic forms in themselves and are thus also a subject to semiological analysis. In the case of *Highway Rider*, Mehldau himself is located on both sides of the poietic and the esthetic process – as both the creator (composer) and the interpreter (musician).<sup>132</sup> So, the question that needs to be asked according to Nattiez is ‘what status [should one] assign to the score in semiological analysis?’<sup>133</sup> He suggests that even in improvisation ‘the song remains recognizable,’ and can thus ‘still be identified despite the depredations of memory.’<sup>134</sup> This is certainly the case with some improvisations, but clearly not all of them. So, the question that needs to be asked in this context is: What model of analysis should be assigned to Mehldau’s music? The neutral level of improvised music could very well be regarded as ‘legitimate in its own right’ as the analysis of composed music. In addition, the model must consider one or different *kinds* of performances. This will partly be discussed in the next section.

### Music and Multimodal Metaphor

In his text “Theorizing Musical Meaning” (2001), Cook puts forward a model for studying how musical meaning is constructed that is linked to Nattiez’s analysis of the neutral level. He turns to the study of material culture in order to show how ‘clumsy’ and ‘obtuse’ linguistic description is of different objects similar in shape and further how such a view runs a ‘parallel with the widespread intuition that music [...] resists comprehen-

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132. Likewise, the conductor Dan Coleman plays a central role for the esthetic process.

133. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 78.

134. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 88.



sive verbal formulation.<sup>135</sup> Studying material culture might in fact provide a useful model for understanding how musical meaning is produced. Cook begins by arguing that the meaning of the material object is socially, though not arbitrary, constructed:

[A]ny pot or picture has an indefinite, though not infinite, number of physical attributes, and each society makes its own selection and interpretation of those attributes.<sup>136</sup>

It is the selection of attributes that makes the interpretation specific of a culture. There is, however, one important difference between material culture and musical objects. Though the physical objects may be replicated, they have their ‘own independent existence.’ Musical objects, in contrast, are rather instanced by ‘scores, performances, or sound recordings.’<sup>137</sup> As Cook says:

The notational trace represented by the score [...] is supplemented or substituted by the multiple acoustic traces of performances and recordings, each of which manifests its own forms of empirical resistance in both the semiotic process and its analysis.<sup>138</sup>

A musical work should thus be considered as a series of traces. This is important to bear in mind when analysing the concept album *Highway Rider* – no matter what, the analysis of the notational trace depends on an acoustic trace. Cook’s model for understanding how musical meaning is produced is so far only halfway through. In his final stage, he turns yet again to another field of study other than music, namely to theatre studies (a field I have touched upon in the discussion of music as drama although with a different agenda). These studies show how meaning is emergent:

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135. Nicholas Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 23:2 (2001): 178. Cook refers to Roland Barthes’ discussion about the third meaning. I will return to this in Chapter 6, “A Modern Symphonic Poem: A Signifier without a Signified?”

136. Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 178.

137. Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 178.

138. Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 179.

how meaning is negotiated and created through the act of performance on the theatre. Performance thus has an emergent quality, a cluster of semi-otic potentials. The ‘material traces of music,’ he says, ‘support a range of possible meanings.’<sup>139</sup> The material trace, equivalent to Nattiez’s neutral level, should be understood here as something that always invokes both the poietic and the esthetic process.<sup>140</sup>

What should now be discussed in more detail are the ideas of how meaning is negotiated and of its emergent qualities. In *Analysing Musical Multimedia* (1998), Cook outlines a metaphor model for understanding how meaning is produced – primarily between music and (moving) images. The precondition of metaphor as ‘cross-media interaction,’ he says, is ‘an enabling similarity.’<sup>141</sup> This means that music and image have different attributes in common:

The meaning of the metaphor [...] does not lie in the enabling similarity; it lies in what the similarity enables, in which is to say the *transfer of attributes* from one of the metaphor to the other.<sup>142</sup>

The emergence, he further argues, ‘is a defining attribute of multimedia.’<sup>143</sup> He exemplifies this model of how sound and image relate to each other with regards to record sleeves, showing how the construction of a painting (S. A. Mokin’s “Stepan Razin’s Appeal”) on a sleeve is transferred to the music (Tchaikovsky’s Second Symphony). The small, repetitive units in the painting are similar to the repetitive units in the music. However, similarity in itself does not mean transference; it is rather how music and image are juxtaposed: ‘It is the *effect* of drawing attention to the properties they share, and in this way constructing a *new* experience of each: the interpretation is in this sense *emergent*.’<sup>144</sup> This can be further specified. In a number of studies, musicologist Lawrence Zbikowski has explored the

139. Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 179.

140. Cook, “Theorizing Musical Meaning,” 181.

141. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 70.

142. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 70.

143. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 70.

144. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 73. My emphasis.

concept of multimodal metaphor from the perspective of so-called cross-domain mapping between music and text. Here I will only briefly touch upon the main aspects of this type of metaphor. Put in relation to Cook's theory of similarity shown above, Zbikowski argues that the relation between music and language is 'borne out by similarities between the two.'<sup>145</sup> Both unfold in time; both have syntactic properties; and both make use of sound. However, they also bring forward differences: music is less precise, and often involves simultaneous events. That is, music most often consists of melodies that co-exists and which unfolds in time (like in a Bach fugue), whereas the differences suggest that music and language:

... belong to two different conceptual domains, [the similarity] suggest that language and music recruit some of the same cognitive resources, and that structure from one domain may be readily mapped to the other to create meaning.<sup>146</sup>

This reasoning is similar to Cook's (see above), but their examples differ. Zbikowski explores the relation between music and words in Palestrina's *Pope Marcellus Mass* (printed 1567), showing how the specific word 'descendit' corresponds to a descending melody:

Christ's descent from heaven is thus represented with a cascading fall through the musical space, a series of overlapping movements 'down' the musical scale.<sup>147</sup>

According to Zbikowski this is a typical product of cross-domain mapping which relies on pitch relationships. The kind of metaphorical descriptions that appear in the quotation are not unusual. In my analysis, this becomes quite clear through the use of musical descriptions (spatial metaphors) like 'make room,' 'climb up, down or beyond.' The metaphors are preceded by descriptions of pitch relationships and describe the effect it gives the lis-

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145. Lawrence Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," in *Multimodal Metaphor*, ed. Charles Forceville et al. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 360.

146. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 360.

147. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 360.

tener when paired with the narrative script and titles. I would suggest that the metaphor model provided by both Zbikowski and Cook further qualifies the use of Wolf and Elleström's theory of iconic relationships. For instance, when there is a semblance between the music and the semantic content of sung words, there emerge in Zbikowski's words a sonic analogue<sup>148</sup> which corresponds to the concepts of metaphoric iconicity and/or metaphor of Wolf and Elleström.

Cross-domain mapping deals not only with the relationship between music and words, such as in a song, it can also be about how titles are related to instrumental music,<sup>149</sup> and how images and verbal narratives (poems, novels, etc.) relate to music by way of their intermedial relationships (whether combined, integrated or transformed). Moreover, the mapping between music and language will show both similarities and differences. Language tends to 'focus on objects (real or imagined) and relations between objects [whereas music] does not tend to be involved with the rich symbolic systems typical of language.'<sup>150</sup> When mapping occurs from language to music it tends to 'focus on static aspects of the musical domain,' but when the opposite mapping occurs it tends to 'draw out the dynamic aspects of the domain of language.'<sup>151</sup> Normally, metaphors have a specific directionality which means that they move from one source domain to another target domain (from language to music or music to language). This is not the case of cross-domain mapping; as Zbikowski writes, the directionality will rather 'take on an added dimension.'<sup>152</sup> Both domains thus 'contribute more or less equally to the process of meaning production.'<sup>153</sup> It is this reciprocal relationship that both Zbikowski and Cook stress in their models, and which makes them relevant for my study. In their respective studies both also discuss the idea of so-called conceptual blending to show how meaning is produced/performed. The main difference between them is their choice of examples. Cook mainly focuses on the relationship

148. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 365.

149. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 367–368.

150. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 364.

151. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 364.

152. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 369.

153. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 370.

between music and (moving) images, such as in films and commercials but also occasionally with record sleeves and instrumental music. Meanwhile Zbikowski focuses on music and text in songs. In this sense, my study differs in that I will study how music relates to both still image *and* words, and furthermore how these basic media relate to each other and to the qualified media in question: the music is instrumental; the words related to the music comes from the different titles and the narrative script; and the image related to the music comes from the front cover of the record sleeve.

Finally, the idea of cross-domain mapping can further shed some lights on how the neutral level/material trace can be understood within the metaphorical distinction/relationship between ‘seeing’ and ‘seeing-as’ put forward by philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (the classic duck/rabbit image) and developed by others.<sup>154</sup> As musicologist Michael Spitzer says, the relationship between seeing and seeing-as deals with ‘the relationship between the material trace [...], and the image in the imagination of the viewer.’<sup>155</sup> Within the framework of music and multimodal metaphor one could say that the material trace (the drawing of the duck/rabbit, or the musical score, performance, recording) and the image in the imagination of the *listener* supports a range of possible meanings by way of how the emergent qualities appears in ‘hearing-as.’ The meaning appears in the transfer between these two metaphors – a title or image to a piece of music may function as a trigger to hearing-as in which meaning emerges through and by what the similarity enables. Spitzer writes: ‘Our understanding of music is permeated with cross-domain mappings, as witness concepts such as “tone painting,” “tone poem,” and “character piece”.’<sup>156</sup> And furthermore, what ‘the musical “picture” happens to represent (if anything) is not the issue. The point is that the metaphor of music as painting predicates a mode of listening, a listening type.’<sup>157</sup> Now, both these last two quotations

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154. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1958), 193–229.

155. Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 9.

156. Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, 11.

157. Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, 11.

make the subsequent analysis particularly interesting. They point to two areas within the study of musicology that have recently been explored, and which this study hopes to contribute new knowledge: 1) How meaning is produced by way of cross-domain mapping and/or intermedial relationships; 2) How different modes of listening are required to understand *Highway Rider* within an intermedial music culture. Both of these questions further emphasise the importance of combining a semiotic and hermeneutic approach to an ecological perspective on musical meaning. In the above-mentioned *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, Cook writes that the idea of emergent meaning can be reformulated as music *affording* meaning to words and/or images, and images and/or words affording meaning to music.<sup>158</sup> Zbikowski draws a similar conclusion when he uses the idea of cross-domain mapping and conceptual blending.<sup>159</sup> I will return to the concepts of affordance and ecological psychology in the last chapter.

To conclude: I find Cook and Zbikowski's metaphor models to be useful complements to Nattiez's semiological tripartition for music analysis. It also shows the importance of taking into account both the poietic and the esthetic processes, as well as the different acoustic traces of the music such as the score and the sound recording as special components of a performance.

### Concluding Remarks: Techniques of Interpretation

The theoretical and methodological framework outlined here does not really mean anything unless one starts using the theories and concepts. From an outside perspective it is relatively easy to describe and explain the intermedial relationships through categorisations of different types. Yet categories in themselves tend to become untouchable truths which are understood as devices that open up the 'truth' behind the work. Since I am dealing with an art form where there is no clear referential force, this makes the performative act of interpretation even more important to consider.

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158. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 96.

159. See Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 203.

The meaning of the material traces is produced in and through the esthetic process. Therefore interpretation does not decipher any meaning already hidden within the immanent musical structure waiting to be found; it is quite the opposite, the receiver produces or performs meaning.<sup>160</sup> However in order to perform this interpretative act and thus show how meaning is produced it is important to learn different techniques. Kramer mentions three types of techniques: *textual inclusion*, *citational inclusion* and *structural tropes*.<sup>161</sup> The first deals with, what I would call, any kind of paratextual relation to the music. These texts ‘invite the interpreter to find meaning.’<sup>162</sup> The second is less explicit than the first, but there is still a link between the music and literary works, images, or other compositions within the same genres or styles. The third is the most implicit and, according to Kramer, ‘the most powerful.’ By structural trope Kramer means ‘structural procedures, capable of various realizations, that also functions as a typical expressive act within a certain cultural/historical framework.’<sup>163</sup> One important aspect that Kramer puts forward in the discussion on structural tropes is that they tend to appear when interpretation is problematical: at certain breaking points in the work, and where gaps appear in the work, etc.<sup>164</sup> This is why different categories and concepts are needed to open up and widen the scope of reflection in the performative act of interpretation. I will not follow Kramer’s techniques in the precise order presented above, but its methodological procedure will be useful. The next chapter will discuss the second type, citational inclusion, and it will focus on the concept of genre, while the other types will be more or less integrated into the analysis of *Highway Rider*.

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160. Lawrence Kramer, “Meaning,” in *Interpreting Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 63–80.

161. Lawrence Kramer, “Tropes and Windows: *An Outline of Musical Hermeneutics*,” in *Music as Cultural Practice 1800–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1990), 9–10.

162. Kramer, “Tropes and Windows,” 9–10.

163. Kramer, “Tropes and Windows,” 10.

164. Kramer, “Tropes and Windows,” 13.

## TWO

### Genre as Semiotic Code: What Kind of Genre is *Highway Rider*?

In order to perform a proper analysis of the acoustic material traces, the musical work must be discussed through the concept of genre. Genre is a cultural and *semiotic* category and works as a ‘generic contract’ between composer and listener, which means that it is part of the whole communicative process: the poietic process, the material trace and the esthetic process.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, the mere knowledge of genre ‘suggests ways of listening.’<sup>166</sup> Genre thus works as a framework that a listener uses, consciously or unconsciously, when constructing meaning; it also implies procedures for the analyst to interpret.<sup>167</sup> However to categorise a piece of music to one specific genre can be a rather complicated procedure. As I will show, different genres might merge into one another creating new types of genres through different kinds of processes: social, economic, historical, technological, etc. Moreover, genres seem to be almost anthropomorphic in nature. The use of ‘biological metaphors,’ such as ‘the birth,’ ‘maturation,’ and ‘death’ of a genre, occurs frequently in descriptions of musical genres.<sup>168</sup> Therefore this chapter will discuss genre from a musical perspective rather than as a transmedial feature. However I will return to this latter feature within the analysis of the first level of materiality in Chapter 4, “Analysis of Two Types of Materiality.”

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165. Samuels, *Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, 92.

166. David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, “Genre,” in *Musicology: The Key Concept* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 72.

167. Beard and Gloag, “Genre,” 72.

168. Franco Fabbri, “How Genres are Born, Change, Die: Conventions, Communities and Diachronic Processes,” in *Critical Musicological Reflections: Essays in Honour of Derek B. Scott*, ed. Stan Hawkins (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 180.



The concept of genre has had different functions throughout history. Within the classical music tradition, for example, ‘there is a gradual change from the eighteenth-century reliance on generic expectations to the state of affairs in the early twentieth century, where an individual work is no longer necessarily related to a general category.’<sup>169</sup> This coincided with a change of the social function of music and the emergence of the so-called autonomy of the artwork.<sup>170</sup> Within the popular music tradition, on the other hand, one might identify two approaches to the study of genre: ‘those grounded in musicology, which identify genre as music sharing distinctive musical characteristics, and accounts that place genre study more firmly in a social context.’<sup>171</sup> Yet genre has also been part of the marketing process.<sup>172</sup> Album covers, for instance, not only help to identify which popular music genre it belongs to, but this is also part of a marketing strategy by way of differentiation – it tells us what it is and is not through its visual and verbal characteristics.<sup>173</sup> However, this is only partly true, as I will show below. The emergence of the so-called song cycle as genre was very much dependent on the marketing processes. Noteworthy, also, is that it is not uncommon to mix the concepts of genre and style. Style is normally reserved to descriptions of ‘manner or mode of expression,’ that is, the formal and internal features of a work.<sup>174</sup> These features are important for the definition of a genre as well. In light of this mix between genre and style, therefore, it is not very surprising that genre identification is sometimes difficult to provide. Mehlau’s *Highway Rider* is a work that cuts across different genres and styles, which encourages the use of some theory in order to ascribe the music to a particular genre. A quick look at different critical reviews in different jazz magazines demonstrates how difficult it is to frame the work

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169. Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, 91.

170. Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, 91. See also Beard and Gloag, “Genre,” 73.

171. Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 95.

172. Beard and Gloag, “Genre,” 73.

173. Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music Culture*, 78–79 and David Machin, *Analyzing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010), 32–57.

174. David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, “Style,” in *Musicology: The Key Concept* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 170.

within a specific genre. Descriptions such as '[t]his is the kind of genre dialogue that gets classical/jazz crossovers a good name';<sup>175</sup> 'this is classically influenced music but it remains jazz with strings';<sup>176</sup> 'this latest effort finds Mehldau deftly mixing virtuosity, compositional fluidity and his trademark romanticism-with-an-edge';<sup>177</sup> 'what's striking is how much the album feels like two disciplines on equal footing';<sup>178</sup> an 'investigation into what used to be called "Third Stream"';<sup>179</sup> and finally, '[t]he closer, "Always Returning," builds to a climax from the cycle. [Joshua] Redman and Mehldau soar with the orchestra before they close it in a whispering tone poem.'<sup>180</sup>

Descriptions such as these show how problematic it might be for both a listener and a music analyst to understand and study the work. In his text "How Genres are Born, Change, Die: Conventions, Communities and Diachronic Processes" (2013), musicologist Franco Fabbri argues that 'no genre theory [...] can be valid if it doesn't take genre formation and diachronic processes into consideration.'<sup>181</sup> Simply put, this means that the birth of a genre depends on the 'establishment of conventions within a community in the "semiotic act" of naming, as well as in the acknowledgement of "family resemblance".'<sup>182</sup> One important notion in this context is that the review descriptions mentioned belong to a specific community, and that they all share norms and specific competence of codes within this community – the jazz community.<sup>183</sup> However, as Fabbri says, this does not mean that 'any code [...] established conventionally, [...] imply that at any

175. John Fordham, "Brad Mehldau: Highway Rider," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2010.

176. Karl Ackermann, "Brad Mehldau: Highway Rider," *All About Jazz*, May 12, 2010.

177. Josef Woodard, "Brad Mehldau," *Jazz Times*, April 9, 2010.

178. Chris Barton, "Album Review: Brad Mehldau's Highway Rider," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 2010.

179. Ted Panken, "Still Evolution: New Jazz Recordings," *Reviews & Essays: Review. Barns and Noble Review*, June 8, 2010.

180. John Kelman, "Extended Analysis of Brad Mehldau: Highway Rider," *All About Jazz*, March 9, 2010.

181. Fabbri, "How Genres are Born, Change, Die," 180.

182. Fabbri, "How Genres are Born, Change, Die," 180.

183. This says something about Mehldau's work, namely that it has mainly been reviewed within the jazz community and, as far as I am aware, not within the classical music community.

point there be a clear agreement, or that the involved parties (or community) shall declare the acceptance of the convention(s).'<sup>184</sup> What these different reviews show is a conventionally established code based partly on agreement, but also a disagreement on what type of genre *Highway Rider* belongs to by way of their semiotic act of naming the work based on stylistic and, to some extent, structural features of the musical work. So, the questions remain, although some clues have been presented: Does the work belong to the genre of third stream or tone poem? Is it jazz or something else? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in between. I will make a point of family resemblance by looking at different types of genre that are highlighted in discussions about *Highway Rider*: song cycle, symphonic poem (tone poem), concept album and third stream. However, these rather disparate genre descriptions do not make it easy to understand the whole work in question. It puts the concept of family resemblance into a somewhat new context by way of asking how the parts (compositions) relate to the whole.

### The Emergence of the Song Cycle and the Symphonic Poem: Structure and Content

As mentioned in the beginning of this essay, *Highway Rider* has a cyclic form (also mentioned in the review). Cycles in the course of music history can be associated with different types of musical forms. Sometimes the cyclic form occurs as a unifying theme in a specific symphony and sometimes it defines a specific genre. Two examples of the cycle as genre are the emergence of the song cycles during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and concept albums during the 1960s and 1970s. Both, I would say, belong to the idea of programme music, though the connection to the concept album might appear a bit far-fetched – at least in historical terms. However, when reading what Philippe André writes about Mehldau's *Elegiac Cycle*, this historical link seems relevant enough to analyse:

Concept albums have appeared several times within Brad Mehldau's discography. One year after "Elegiac Cycle", in 2000, "Places" gravitates

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184. Fabbri, "How Genres are Born, Change, Die," 185.

around the numerous cities visited while on tour. And 10 years later, “Highway Rider” is constructed like a voyage, with its discoveries, its moments of solitude, its chance encounters, from the moment of departure until the return home, transformed by the adventure. Furthermore, Mehldau uses the form of the cycle in each of these three works.<sup>185</sup>

André neither discusses the concept album, the emergence of the song cycle, nor how these two may be connected in historical terms. I will come back to this link in the next section. According to musicologist Laura Tunbridge one must begin with the question as to whether the song cycle really is a genre. For example, compared to the sonata or the symphony the answer is not as simple as it might appear:

It might seem that the order in which individual elements are placed should be honoured, and that only the whole work should be taken into account; but to do so would contradict centuries of performance practice. Similarly, one might expect the group to be connected in some way; perhaps that, as a cycle, beginning and end will conjoin. While there are famous song cycles that do just that, there are others (just as famous) that do not.<sup>186</sup>

In light of this, the structure of the song cycle appears confusing: What is it that connects the individual elements within the cycle? How is the cycle structured? The answers to these questions may be given by the following question: How did the cycle come into being? First of all, the cycle cannot be understood if we do not consider how music was related to words: ‘Its emergence would not have been possible without the lyric poem, one of the central forces of literary Romanticism in the late eighteenth century.’<sup>187</sup> The step from ‘likening poetry to music to endowing music with poetic significance’ was short, according to Tunbridge.<sup>188</sup> The romantic writers

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185. Philippe André, “‘Elegiac Cycle’: A Concept Album,” in *Elegiac Cycle. Brad Mehldau. Transcription Complète Et Analyse Par Philippe André/Complete Transcription & Analysis By Philippe André* (Paris: Outre Mesure, 2011), 10.

186. Laura Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.

187. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 2.

188. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 2.

saw the ‘art of tones’ as something that could convey the inexpressible – they endowed music, particularly *instrumental* music, ‘with power beyond language’s grasp.’<sup>189</sup> This gave music a new status among the other arts during the late eighteenth century even though it still came second to words (poetry). Yet due to social factors, a new musical audience known as the educated middle class started to grow. The Lied arose at the same time. As Tunbridge writes:

This shift necessitated a greater commercial awareness on the part of composers and their publishers, who now needed to advertise their wares in a competitive marketplace. Such commodification of music had a direct impact on the development of the song cycle. Because Lieder [...] were relatively small-scale, they tended to get published in collections. Gradually [...] various terms were borrowed to mark these groupings: *Reihe* (series), *Kranz* (ring), *Zyklus* (cycle) or *Kreis* (circle).<sup>190</sup>

The main purpose with this grouping was to make the music more sellable. The song cycle is therefore considered to be a general term used to describe collections of songs at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, however, another approach developed, namely the interaction between cycles and narrative forms.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, the song cycle was constructed to follow its own internal structure, which means that it had to be coherent. This interaction can also be seen as a historical development of at least four types of cycles. The first type, called ‘topic cycles,’ were ‘based on poems connected by a theme,’ such as wandering, love and death. The second type, called ‘external-plot cycles,’ were a set of songs ‘excerpted from a narrative context.’ The third, called ‘internal-plot cycles,’ were cycles whose ‘poetry entailed a narrative.’ The fourth type is called ‘musically constructed cycles.’<sup>192</sup> The musical coherence within this last type ‘relied on tech-

189. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 2.

190. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 3. See also Ruth O. Bingham, “The early nineteenth-century song cycle,” *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied*, ed. James Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 101.

191. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 3.

192. Bingham, “The early nineteenth-century song cycle,” 104.

niques formally associated with instrumental and *dramatic* genres.<sup>193</sup> These different types show, typically, a historical development from poetry as the primary medium to music as the primary medium within the music-text relationship. But as Tunbridge says, ‘the *idea* has often been more important than whether the cycle itself has a coherent, cyclical structure.’<sup>194</sup>

The difference between Mehldau’s cyclical work and the song cycle is that Mehldau’s music is instrumental. The relationship between the separate pieces in *Highway Rider* is partly embedded somewhere else than *in* the music. This means that the hermeneutic motivation to understand the musical work as a cycle must be localised both in the non-musical features and inside the music at the same time.

Moreover, as instrumental music with a specific (narrative) programme, Mehldau’s work has some common features with the symphonic poem. The symphonic poem, as a genre within the discussion of programme music and in relation to the symphony, might also give us some clues how to define the genre of the work. It emerged from the concert overture during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a ‘single-movement orchestral piece of symphonic dimensions with a program from literature or the beaux arts.’<sup>195</sup> For Richard Wagner (1813–1883), who proclaimed the ‘death of the symphony’ around 1850, he said it was an ‘aesthetically legitimate means of music expression’ and the symphonic poem had to be “substantiated” by the “object” which they represent.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, the criterion for musical meaning according to Wagner was ‘the extent to which [the literary dimension’s] “poetic intention” [was] intelligible to the listener.’<sup>197</sup> Mere illustration was not enough, that is to say, the object represented could ‘not be sought in empirically tangible entities.’<sup>198</sup> As for Franz Liszt (1811–1886), the founding figure of the genre, the symphonic poem came

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193. Bingham, “The early nineteenth-century song cycle,” 115. Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* (1816) is considered the first musically constructed cycle. See Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 5.

194. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 5.

195. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 238.

196. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 237.

197. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 237.

198. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 237.

about as a solution to three problems: how to write a symphony without the traditional formal schema; how to elevate programme music; and how to unite piano pieces with thematic and motivic manipulation.<sup>199</sup>

### Concept Album: A Historically Contingent Cultural Phenomenon

With this short historical rendition on the emergence of the song cycle and the symphonic poem, one might wonder about the status of them during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Tunbridge spoke of the ‘death of the song cycle’ after the Second World War, as well as how the new recording technology, the LP record, transformed the way one listened to the cycles.<sup>200</sup> Also, the proclaimed ‘death of the album’ during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the emergence of the concept album during the late 1960s, raises the question about whether there is some kind of connection between these two genres:

In many ways the history of the concept album replays, in compressed form, previous developments in the song cycle. They share an impulse towards gathering songs, according to ever grander and more complex themes. They also nurture particular performance and listening habits.<sup>201</sup>

There are different definitions of the concept album. The general definition, that it is an ‘album with songs that cohere around a single idea,’ is too vague.<sup>202</sup> This idea could be applied to anything. Another definition that is only slightly different from that definition is ‘an album by either one artist or a group which contains a unifying thread throughout the songs – be it musical, thematic, or both.’<sup>203</sup> A third definition makes a

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199. Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music*, 238.

200. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 143.

201. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 169.

202. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 9.

203. Martina Elicker, “Concept Albums: Song Cycles in Popular Music,” in *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Word and Music Studies at Ann Arbor, MI, 1999, ed. Walter Bernhart et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 229.

point of the recording medium as an important aspect of the genre: ‘an original recorded project that through its thematic, harmonic, timbral and/or sonic materials as well as its lyrical forms (when applicable) can be read as a coalescing around a limited set of ideas.’<sup>204</sup> According to Tunbridge, this third definition could easily be transferred to a definition of the song cycle. The only difference, though an important one, is how the musical ideas are mediated. In this context Tunbridge refers to McLuhan’s formula ‘the medium is the message.’ Culture in its specific form as a historical contingent phenomenon, such as a specific qualified medium, is evident here.<sup>205</sup> This means that the emergence of the LP record as a new technological medium not only made it possible for the inception of the concept album but was also a prerequisite. This does not mean that the connection to the song cycle is diminished. The focus on compositional strategies in concept albums actually reveals similarities to those of the song cycle.<sup>206</sup> To give two examples: Frank Zappa’s album *Freak Out!* (1966), from *The Mothers of Invention*, has a unifying sociological theme in which a ‘sequence of related songs [reveals] itself [as] a literary rather than a musical form.’<sup>207</sup> Another example is Genesis’ 23 minute long composition “Supper’s Ready” (1972), which is a narrative song cycle united by ‘reoccurring musical motives and key relationships.’<sup>208</sup> Besides these similarities there is another link, which I have only touched upon previously – that of marketing strategies. As Tunbridge noted, the commodification of music played an important part on the development of the song cycle. The collections of songs, marked with specific groupings – such as series, rings, cycles and circles – reveals similarities with the commercial aspect of packaging the LP record. Advertising for the record label can be compared with the publisher’s methods of collecting songs. Furthermore, the collection of songs in song cycles were often based on specific poetic topics

204. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 169.

205. See section ‘The Medium is the Message’/‘The Message is in the Medium’ in the introduction.

206. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 170.

207. Marianne Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album: How to Disappear Completely* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 17.

208. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 17–18.



(topic cycles), such as the changes of season; wanderings; and different emotional states – not least ‘themes of love and distant landscapes, and its concern with reminiscence.’<sup>209</sup> These themes, Tunbridge argues, ‘have been transferred into popular music [...] as in the concept albums of the late 1960s and early 1970s.’<sup>210</sup>

Therefore the connection between song cycle and concept album does not seem to be far-fetched at all. At the same time it urges a further discussion about the relationship between these two musical genres. An *album* within the musical context, and not the concept album per se, can be seen as part of the development of its ‘covers as an art form with some creative packaging and the inclusion of supplementary material in releases during the 1960s.’<sup>211</sup> The album cover can be said to have at least three functions: as advertising; as an artistic statement in relation to the style or genre of music; and with liner notes, which ‘functions as a literary and advertising form.’<sup>212</sup> However, in her study “Concept Albums: Song Cycles in Popular Music,” literary scholar Martina Elicker shows how the definition of such an album is quite problematical and ‘difficult to prove.’<sup>213</sup> Most often the term ‘concept’ refers to an idea, thought, or abstract notion which may include all kinds of music, such as the previously mentioned symphonic poem *Eine Alpensinfonie* by Strauss, or different kinds of tribute albums which are normally *not* attributed to concept albums. Perhaps the keyword here is not the concept itself, but rather the *relationship* between concept and cycle. Elicker writes: ‘In the nineteenth century, “a poetic relationship among the songs – be it a narrative design, or a grouping of poems – was basic to the concept of a song cycle”.’<sup>214</sup> Also, as Wolf argues, a cycle ‘in a temporal art, should imply a cyclic movement, in which unity is created by an ending that points back to a beginning.’<sup>215</sup> Thus it is important to

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209. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 20.

210. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 20. See also Roy Shuker, “Albums,” in *Popular Music: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2005), 8.

211. Shuker, “Albums,” 7.

212. Shuker, “Albums,” 7.

213. Elicker, “Concept Albums,” 227.

214. Elicker, “Concept Albums,” 228.

215. Werner Wolf, “‘Willst zu meinen Liedern deine Leier drehn?’ Intermedial Meta-

have a certain conception of the song cycle within the discussion of concept albums, although most often there is no such a pointing back in many song cycles as both Tunbridge and Wolf shows. Wolf even argues that 'there is not even a hermeneutic motivation to see a connection between ending and beginning.'<sup>216</sup> This demonstrates how difficult it is to compose music using non- or extra-musical references within the musical structure that is intelligible to the listener. I will bring this specific issue into the analysis, asking whether one can find such a hermeneutic motivation to make a connection between ending and beginning, that is, what musical unity means and how it is applied to *Highway Rider*.

Shute, finally, makes a distinction between two types of concept albums: *narrative* and *thematic*. Their common feature is the integration of 'non-musical ideas to structure an album.'<sup>217</sup> Some argue that the *intention* to write a concept album must be clear. This excludes some albums that actually have a thematic concept.<sup>218</sup> The difference between narrative and thematic concept albums also makes Wolf's distinction between narrative and descriptive music particularly interesting. It is the non-musical features and how the musical structure relates and integrates those non-musical features that partially determines whether the music is narrative or simply descriptive, and whether, as a concept album, *Highway Rider* besides its cyclic aspiration is narrative or thematic – or perhaps both. This is also something that I will be further commenting upon in my analysis.

Now, in light of this discussion, I want to emphasise that there is not always a clear-cut line between the defining qualifying aspects that are needed for an album to be conceptual. The views tend to diverge. Tunbridge, for instance, poses the question of who really decides an

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textuality in Schubert's 'Der Leiermann' as a Motivation for Song and Accompaniment and a Contribution to the Unity of Die Winterreise," in *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field*. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Word and Music Studies at Ann Arbor, MI, 1999, ed. Walter Bernhart et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 122.

216. Wolf, "Willst zu meinen Liedern deine Leier drehn'," 122.

217. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 13.

218. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 14.

album's concept: Is it the listener or the musicians?<sup>219</sup> I will now give some examples where there are both clear-cut answers as well as where the answer is a bit more ambiguous. The criterion is that there must be a clear intention behind the work, although this might be perceived as somewhat narrow. However, as musicologist Marianne Tatom Letts suggests, almost any kind of album can be considered to be conceptual if there was no need for intention:

Beyond any apparent intent on the part of the artist to draw an album together into a coherent whole through its musical or lyrical content, *any* album is to some extent unified the same way a dee-jay's playlist is, simply by virtue of its sequence of tracks. A listener intent on listening to an album as a whole instead of in piecemeal three-minute chunks defined by the tracks can always, by being sufficiently clever, turn the runner order into a mark of cohesion, constructing her own 'concept' in the form of a narrative or at least a constant theme.<sup>220</sup>

In light of this I would argue that if the definition excludes the intent and only relies on the listener's experience then the very idea of a concept album loses its meaning. However this does not exclude the listener's role in the experience of creating a conceptual coherence of the work – the decision is not (only) in the eye/ear of the beholder.

The critically acclaimed studio album *OK Computer* (1997) by the British alternative rock band Radiohead has been discussed in terms of a concept album. Specifically Radiohead's music in general, and not only the album *OK Computer*, has been compared with the 'Romantic song cycle [and] tending toward a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a complete artwork encompassing a unification of elements, visual as well as musical/lyrical.'<sup>221</sup> Without further comment on the complexity of the concept *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the music of *OK Computer* positions itself in the discussion on intent in an interesting way.<sup>222</sup> The theme of the music deals with issues of 'alienation

219. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 184.

220. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 13.

221. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 9.

222. For a thorough investigation of the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* see Matthew

in a society of mass consumption' and is filled with 'paranoiac visions of a disconnected, fragmented society.'<sup>223</sup> Musically, it has been described as rhythmically complex, using 'sustained ostinato, quasi-modal harmony, common-note progression [...], electronic music as background, and pitch-tonal continuity,'<sup>224</sup> and furthermore, it uses 'electronica blips and beats' that give the 'sense that the individual tracks [are] all inspired by new coherent musical vision.'<sup>225</sup> Altogether, *OK Computer* as an album seems to create a certain coherence throughout the songs – musically as well as lyrically. However, as both Thom Yorke (singer) and Ed O'Brien (guitarist) of Radiohead deny the whole idea of creating a concept album, how should the work be defined/categorised other than as a concept album?<sup>226</sup> One way is by adding a third type to Shute's distinction between narrative and thematic, namely a *resistant* concept album, in which the albums 'attain their impression negatively, as it were, by consistently resisting one or another of the categories.'<sup>227</sup> They tend to convey 'some kind of concept beyond a single sequence of organized tracks over the course of an album.'<sup>228</sup> This can be interpreted as a denial of the idea of a concept album, which in itself can be a criterion for the genre as such. However I found this criterion somewhat strange.

Sometimes the definition is quite obvious – as in the case of the American progressive heavy metal band Queensrÿche's third studio album *Operation: Mindcrime* (1988), a 'fully-fledged concept album' and a rock opera that follows the protagonist Nikki, a drug addict who is hospitalised and unable to remember his past besides being manipulated into an organization 'to become a mindless assassin who is controlled by the triggerword "mind-

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Wilson Smith, *A Total Work of Art: From Bayreuth to Cyberspace* (New York and London: Routledge, 2007).

223. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 1, and Shute, *Concept Albums*, 148.

224. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 8.

225. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 148.

226. Shute, *Concept Albums* 148. See also Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 184. O'Brien do though open for a certain intent behind the work in saying that 'there is a continuity there.'

227. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 25.

228. Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album*, 25.

crime”.<sup>229</sup> The whole story circulates around flashbacks, reminiscence and murder, however, this is done with an open ending which creates an uncertainty in defining it as a *cyclic* concept album.

### Third Stream: An Exploration of Cultural Pluralism and Personal Freedom

Finally, one might wonder why I have not put any emphasis on genre into the discourse of jazz music since Mehldau is primarily a *jazz* musician. The rhetoric of the question is legitimate. *Highway Rider*, which consists of both through-composed orchestral pieces and jazz improvisations, seems to have much in common with the quite controversial genre within the discourse of jazz music called third stream – one of the musical genres that were mentioned in the review magazines. This term was coined in 1957 by composer and jazz musician Gunther Schuller (1925–), and it was an attempt ‘to fuse “the improvisational spontaneity and rhythmic vitality of jazz with the compositional procedures and techniques acquired in Western music during 700 years of musical development”’.<sup>230</sup> The genre is regarded as non-traditional in the sense that as Schuller says it ‘exemplifies cultural pluralism and personal freedom.’<sup>231</sup> Considered as a genre, it has some similarities with *Highway Rider* – at least in its ‘negative form.’ However, what third stream is not: ‘it is not jazz with strings; it is not jazz played on classical instruments; it is not classical music played by jazz players; [...]; it is not designed to do away with jazz or classical music; it is just another option amongst many for today’s creative musicians.’<sup>232</sup>

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229. Shute, *Concept Albums*, 122.

230. Gunther Schuller, “Third Stream,” in *Musings. The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller: A Collection of His Writings* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 115. The music of Pete Rugolo, whom I mentioned in the introduction to this essay, has been ascribed to the genre of third stream.

231. Gunther Schuller, “Third Stream Revisited,” in *Musings. The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller: A Collection of His Writings* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), 120.

232. Schuller, “Third Stream Revisited,” 120. Here we actually find a contradiction between Schuller’s definition and what we find in the reviewers – third stream or jazz with strings. My point here is not so much to prove who is right or wrong; my point is only to

## Concluding Remarks:

### Family Resemblance and Genre Identification

Let us return to the initial problem: how to define *Highway Rider* in terms of genre and whether the concept of family resemblance might contribute to an understanding of the work as a whole. Part of the problem concerns the issue of how the parts (compositions) are related to the work as a whole. There are no obvious stylistically common features that hold the different parts together, thus identifying the work within a specific genre tradition. In fact, it is quite the opposite: *Highway Rider* is constituted of genres like jazz music, symphonic poems (tone poems), third stream, and the song cycle and concept album. When our use of concepts, or genres, like these are put under scrutiny with the purpose of finding any kind of common feature, they are, as Wittgenstein argues, connected within ‘a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.’<sup>233</sup> He exemplifies family resemblance through the concept of games and asks what is common to them all:

Don’t say – ‘There *must* be something common, or they would not be called “games”’ – but *look and see* whether there is anything in common to all – For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*.<sup>234</sup>

This complicated network of overlapping similarities is explained by the fact that genre exists on two different levels simultaneously: 1) the work as a whole which is defined as a concept album with similarities to the construction of different types of song cycles, that is to say, how the inherent parts of the album/cycle are related by way of expressing the semantic content of the narrative script; 2) the inherent parts in themselves defined as jazz music, symphonic poem and third stream. Compared to the con-

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show, in the words of Samuels, that it is sometimes ‘difficult to distinguish between the effect of genres imported from a “foreign” musical source [...] and those which have an extramusical source [...]’ Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, 92.

233. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, 32.

234. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, 31.

cept albums exemplified above (Zappa, Genesis, Radiohead, Queensrÿche), their relationship in terms of family resemblance is not through sharing a single common feature (except with the intention) but to consider them as part of a *network* of similarities. I therefore suggest that these two levels are differentiated between form and style as well as content.

### THREE

## The Poietic and Esthetic World of Brad Mehldau

Since the intention plays an important part in the creation of the concept album, it would be interesting to trace this and furthermore try to make sense of it. In the present case, this means that I partly go beyond the specific paratextual context of *Highway Rider*.

There is something peculiar with the way Mehldau communicates his music to his listeners. The listener becomes part of a creative process behind the music, but not always in a way that relates to the music as such. Rather, he shares his philosophical worldview, meaning his perception of the world that he is part of, with the listener. This is why this chapter is entitled “The Poietic and Esthetic World of Brad Mehldau” since it deals both with his creative process and his process of perception, which are reflected in and through his music in different ways. Sometimes it appears as if he uses his philosophical worldview as a *persona*, a kind of social character, in order to compose his music. This raises questions such as: Whose ‘voice’ is it behind the words? How can the words be transformed into instrumental music? These questions are part of a larger interpretative framework that looks at how the intention behind the work affects the receiver’s interpretation of it. As musicologist Edward Pearsall says: ‘because the composer is responsible for composing the music in the first place – the composer (or the composer’s persona) remains implicitly present in the music.’<sup>235</sup> Mehldau’s writings are present in his music and forms various hermeneutic windows into the world he creates, albeit in different ways.<sup>236</sup>

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235. Edward Pearsall, “Anti-Teleological Art: Articulating Meaning through Silence,” in *Approaches to Meaning in Music*, ed. Byron Almén et al. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 43.

236. The idea of hermeneutic window comes from Kramer’s text “Tropes and



The peculiarity of his writings does not mean that music is absent from the communicative act, only that it is verbalised in a form that demands a hermeneutic interpretation in order to become meaningful. In many of the texts, besides using music he uses philosophical works, novels and poems to explore different themes and topics that both bear meanings in the wider context within his own cultural and social world and meanings for the specific musical work within which the specific texts (liner notes) occur. The purpose of what follows is to locate *some* of these themes that also bear meaning to *Highway Rider* – themes that belong to the epitext of the work. I will mainly focus on themes such as form, style and narrative, and the relationship between music and language, but also make some comments on ideas dealing with political and ideological aspects like democracy, solidarity and utopia. Similar to Chapter 1, this chapter will not be exhausted but rather qualified and commented upon in the following analysis.

### Form, Style and Narrative

There are several themes that are recurrent within *The Art of the Trio Recordings*. One such theme is the reference to German author Thomas Mann (1875–1955). In his novel *Doctor Faustus* (1947), there is a famous dialogue between composer Adrian Leverkühn and the devil with whom Leverkühn signs a pact. The dialogue deals with musical form as shown in the quotation below, in the words of the devil:

[T]he masterpiece, the self-sufficient form, belongs to traditional art, emancipated art rejects it. The thing begins with this: that the right of command over all the tone-combinations ever applied by no means belongs to you. Impossible the diminished seventh, impossible certain chromatic passing notes. Every composer of the better sort carries within himself a canon of the forbidden, the self-forbidding, which by degrees includes all the possibilities of tonality, in other words all traditional music. What has become false, worn-out cliché, the canon decides. Tonal sounds, chords in a composition with the technical horizon of today, outbid every dissonance.<sup>237</sup>

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Windows,” 9–10.

237. Thomas Mann, *Doctor Faustus. The Life of the German Composer Adrian*

One might recognise the rhetoric involved in this dialogue. It is the language of philosopher Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969) that emerges, and it deals with the idea of ‘true music’ – music that, according to Adorno, expresses the contradictions that lay claim to truth. In the liner notes to *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2 (1997), there is a somewhat similar fictive dialogue between two characters. The liner notes begin with a quotation from Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, which opens up the content of the whole dialogue: ‘What is art today? A pilgrimage on peas.’<sup>238</sup> The names of the two characters in Mehldau’s dialogue are called Socrates and Phaedrux – who are also characters in Plato’s dialogue *Phaedrus* (about 370 BC), which, besides love, deals with art and how art should be practiced. Mehldau thus throws new light on old and ancient issues about art and art-making. The dialogue starts with the issue of irony and its relation to music, where Phaedrux expresses concerns about life as an either/or way of existing: ‘life just seems like a cruel trick,’ he says, and further concludes that music-making today seems futile and unrequited.<sup>239</sup> Socrates, on the other hand, confronts this perspective on life by saying that music is:

... a way of expression yet completely in the abstract; a language yet without words, autonomous without need to refer outside itself, yet encompassing that outside.<sup>240</sup>

He concludes that music-making in fact celebrates irony by transcending the either/or way of existing. It is not without wondering how this argument relates to the music on the record, and furthermore which of the characters in the dialogue that may personify Mehldau. When Phaedrux answers Socrates by saying that ‘harmony exhausted itself, played itself out,

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*Leverkühn as Told by a Friend* (London: Minerva, 1996), 239.

238. Brad Mehldau, liner notes to *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2. See also Mann, *Doctor Faustus*, 238, and Mehldau, “Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle.”

239. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2. The either/or theme could bring to mind the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, whose book *Either/Or* (1843) deals with a fictional character that discusses, albeit in a monologue, the aesthetic and ethic stages of existence. I have however not found such references in Mehldau’s writings. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (London: Penguin, 1992).

240. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2.

as it were, at the turn of this century,' and further questions his *own* choice of playing so-called show tunes, the link to the music on the record seems to be obvious. Among the songs we find such show tunes: Cole Porter's "It's Alright With Me," Albert Hague and Arnold B. Horwitt's "Young And Foolish," and Jerome Kern and Dorothy Field's "The Way You Look Tonight."<sup>241</sup> Is Mehldau Phaedrus personified? Does he use the dialogue as a way to highlight his own thinking about the choice of song material and of life as an either/or way of existing? Is it possible to find a more profound philosophical understanding in these writings? It is hard to know, of course. But these questions should be taken seriously since they ask the question: Who is the voice speaking, not only in these tunes but also in other tunes played and composed by Mehldau?

The dialogue continues with the issue of the musician's relationship with music history. Socrates sees danger in referencing oneself too much in history, which Phaedrus in fact seems to be doing, since it risks the power of lineage and style in music when it should be the other way around: 'When lineage and style are the driving force, music loses its autonomy and is delegated to the finite, stilted world of words.'<sup>242</sup> Instead, Socrates continues, '[f]orm follows function,' whereas lineage and style are secondary.<sup>243</sup> One way to approach these issues is to argue that the form of the music should primarily be based upon its intended function or purpose. Put in relation to the dialogue, the function might be understood as one way of transcending the either/or way of existing *by way of telling a story* – not in the stilted world of words but in music. This may be one reason why *Highway Rider* varies in genre and style in its entirety, though it appears somewhat vague at this point. However, within the context of the three concept albums, it can be concretised. Here I would like to take a look at the writings of *Elegiac Cycle*.

Early on in his text "Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle" (2011), Mehldau speaks of 'narrative tones' in writings from The Age of Antiquity to Mod-

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241. These three compositions are all examples of show tunes, that is, they are popular compositions originally written as part of a show that later on has become a standard jazz tune.

242. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2.

243. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2.

ernism. One of the recurrent references in his writings is the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926). In the liner notes of *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 1 (1997), there is a quotation from one of Rilke’s sonnets, “The Sonnet to Orpheus, I,3” (1922):

A god can do it. But will you tell me how  
a man can penetrate the lyre’s strings?  
Our mind is split. And at the shadowed crossing  
of heart-roads, there is no temple for Apollo.

Song, as you have taught it, is not desire,  
not wooing any grace that can be achieved;  
song is reality. Simple, for god.  
But when can *we* be real? When does he pour

the earth, the stars, into us? Young man,  
is not your loving, even if your mouth  
was forced wide open by your own voice – learn

to forget that passionate music. It will end.  
True singing is a different breath, about  
nothing. A gust inside the god. A wind.<sup>244</sup>

EXAMPLE 1.1: Rainer Maria Rilke’s “The Sonnet to Orpheus, I,3.”

This specific sonnet bears meaning in the wider context of Mehlau’s writings, both with regards to content and how the sonnet is told. The name of the god for whom Rilke sings this sonnet is the god of the lyre, Orpheus. In his short article “Slipping Through the Strings: A Meditation on Rilke’s ‘Sonnet to Orpheus’ I,3,” Gary Kochhar-Lindgren makes some interesting notes. He suggests that the sonnet deals with the concept of emptiness, nothingness and freedom in a somewhat paradoxical way:

We long for the freedom implied by emptiness, for that expression of our vision, but we are terrified, for that expansion, that enlightenment requires

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244. Brad Mehlau, liner notes to *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 1.

the surrender of the ego, which is our death. We do not want to die, but without the emptiness there is no humming of the lyre, no singing reality.<sup>245</sup>

Orpheus thus teaches us to listen to the song of emptiness, nothingness and freedom. Rilke's poems, and not only this specific sonnet, function as sources of inspiration for Mehldau's first concept album *Elegiac Cycle* – both with regards to content and form. Content first: the relationship between immortality and mortality. Mehldau celebrates the human being's mortality in much the same way as Rilke does. In another of Rilke's poems, *Duino Elegies* (1923),<sup>246</sup> Mehldau particularly makes a point of the end of "The First Elegy," which says:

Is the legend meaningless that tells how, in the lament for Linus,  
the daring first notes of song pierced through the barren numbness;  
and then in the startled space which a youth as lovely as a god  
had suddenly left forever, the Void felt for the first time  
that harmony which now enraptures and comforts and helps us.<sup>247</sup>

EXAMPLE 1.2: Rainer Maria Rilke's "The First Elegy" of *Duino Elegies*.

As with the case of "The Sonnet to Orpheus" one might ask for the general meaning of these lines in Rilke's poem, especially in the context of Mehldau. I will make this as short as possible by using J. B. Leishman's comments on Rilke's elegies.<sup>248</sup> Firstly, according to Leishman, in 'the Elegies the predominant symbol is the Angel, the superhuman, and the predominant theme is Lament (*Klage*) – lament over the limitations and deficiencies of human nature.'<sup>249</sup> This should be compared to the "Sonnet to

245. Gary Kochhar-Lindgren, "Slipping Through the Strings: A Meditation on Rilke's 'Sonnet to Orpheus' I,3," *Studia Mystica* X:3 (1987): 44.

246. Brad Mehldau, "Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle."

247. Mehldau, "Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle." The translation from German to English was done by Stephen Mitchell.

248. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies: The German Text With an English Translation, Introduction and Commentary* By J. B. Leishman & Stephen Spender (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).

249. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 103.

Orpheus” in which the symbol is Orpheus and the theme is praise.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, the elegies and the sonnets should ‘be read and remembered in the light of the other.’<sup>251</sup> Secondly, the first elegy deals with the ideal:

... where will and capability, thought and action, vision and realization are one, is the highest Man can form, and yet, so impossible is it for Man to realize this ideal, to become the Angels, that is rather a rebuke than an inspiration.<sup>252</sup>

What remains for Man, according to Leishman, is to ‘give the highest possible significance to his moments as they pass; to be continually prepared for those moments when eternity is perceived behind the flux of time, those moments when *the light of sense goes out, but with a flash that has revealed the invisible world*.’<sup>253</sup> Thirdly, the specific passage of Rilke’s poem which Mehldau quotes, deals with Linus, a god, poet, and inventor of music, who was killed by his own father Apollo, and the Linus-song, that is, a lament for the dead. Leishman writes:

Sometimes the origin of song and music in general was connected with this dirge [lament for the dead], and it was said that those who had been benumbed with fear and horror at his death were reawakened to life by the song of Orpheus.<sup>254</sup>

As I see it, what we have here is a direct connection between “Sonnet to Orpheus,” in which Orpheus teaches us to sing the song of nothingness, and the lament for the dead in the first elegy of *Duino Elegies*, in which the numbness is awakened by this song to Orpheus. One of the elegies on *Elegiac Cycle* is the “Lament for Linus” – itself a mourning song, an elegy.

Rilke also inspired Mehldau from a formal perspective, as explained in the following:

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250. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 103.

251. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 103.

252. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 103.

253. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 103–104. The emphasised lines in this quotation are part of a William Woodworth (1770–1850) poem called “The Prelude.”

254. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, 111.

I was discovering how certain narrative devices that I encountered in novels could migrate to the more abstract medium of instrumental music, and started to think about music as form of storytelling as well. The idea of telling a story through music became very important in my development as a jazz musician on all fronts – interpreter of standards/covers, composer and perhaps most importantly, improviser.<sup>255</sup>

The main character in the story of *Elegiac Cycle* is “Bard,” the first composition in the cycle, which becomes both the subject of the music and the subject who tells the story.<sup>256</sup> “Bard” has a 4/4 time signature and is a 22 mm. long composition in A minor, which consists of a three-note motif (B, A, D) that is repeated;<sup>257</sup> the whole cycle ends with the composition “The Bard Returns,” which suggests a closure using the same melody as “Bard.” Throughout the cycle Mehlau quotes both great composers, such as Beethoven, and himself from other compositions *within* the cycle (“Memory’s Trick,” “Resignation,” and “Goodbye, Storyteller”).<sup>258</sup> In this way, Mehlau creates a sense of inherent memory in the music as if something has happened in the past that is haunting both the subject of the music, the subject who tells the story, and the subject who listens to the music.

Using a poem such as Rilke’s “Sonnets to Orpheus” might not come as a surprise within a wider cultural perspective of music as implicated in the Leishman quotation. As Kramer writes: ‘the vast repertoire of sad songs, mourning songs, songs of lost love, songs of lament [is] foundational for the very concept of music; it proves the truth allegorized by the myth of Orpheus from the earliest operas [...] to Rilke’s *Sonnets*.’<sup>259</sup> Moreover, this

255. Mehlau, “Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle.”

256. Mehlau, “Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle.”

257. The three-note motif is a musical anagram of Brad’s first name, which becomes Bard. A similar three-note motif appears in “Lament for Linus” (B, A-sharp, D-sharp). See André, “‘Elegiac Cycle’: A Concept Album,” 13, and “Transcriptions,” 120.

258. André, “‘Elegiac Cycle’: A Concept Album,” 54 and “Transcriptions,” 213. This is a typical example of the type of self-reference which has a meta-referential potential. See Chapter 6 where I elaborate on these concepts with regards to the last two compositions of *Highway Rider*.

259. Lawrence Kramer, *Expression and Truth. On The Music of Knowledge* (Berkeley and

repertoire of songs can be extended to what Kramer describes as a 'speaking melody.' By this he means a melody 'that lacks its words yet still conveys what the words says.'<sup>260</sup> Here, however, I will use the concept of speaking melody in a somewhat different manner than Kramer. According to Kramer, spoken melodies are those songs that *previously* had words attached to them but later became successful without the songs being sung: 'They are the songs that have so absorbed their own words that their melody alone can substitute for the original union of words and music.'<sup>261</sup> Mehldau's music is rather spoken in reverse. The words attached to the melodies have only been sung without them being united. Rilke sings in *silence* through Mehldau's compositions as if Mehldau personifies the content of these words – he is both the voice who sings and the one who hears to Rilke's sonnets. This further correlates in Mehldau's dialogue with what Orpheus says of music: that it is a language without words, still encompassing the outside world. It also corresponds with the compositions on *Elegiac Cycle*, which are associated with words 'without [they] being either uttered or sung [carry] the force of utterance.'<sup>262</sup> Thus one might say that it is the *sung* voice in Rilke's poem that is transformed into an *unsung* voice or a speaking melody in Mehldau's music (though they have never been attached to each other). This is a rather different way of understanding the idea of speaking melody; the composition does not have a specific goal other than reflecting or *speaking* of the nothingness of life.

Moreover, the sung voice is also part of a specific narrative tone in terms of how Rilke tells the story of nothingness and lamentation. This is further explored through how Mann tells the story of the composer Adrian Leverkühn in which Mehldau is especially intrigued by the idea of how to transpose the narrative structure into the wordless music:

Mann's novel of ideas seemed to me the ultimate narrative form of expression because, in drawing from various disciplines, it gave the reader a multifaceted experience. Considering Adorno's ideas about music, and

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Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), 74 and 37.

260. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 32.

261. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 32.

262. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 34.



Mann's ability to weave a story from them, I wondered how that worked going the other direction – could a piece of music, with its wordless language of tones, 'tell' us something about discursive thought?<sup>263</sup>

The issue here, in other words, is a transmedial phenomenon – a transfer of narrative forms/discursive thoughts into a musical narrative. Mann's novel also 'served as a model for *Elegiac Cycle*'<sup>264</sup> – especially how he uses allusions and intertextualities, connecting to 'system of thoughts.' To be more specific:

A book could be like a picture of one section of a river: Where the frame ended, you could not see anymore which way the river went, but by viewing what was inside the frame, you could deduce certain things about where it came from and then explore its sources. [A] book or a piece of music would always have some sort of provisional 'frame' – a beginning and an end – but would also beckon the reader to speculate about what was outside the frame – where the river came from and where it might go in the future.<sup>265</sup>

One particular question which is raised from this quotation is how this frame works within the poietic world of Mehldau: How is the frame structured? What basic media does the frame consist of: Is it words and/or images? More importantly, how is the frame related to the music? It also seems that we are not speaking of a musical narrative at all, at least not in a strict sense, but rather a musical drama or description similar to Levinson's argument, where the features that are present are experienced as occurring as they are perceived, which make some kind of sense as a whole.<sup>266</sup> Therefore the frames could be understood as different dramatic/descriptive 'snapshots' of a narrative script, snapshots that give 'life' using different musical gestures and motifs. This not only opens up the question of how to unite these descriptive snapshots, but also from which subject position they relate to. Is there any way to create a sense of musical unity that has a narrative quality? This question will be examined later in the next chapter.

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263. Mehldau, "Looking Back at Elegiac Cycle."

264. Mehldau, "Looking Back at Elegiac Cycle."

265. Mehldau, "Looking Back at Elegiac Cycle."

266. See Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," 433.

## Music and Language: Democracy, Solidarity and Utopia

The idea of transposing narrative structures and narrative tones into wordless music puts the relationship between music and language in a particular field of tension – not only in Mehldau's poietic world but also with regards to the possibility for music to express truth-propositions similar to the language in a novel or a poem. As shown in some of the liner notes, music in Mehldau's esthetic world may celebrate irony by transcending the either/or way of existing; furthermore, though it needs not to refer outside itself, music may still encompass that outside. This seems like a paradox – a paradox that Mehldau explores in his later writings. For instance in the liner notes to *Places* (2000), a collection of originals composed on the road, he elaborates on different themes dealing with memory, remembrance, time and place. He quotes, among other philosophers, Richard Rorty (1931–2007) whose thoughts echo in his writings in different ways:

For there is no big secret which the ironist hopes to discover, and which he might die or decay before discovering. There are only mortal things to be rearranged by being redescribed.<sup>267</sup>

What does this mean in the context of Rorty, and what might it mean in the context of Mehldau? The quotation is from Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), in which he explores concepts such as truth, language, contingency, irony, hope, solidarity, liberalism, and utopia. This occurs in Part II of the book ("Irony and Theory"), in a chapter called "Self-creation and affiliation: Proust, Nietzsche, and Heidegger."<sup>268</sup> In this chapter, he discusses the so-called ironist, meaning someone who *re-creates* his past, and who 'faces up to the contingency of his or her most central beliefs and desires.'<sup>269</sup> Rorty formulates his purpose in the following manner:

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267. Mehldau, *Places*.

268. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 99.

269. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

[T]o show how things look like if we drop the demand for a theory which unifies the public and private, and are content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable.<sup>270</sup>

From this he suggests the possibility of a 'liberal utopia,' in which 'human solidarity would be seen as [...] a goal to be achieved.'<sup>271</sup> To see other people as 'one of us' (human solidarity) is a matter 'of redescription of what we ourselves are like.'<sup>272</sup> Rorty suggests that it is the task for genres such as fiction to achieve human solidarity since they have become 'vehicles of moral change and progress, [and] would be part of a general turn against theory and toward narrative.'<sup>273</sup> Somewhere here, it seems to me, Rilke's idea of mortality and the ideal of Man's highest form are echoed through Rorty's writings. Whether this is simply the case because Mehlau brings them together I am not sure, but it is worth taking note of.

The narrative further connects the present with the past and with utopia in an endless process of freedom – it is a narrative of contingencies. In the first part of the book, Rorty explores the relationship between contingency and language and how the human being relates to the world by using words to describe the world. He concludes that the descriptions of the world should be avoided; instead he suggests that so-called 'final vocabularies' should be discussed:

All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives. These are the words in which we formulate praise of our friends and contempt for our enemies, our long-term projects, our deepest self-doubts and our highest hopes. They are the words in which we tell, sometimes prospectively and sometimes retrospectively, the story of our lives. I shall call these words a person's 'final vocabulary.'<sup>274</sup>

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270. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xv.

271. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xvi.

272. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xvi.

273. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, xvi.

274. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 73.

The words are final ‘in the sense that if doubt is cast on the work of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse.’<sup>275</sup> At the same time the contingencies seem to be ignored by the human being in that he or she might fear that someone else’s final vocabulary will be used; by letting the past be recontextualised, and the human being to be re-described, this might lead to the human’s ‘historically contingent final vocabulary.’<sup>276</sup> It is within this context that Rorty’s quotation should be understood. In the liner notes to *The Art of the Trio, vol. 5: Progression* (2001), released a year after *Places*, Mehldau wrote:

A basic tenet of a democracy is that *no* discussion should be deemed pointless ahead of time. There is a non-stop process among its members, aimed at reaching consensus on any given topic. Michel Foucault spoke of an ‘endless need for discourse’ among members of a democratic society. If the truth-value of a proposition is historically contingent, as Foucault (a la Nietzsche) maintained it was, then a consensus can never be reached with absolute finality. Nor should it be. When someone claims to be having the last word on some matter, we had better take heed. The last word might fossilize into something like dogma and remain on the scene long after it’s bereft of any positive social utility.<sup>277</sup>

Mehldau says that he ‘is posited into a yet unforeseeable future that never arrives, because there is always a better future that can be imagined.’<sup>278</sup> By this he means a democracy that ‘operates on a paradox in the sense that it thrives on endlessly unresolved problems.’<sup>279</sup> Here he embraces Rorty’s ironist, though without making explicit references to him, by questioning those who claim to have the last word, and perhaps questioning those who make use of someone else’s final vocabulary. He comments on the possible consequences for holding such view, saying ‘[i]t’s disturbing to think that a democracy’s woes might never be resolved – that there might be some-

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275. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 73.

276. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 192.

277. Brad Mehldau, liner notes to *The Art of the Trio, vol. 5: Progression*.

278. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio, vol. 5*.

279. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio, vol. 5*.

thing built into society itself that keeps us forever short of utopia.<sup>280</sup> Music seems to hold the key to such an imagined future or utopia in Mehldau's world. Music supersedes the need for discourse, and shows a 'deep solidarity that the listener experience amongst each other,' a solidarity that further 'suggests that music gains a communicative advantage over words [...] because of its non-linguistic character.'<sup>281</sup> In one sense, this view should not come as a surprise. Mehldau's interest in romantic music, and romanticism in general, emphasises the idea of music's power over language but puts it into a contemporary context. For instance, the discussion on the emergence of the song cycle genre highlighted this particular aspect – not least among the romantic writers, which, as we have seen, endowed instrumental music with power beyond language's grasp.<sup>282</sup> At the same time song cycles contain words, suggesting that language does something that instrumental music cannot do – it tends to focus on real or imagined objects, and the relation between objects and events.<sup>283</sup> The provisional narrative frame put forward by Mehldau shows the possibility of the inclusion of such imaginary objects into music. The words are there but not in the 'ear' of the listener, so to speak.

In light of this, one could argue for a dual purpose of Mehldau: 1) To see how to narrate through wordless music inspired by the novels and poems; 2) To provide a specific philosophical worldview through the wordless music inspired by thoughts of Rilke, Rorty and Nietzsche. These two aspects will permeate the main chapter in the essay.

### Concluding Remarks:

#### Intra- and Extracompositional Features of *Highway Rider*

The purpose of this chapter has been to locate some themes in Mehldau's epitextual writings that might bear meaning to *Highway Rider*. By now these themes may only be vaguely coherent and may occasionally appear

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280. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 5.

281. Mehldau, *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 5.

282. See Chapter 1, "Theoretical and Methodological Framework."

283. See Chapter 1, section "Music and Multimodal Metaphor."

fragmentary within the context of *Highway Rider*. The uniting factor seems to be that they are part of Mehldau's poietic and esthetic world. Thus the central issue this discussion generates is its relevance and relationship to the whole work. In approaching this issue I suggest that the themes be divided into two interrelated and by now familiar areas. The first area deals with concepts such as form, style and narrative, and the second with content. A tentative conclusion is that the narrative form that frames the music makes the expression not only possible but also intelligible. Whether this also makes the music a narrative is of course still open to discussion. For instance, what is it that makes the descriptive snapshots into a coherent musical narrative? From an intermedial perspective, these two areas deal with the relationship between the intra- and extracompositional as explained in Chapter 1. Therefore questions that need to be explored in detail are whether there are signs within the musical structure that carry some degree of iconicity and how these are characterised, and in what way the music is transmedial. With regards to the semantic content of the narrative form and what the signs might mean, this is another area that needs to be explored. Here I consider the various topics which deal with emptiness, freedom, sadness, solidarity, democracy and utopia.

In the next chapter, first the narrative will be discussed by investigating the verbal and visual peritexts of the CD and second the verbal epitext. I argue that these two paratexts together create the narrative form that frames the music. Furthermore, the narrative form not only seems to govern the musical expression, as implicated by this argument; in certain ways the form also governs the style and perhaps even the genre of the music. The musical expression is dependent on how the content is related to the narrative form, and furthermore, what the music 'depicts' or rather describes, depends on the layout of the music.



## FOUR

### Analysis of Two Levels of Materiality

In this chapter I will discuss the analysis of *Highway Rider*. As mentioned, there are two levels of materiality in Mehldau's musical work: the materiality that is enabled by the specific package of the work, and the acoustic material traces manifested in the printed score, the performance and the recording. In order to understand how musical meaning is produced these two levels cannot be separated. I will begin with the first type of materiality having the theoretical and methodological framework of Genette at hand. This is followed by a discussion of the narrative frame of the music, not least since this is part of the general paratextual discourse, before discussing the analysis of the acoustic traces of the score and the recording paired with a hermeneutic reading.

#### First Level of Materiality

##### *The Verbal and Visual Peritexts: The Narrative Architecture of the CD*

The semiotics of the record in its unplayed state is part of what Symes calls the narrative architecture. I aim to identify the semiotic markers that make the analysis of the material traces motivated, and by doing so I will identify the hermeneutic motivation for understanding *Highway Rider* in terms of narrativity and transmediality.

The package is a 6-panel double CD Digipak with a tube pocket in the middle panel. In the upper left hand corner of the front cover there is a light gold sticker with some information, written in capitalised white sans-serif font, names in bold on those behind the work: 'Produced by Jon Brion Featuring the Brad Mehldau Trio and Special Guests Joshua Redman



and Matt Chamberlain.<sup>284</sup> In the upper right hand corner Brad Mehldau's name appears in black; written below in golden brown is the title *Highway Rider* – both are capitalised and in the same sans-serif font (Figure 1). The names are a first sign of genre indication. This works as a kind of contract between sender and receiver. However incomplete this contract is at this stage, it still acts as an index on what type of music it might be.<sup>285</sup> As highlighted in the discussion on genre as code, the contract is an essential part of the whole communicative process. This also shows how important it is to establish a genre not only by the semiotic act of naming but also through the semiotic resources that album covers display visually and verbally. At first sight, the typographical design seems to play a small part in the composition of the front cover. However the verbal aspect is also visual. As social semiotician Theo van Leeuwen argues, typography 'is multimodal, integrated with other semiotic means of expression, three-dimensionality, and movement.'<sup>286</sup> By looking at the typographic composition one can notice that the use of a sans-serif, the different colours and the relationship between the words obviously communicate something. The name becomes substantial by adding weight to the visual impression due to its colour and dominant position above the title. The title, on the other hand, with its golden brown colour, melts into the photograph's nuances of earth colour. The title thus implicitly visually connects with the image – additionally the text and image co-exist on the same surface.<sup>287</sup> However this does not say much about the music as such – something the semiotics of packaging rarely do.<sup>288</sup> For this the paratext needs to be widened to also include the epitext. In order to make this a fruitful discussion, a few words need to be said about the picture on the front cover.

In *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text* (2010), media and cultural theorist David Machin argues for a careful description of the visual

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284. Brad Mehldau, *Highway Rider*, Nonesuch Records, a Warner Music Group Company, 2010.

285. Genette, *Paratexts*, 41.

286. Theo van Leeuwen, "Towards a Semiotics of Typography," *Information Design Journal* 14:2 (2006): 144.

287. Lund, "Medier i samspel," 21.

288. Cook, "The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*," 108.



FIGURE 1: The front cover of Brad Mehldau's record sleeve to the CD *Highway Rider* (2010).

semiotic resources in order to show the ways these visual resources connote meaning. He introduces the concept of modality slightly differently than Elleström – inspired by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen among others.<sup>289</sup> For Machin modality means a description, which shows how real a representation is. In light of this one should ask how naturalistic the photograph is on the front cover of the *Highway Rider* record sleeve. As I continue to use the concept of modality throughout the essay I will undertake Elleström's definition in order to avoid confusion among the defi-

289. David Machin, *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text* (London: Sage Publications, 2010), 50. See also Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

nitions, but additionally because I find Elleström's definition more useful for my purposes. This does not mean that the image description does not intend to convey as naturalistic a 'picture' of reality as possible. However, I cannot see the point in accounting for the degree of realism/naturalism in the *specific* photograph in terms of meaning production – at least not more than the simple observation that it is a photograph which consists of specific semiotic resources (objects, colours, texts, etc.) with a high degree of modality and which becomes parts of meaning potentials for the recipient to activate.

The front cover consists of a photograph of a drive-in theatre located in the vast American desert country somewhere near Las Vegas in Nevada.<sup>290</sup> In the foreground stands a desolate, empty, grey asphalt parking lot. In the middle ground and in the centre of the image, behind a fence on a pad of sand, there is a gigantic empty white outdoor cinema screen, which makes the mountainous background along the horizon a dreary backdrop.<sup>291</sup> The cottony clouds in the sky seem to *almost* stand still. The vastness of the landscape creates a somewhat abandoned but peaceful impression – there are no people. The photograph creates a tension in relation to the title, an expectation of the recipient to 'open up' the record sleeve like a book and continue 'reading'/'looking' at *Highway Rider*. The peritextual level of the paratext is thus both verbal and visual. Further-

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290. The information of the photograph and photographer appears in the booklet to the CD. It says the photograph is a 'Drive-in Theatre,' taken in Las Vegas 1987 by Richard Misrach, an American photographer notably famous for his depictions of the deserts of the American west.

291. The concepts of 'foreground,' 'middle ground' and 'background' should not be confused with the so-called Schenkerian analysis of music, though they share some conceptual similarities. Within the Schenkerian analysis, the first concept deals with the surface of music, while the others deal with the different layers that are further from the surface. This photograph has the *illusion* of being a three-dimensional image due to how the objects are situated in relation to each other, an illusion that music within the context of Schenkerian analysis cannot really deploy. This does not, however, mean that music cannot create spatial effects. For instance, microphone placements at a studio recording may create imaginary spaces. The difference here between Schenkerian analysis and analysis of a recording shows a difference in focus from 'text' (work) centred analysis to 'action' (performance) centred analysis.

more one could argue that the record sleeve, which includes the cover, frames the music in a *specific* way; either as ‘frame-to-music,’ as something that points ‘inwards as a guiding and referential function,’ or as ‘frame–music,’ where image, music and text collaborates in order to tell a story.<sup>292</sup> However, the record sleeve and its paratextual aspects must be extended to also include the epitext – the peritext is not enough with regards to *Highway Rider*.

The record sleeve is like a book – you can open it up. It has a narrative quality from a material point of view since the 6-panel format, with front, back and spine opens in a gatefold and works just like a book. There is a booklet inserted, which can be pulled out and read/viewed separately. The sleeve’s inside pictures on the left, middle and right consist of photographs taken at the studio session. The pictures serve partly as filling, but they also work as genre indications: the double bass, grand piano and saxophone signifies that the music belong to the jazz domain. There is also an image of a printed score which clearly signifying that this is serious music. Moreover, the back cover of the sleeve consists of photographs from the studio session. In the case of the back cover of books, this mainly works as a *reminder* of the front cover which has the name of the author and the name of the title – this is also the case of *Highway Rider*.<sup>293</sup> It also consists of information about the titles; that the work is distributed over two CDs; its release year; publisher; producer; and the obligatory barcode.

The inserted booklet works as a reminder. The booklet contains some repeated pictures and text information, with new elements and in new constellations, such as a printed score as a background image, almost as a watermark, that once again signifies a seriousness of the music; specifics on what compositions are played, who plays what on these compositions, and that the Brad Mehldau Trio is complemented with an orchestra conducted by Dan Coleman. Lastly, information about the cover photograph and photographer, graphic designer, session photographer, and when the

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292. Jens Arvidson, “‘To Stitch the Cut...’: The Record Sleeve and its Intermedial Status,” in *Changing Borders: Contemporary Positions in Intermediality*, ed. Jens Arvidson et. al. (Lund: Intermedia Studies Press, 2007), 70.

293. Genette, *Paratexts*, 25.

music was recorded. In the specific case of *Highway Riders*, the titles as paratextual elements must carefully be taken into consideration. I will, however, leave this discussion until the analysis of the music because they are more or less integrated into the music.

*The Verbal Epitext: The Narrative Frame of the Music*

The difference between the peritext and the epitext, according to Genette, is that the latter is 'not materially appended to the text within the same volume, but circulating, as it were, freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space.'<sup>294</sup> The location of the epitext could be anywhere outside the work: in newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes, lectures, public performances, etc. The temporal occasions of the epitext are thus varied: either before, simultaneously or after the publication of the work. This, of course, may affect the production of musical meaning. Depending on the information available at the esthetic process different meanings are produced – there is of course quite a difference between a musical piece with only the title at hand and the same piece with titles and a thorough written page about the story behind the music, such as composer Hector Berlioz' (1803–1869) *Symphonie fantastique* (1830). Thus the problem that is confronted is to define the relevant epitextual communicative context since this seems to be constantly changing: When does the epitext begin and when does it end? From an intermedial *cultural* perspective, this is what Lehtonen terms *vertical* intertextuality where intermediality is defined as intertextuality transgressing media boundaries. The 'texts' circulate in and through society between so-called primary texts and secondary texts.<sup>295</sup> This shows at least that it is not always an easy task to identify how primary and secondary texts are linked together.

In the case of Mehldau's work one could easily argue of an expanded package. It is common today for artists of any kind to have a website and Mehldau is not an exception. Mehldau's website has various information about his musical productions. Here two different epitexts are found that

294. Genette, *Paratexts*, 344.

295. Lehtonen, "On No Man's Land: Theses on Intermediality," 75–76.

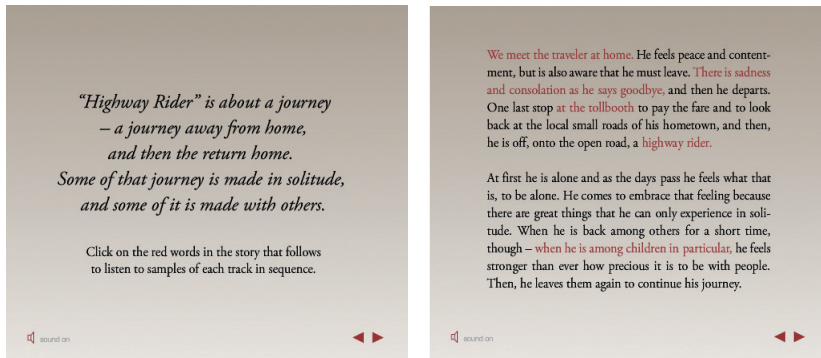


FIGURE 2: The beginning of the storybook.

deal with *Highway Rider*. Firstly, an article published about the same time as the music was released in which he writes about the compositional strategies behind the music; Secondly, he share with the reader/listener a way into the listening process, a hermeneutic threshold in Genette's words, by structuring a storybook that follows, or rather frames, different compositions in the work. The storybook was published about a year after the music's release.<sup>296</sup> These two epitexts are thus part of the paratextual discourse that supposedly 'makes' the music – they play a part of the production of meaning. The storybook, partly exemplified in Figure 2, is also multimodal by way of hyperlinking parts of the text to the specific compositions in the work.<sup>297</sup>

296. The title of the article is "Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative" and was published in February 2010, whereas the storybook was published in 2011. During the process of this research project, the communicative context within which *Highway Rider* occurs has changed. On 14 January 2014, Mehldau moved his website, keeping the article, but having the storybook removed. This not only affects the production of musical meaning but also the researcher's perspective on how to study and understand the work in question from a methodological point of view. One might even see the two websites, the old and the new, as two editions of the same volume, where the first edition is 'out of print' and is nowhere to be found anymore. The whole storybook in its original version is attached in Appendix II. See my discussion in the introduction ("Digital Aesthetics and Communication").

297. See my comment in the introductory chapter, on how the CD is part of a digital culture by way of hyperlinks.



EXAMPLE 2.1: The two-part melody in “Now You Must Climb Alone.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

The article, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative,” functions as a liner note to the music. Mehldau explains how he has tried to develop the narrative techniques he used to tell the story of lamentation/mourning in *Elegiac Cycle* and the story of memory in *Places*. He says that *Highway Rider*, ‘is bound together by a two-part melody – a statement and a reply’ (see Example 2.1).<sup>298</sup> To be more specific, he tries to connect this motif ‘with the larger tonal architecture of the whole [by] generating [...] melodic material from a motif, [and] larger tonal relationships that unfold and span the entire work.’<sup>299</sup> Mehldau seems particularly interested in connecting the small and larger scale within the work in order to create a sense of unity. He makes an analogy to the natural world when describing how the musical work unfolds organically and thus corresponds to how the largest objects are governed by the smallest particles: ‘we’re still looking for order in all the chaos and still trying to find a way to represent the journey from chaos to order, no matter how inverted the approach.’<sup>300</sup>

298. Mehldau, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.”

299. Mehldau, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.” One could understand the two-part melody as a kind of *leitmotif* of Wagnerian spirit; it functions in much the same sense as a short musical idea, as a salient recurrent figure and as part of a plot to establish an association with past events in a musical narrative or musical drama. Such an interpretation of the melody would, however, require a thorough discussion of the term in question and its various applications – not only throughout music history from Carl Maria von Weber, Hector Berlioz and Richard Strauss, but also how it has been used in film music. In this sense, the concept of leitmotif is as much a transmedial phenomenon as a narrative and genre are. See Werner Wolf, “Leitmotif,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 276.

300. Mehldau, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.”



One way to interpret this quotation is to understand it metaphorically as something Mehldau explores through the story of *Highway Rider* and where the melody works to make the story intelligible for the listener. The metaphorical aspect will be part of the analysis that follows.

There are two tonalities within the motif, C-sharp minor and F-sharp Major, which always relate to each other throughout the work. According to Mehldau, this motif has a narrative quality in much the same sense as a ‘theme is central to a novel.’<sup>301</sup> This comparison between music and a novel is something one might recognise from Chapter 2 and is also something I will return to in different contexts.

Compared to *Elegiac Cycle* in which he lend the main character “Bard” to be both the subject of the story and the subject who tells the story (the narrator), one might ask how the narrative script is constructed in the work of *Highway Rider*, that is, how the narrative script is interconnected with the musical structure. As shown Mehldau presents a storybook equivalent to the idea of the narrative script where he invites the listener to get a grip on the unity of the work. I have structured this storybook in relation to the musical compositions in Figure 3 below. The bold text illustrates a hyperlink to the compositions in the left column.

The concept of unity thus seems to be quite important for how Mehldau unfolds his story. At the same time, the issue of unity is open to different interpretations on what it means and how to apply it.<sup>302</sup> In short, it can mean the following: 1) *similarity*: units that share similar features; 2) *coherence*: the logical connection between different elements, often used in ‘technical analysis aiming at objectivity’; 3) *organicist analysis* having an almost metaphysical character: ‘[o]rganicism reflects the idea that the musical work is an organism in which parts combine together as a functioning whole, appropriating the body as a metaphor for the musical work. It therefore restates the concepts of musical *unity* as defined through music

301. Mehldau, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.”

302. William van Geest, “The Concept of Unity in Musical Analysis: Some Ontological Issues” (Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Students of Systematic Musicology, Montreal, Canada, May 24–26 2012). These six points refer to Van Geest unless otherwise specified.



## ANALYSIS OF TWO LEVELS OF MATERIALITY

<b>The Story</b>	<i>"Highway Rider" is about a journey – a journey away from home, and then the return home. Some of that journey is made in solitude, and some of it is made with others.</i>
<i>John Boy Don't Be Sad At The Tollbooth Highway Rider</i>	We meet the traveler at home. He feels peace and contentment, but is also aware that he must leave. There is <b>sadness and consolation as he says goodbye</b> , and then he departs. One last stop <b>at the tollbooth</b> to pay the fare and to look back at the local small roads of his hometown, and then, he is off, onto the open road, a <b>highway rider</b> .
<i>The Falcon Will Fly Again</i>	At first he is alone and as the days pass he feels what that is, to be alone. He comes to embrace that feeling because there are great things that he can only experience in solitude. When he is back among others for a short time, though – <b>when he is among children in particular</b> , he feels stronger than ever how precious it is to be with people. Then, he leaves them again to continue his journey.
<i>Now You Must Climb Alone</i>	<b>He must climb now for a long time alone</b> , and this part of his journey is a test. He must resist his desire to give up and turn back, because he has come so far now that turning back would be almost as long as continuing forward. Finally, he reaches the peak of a mountain and looks around him. From the peak, everything looks different. There is no clear line in any direction; everything surrounds his view like one great circle. He realizes that his journey is also a circle, and he is halfway around the circle. He had never grasped this until now, and is intoxicated by what he sees and realizes. <b>He stays there at the peak for a while, walking around, looking ahead to where he will go, looking behind from where he has come, looking all around him.</b>
<i>Walking The Peak</i>	And when he is done walking the peak, he descends again, and he no longer needs to be alone. For the next part of his journey, he finds others along the way who travel with him, who go where he goes – for a time at least. They travel further together, and see a wide river ahead. Helping each other, <b>they cross the river together</b> . They are bound to each other by what they surmount together.
<i>We'll Cross The River Together</i>	With the other travelers, he sees more of his surroundings than he did when he was alone, because there is another set of eyes to look through. Those others come and go, though, and sometimes he is alone again. As his surroundings and his companionship constantly shifts, he experiences the way time passes: <b>Something is capricious and ephemeral</b> , you hold it in your hand and take pleasure in it; you feel its immediacy. Then it leaves you, and you feel the weight of its absence; the <b>sky turns grey</b> . And time never stops. He travels further, always moving onward, <b>through the throng of cities</b> , and then <b>further west, where the land is dry</b> . There, there are fewer people, and they are hardened but wise, full of legend and old ways.
<i>Capriccio Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith) Into The City Old West</i>	
<i>Come With Me Always Departing/ Always Returning</i>	He is close to where he began – he is close to home again. For one last time, he asks his friends to <b>come with him</b> . They make their last journey together. He leaves his friends, saying goodbye to them at the entrance to his hometown, where the roads get smaller again. He is home again. He realizes that he is <b>always departing</b> from somewhere and someone and <b>always returning</b> to someplace and someone else.

FIGURE 3: The structure of the storybook in relation to the musical compositions as they appear on the record sleeve.

analysis.<sup>303</sup> 4) *a feeling* received by the listener; 5) *continuity* and *predictability*, that is, the psychological experience of the musical structure; and 6) *value*: asking whether the music is successful or not in creating a sense of unity. These definitions, it seems, primarily deals with the intracompositional structure of a work rather than how this structure relates to extracompositional features such as a narrative script. Anyhow, the different aspects of the concept of unity will be discussed in relation to the analysis of the two-part melody.

*Highway Rider as an Imaginary Musical Road Movie:  
Representing and Mediating Utopian Culture*

In *Analysing Popular Music* Machin pays special attention to the record sleeve's iconography. Iconographic analysis, he says, 'draws on traditional semiotics [...] and involves focusing on the way objects, persons, settings and poses are able to connote meanings.'<sup>304</sup> The question under scrutiny here is not only what *Highway Rider* might connote but also how to perceive the meanings carried by the salient features on the sleeve, that is, what kind of features 'stand out' in the visual composition and what features draw in our attention.<sup>305</sup> So far I have only *described* the visual and verbal features on the sleeve and thus have shown that the paratext belongs to a multimodal discourse. Within Elleström's theoretical framework the multimodal discourse can be summed up in the following way: the interface of the flat surface where our eyes meet the material (*material modality*); our mental act

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303. David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, "Organicism," in *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 124–125. My emphasis.

304. Machin, *Analysing Popular Music*, 35. Even though the genre analysed by Machin belongs to the world of popular music, and neither jazz nor classical music, the way he approaches his analysis of record sleeves is useful for my purpose. See also musicologist Ian Chapman's "Kiss: Alive! An Iconographical Approach," in *Coverscaping. Discovering Album Aesthetics*, ed. Asbjørn Grønstad et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), 132–143, in which he creates an analytical model for album covers based on art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892–1968), particularly his *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939). Machin's iconographic analysis is also partly inspired by Panofsky.

305. Machin, *Analysing Popular Music*, 48.

of perceiving the flat surface by way of looking at the photograph (*sensory modality*); the structuring of our perception of the flat surface into an experience of space, that is, the illusion of three-dimensionality in the photograph (*spatiotemporal modality*); and finally, the creation of meaning in this spatially conceived medium in how the different signs are composed, that is to say, whether they are combined or co-exist on the same surface (*semiotic modality*).<sup>306</sup> The convergence of these different modalities thus creates an array of potential meanings. For instance, when Symes speaks of the ‘technology of recording [constituting] a complex textual and narrative architecture that is, to a large extent, “intermodal,” facilitated through the complex linkages of sound and word,’ I would not only add images to this but also emphasise the different modalities.<sup>307</sup> As Elleström puts it, ‘[a]ll media requires technical media to be realised, and the material modality is the media level that so to speak links to the technical media.’<sup>308</sup> Symes continues by saying that the narrative architecture ‘acts as a passageway through which the manifold of concepts and practices associated with recording pass before their assimilation into the general sensibility.’<sup>309</sup> The concept of intermodal is an interesting choice of word in this context. As far as I know, as a concept it was originally used to describe the *transportation* of freight in containers between different ‘modules,’ such as between railways and canals.<sup>310</sup> However he implicitly turns the concept into a metaphor for something else: to describe transportation as a passageway for the production of musical meaning. Furthermore, meaning is intermodal in that it not only is created by the receiver but also transported within a system of networks. As musicologist Esti Sheinberg argues, ‘[i]gnoring that musical semiotics is based on intermodality necessarily misleads music interpretation.’<sup>311</sup> Music is always interconnected with systems: be it dramatic, social, historical or

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306. See Chapter 1, section “Intermediality and Transmediality.”

307. Symes, *Setting The Record Straight*, 15.

308. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 27. My translation.

309. Symes, *Setting The Record Straight*, 15.

310. See for instance “Intermodal Optimization.”

311. Esti Sheinberg, introduction to *Music Semiotics: A Network of Significations in Honour and Memory of Raymond Monelle*, ed. Esti Sheinberg (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publication, 2012), 4.

rhetorical.<sup>312</sup> To put this reasoning another way: the salient features on the sleeve are part of a narrative architecture within which meaning is both created (from both sides of the story) and transported. The process of meaning creation involves semiotic modality, which is based on transportation (mediation), thus emphasising the process of realising the content of the specific medium through technical media.<sup>313</sup> With this notion in mind, the descriptions now become useful when moving closer to the analysis. Even though the best way (the only way) to fully understand what, how, where and when *Highway Rider* might mean would be to study the relationships between basic media – such as image, sound and text *and* modalities of different sorts – for methodological purposes I will leave the musical aspect to concentrate on the visual and verbal *context* within which the music is communicated. Implicitly, the analysis also focuses on genre as a trans-medial phenomenon. In this case it is about how a specific film genre (road movie) is transformed into a musical context.

In the section “Music and Multimodal Metaphor” (Chapter 1), I presented Cook’s theory of how meaning is negotiated. Here I would like to pay attention to the notion of the communicative contexts mentioned. Cook says that ‘[record sleeves] function as agents in the cultural process, sites where meaning is negotiated through the act of consumption.’<sup>314</sup> In the case of the relationship between the image on the record sleeve, the drive-in theatre and the narrative script (the storybook), one might ask how meaning is negotiated within this context. Cook speaks of attributes, or qualities, transferred (or perhaps transported, to relate to Symes concept of intermodal) between different basic media or attributes that ‘possess qualities that are intelligible’ in this transference.<sup>315</sup> It is the interaction between this transference of attributes and the receiver that makes the meaning so to speak. Therefore meaning is performed and activated by the receiver through the salient attributes.

312. Sheinberg, introduction, 4.

313. See Chapter 1, “Theoretical and Methodological Framework” (section “Narrativity in Music”), where I discuss the concept of representation. See also Elleström, “Adaptation within the field of media transformation,” 116.

314. Cook, “The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*,” 106.

315. Cook, “The Domestic *Gesamtkunstwerk*,” 112.

As my description tells, the image on the front cover of the record sleeve consists of a vast American desert country with a desolate, empty grey asphalt parking lot in the foreground, and a gigantic empty white cinema screen in the centre of the image. The significance of emptiness is emphasised by the narrative script: the journey of a lonely traveller trying to understand what it means to be alone. Furthermore, the drive-in theatre is most often regarded as a typical symbol of American culture. The title of the work enhances this signifying aspect. The word highway, at least in American culture, denotes ways for travel. Therefore there are transferences of semiotic attributes between words and image that frames the music within this context, but that is more to do with this simple observation. The empty white cinema screen is suggestive in itself; by opening up the sleeve and putting the music on, it invites the receiver to take part in a musical journey, which in certain ways are reflected back onto the individual receiver by way of a preconceived conception of what the story is about.<sup>316</sup> Furthermore, when reading the narrative script it becomes clear that the story is not only about American culture in general, but it also has a special way of *representing* and *mediating* this culture. What comes to mind is the so-called road movie – a film genre which most often deals with adventures of an individual or groups who leave their hometown and travel from place to place, perhaps desperately trying to escape from their boring everyday life. With our eyes closed, the moving images, *albeit in abstract/mental terms*, are projected onto the empty, white cinema screen by way of listening to the music. It is as if the movie cannot begin until the specific moment the music begins – a movie that must be activated, or rather *performed*, by a spectator/reader/listener. Furthermore, road movies are ‘iconographically marked through such things as a car, the tracking shot, wide and wild open spaces.’<sup>317</sup> In the introduction to *The Road Movie Book* (1997), the road is described as a ‘persistent theme of American

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316. This preconceived conception will be framed and explored within a Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in the section “The Imaginary Musical Road Movie as an Imaginary Signifier” in the chapter that follows.

317. Susan Hayward, “Road Movie,” in *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 313.

culture,' and is further linked to 'the technological intersection of motion pictures and the automobile in the twentieth century.'<sup>318</sup> What is even more significant for the genre is that it not only 'provides a ready space of exploration of the tension and crisis,' but also 'catches peculiarly American dreams, tensions and anxieties.'<sup>319</sup> There are generally four features that corresponds to the genre of road movie:

A road narrative, first of all, responds to the breakdown of the family unit, 'that Oedipal centerpiece of classical narrative'. [...]. Second, 'in the road movie events act upon the characters: the historical world is always too much of a context, and objects along the road are usually menacing and materially assertive'. Third, the road protagonist readily identifies with the means of mechanized transportation [...], which 'becomes the only promise of the self in a culture of mechanical reproduction' to the point where it even becomes 'transformed into a human or spiritual reality.' And fourth, as 'a genre traditionally focused, almost exclusively, on men and the absence of women.'<sup>320</sup>

These features may not be immediately connected to *Highway Rider*. There is no breakdown of a family (as far as we know); and the objects along the road are not materially assertive. However, the mechanised transportation, the car, most definitely works as a promise of the self in a specific cultural and ideological context. Also, the features invite one to search for relevant interpretative frameworks that can help to explain the story's meaning. In particular I am thinking of psychoanalytic theories such as those developed by Jacques Lacan. I will return to this issue in the next chapter where I present what I term a higher order of analysis. At this point, I need to present the whole story in order to make use of such an interpretative framework. Moreover, the topic within which the road movie belongs corresponds to Mehldau's idea of music transcending the either/or way of existing discussed in the previous chapter. To be more specific:

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318. Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark, introduction to *The Road Movie Book* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

319. Cohan & Hark, introduction, 2.

320. Cohan & Hark, introduction, 2.

[T]he road movie genre has repeatedly worked, first, to set in opposition two contrasting myths central to American ideology, that of individualism and that of populism, and second, to use the road to imagine the nation's culture, that space between the western desert and the eastern seaboard, either as a utopian fantasy of homogeneity and national coherence, or as a dystopic nightmare of social difference and reacting politics.<sup>321</sup>

From an esthetic perspective this makes sense; it opens up the question on whether to understand *Highway Rider* either as a utopian fantasy or a dystopic nightmare. Without answering this question with an affirmative or negative answer, at least not at this stage, one can conclude that it deals with an exploration of the *space* between these two oppositions. Moreover, as discussed previously, music in Mehldau's world has the power to give hopes and dreams. This increasingly makes sense when comparing this reasoning with Adorno with whom Mehldau seems greatly to admire:

Music is similar to language. Expressions like musical idiom or musical accent are not metaphors. But music is *not* language. Its similarity to language points to its innermost nature, but also toward something vague.<sup>322</sup>

As musicologist Richard Leppert says (in a commentary to Adorno's discussion about music's similarity to language): 'music at heart is utopian: the expression of hope, which seeks to name the philosophical (and spiritual) Absolute that nevertheless is unnameable [...]. Music is the (concrete) voice of yearning for happiness, which cannot otherwise be directly annunciated, let alone realized.'<sup>323</sup>

This utopian idea can be further examined. In an article called "Notes for a Theory of the Road Movie," Brazilian film maker and film producer Walter Salles (*The Motorcycle Diaries*, 2004 and *On The Road*, 2012) says that movies such as Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969), perhaps one of the

321. Cohan & Hark, introduction, 3.

322. Theodor W. Adorno, "Music, Language, and Composition," in *Adorno: Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 113. My emphasis.

323. Richard Leppert, "Commentary," in *Adorno: Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 85–86.

most famous of this genre, ‘suggests that [they] are those in which the identity crisis of the protagonist mirrors the identity crisis of the culture itself.’<sup>324</sup> Though the word crisis is not mentioned in the narrative script, it clearly deals with some kind of inner mental struggle of the protagonist John Boy. The composition “Now You Must Climb Alone,” for example, can be understood in these terms. As the narrative script says: ‘this part of his journey is a test. He must resist his desire to give up and turn back, because he has come so far now that turning back would be almost as long as continuing forward.’ In this description, the term crisis is captured. The Greek word for crisis means a crucial or decisive test, or a turning point.<sup>325</sup> In one sense, this theme should not come as a surprise. Mehldau’s exploration with the concepts of emptiness, nothingness and freedom has been recurrent themes since *The Art of the Trio*, vol. 2.

In his book *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2007), literary critic Fredric Jameson argues that ‘we need to distinguish between the Utopian form and the Utopian wish: between the written text or genre and something like a Utopian impulse detectable in daily life and its practices by a specialized hermeneutic method.’<sup>326</sup> Within the fictional world, utopia mainly seems to have been explored both by the historical novel and science fiction – and now with road movies. According to Jameson utopia postulates two different traits: the utopian *programme*, which deals with the realisation of the utopian system, and the utopian *impulse*, which deals with political ideologies expressed through the imaginary narrative.<sup>327</sup> With this distinction in mind, Mehldau’s *Highway Rider* fits into the second trait; it thereby may be understood as an impulse that deals with the exploration of freedom, solidarity and desire for something better expressed through an imaginary narra-

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324. Walter Salles, “Notes for a Theory of the Road Movie,” *New York Times*, November 11, 2007.

325. Mats Arvidson et al., “Introduktion: Kulturvetenskapliga perspektiv på kris,” in *Kris och kultur: Kulturvetenskapliga perspektiv på kunskap, estetik och historia*, ed. Mats Arvidson et al. (Lund: Sekel Bokförlag, 2013), 9–27.

326. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 1.

327. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 1–4.



tive. It may also be understood as a specific expression through what I would define as an *imaginary musical road movie*, meaning a specific symbolic form in which the impulse is embodied in a materiality accessible not only to our senses but also to our mind as a cognitive virtual space.<sup>328</sup>

So, now we can narrow down a specific hermeneutic understanding of what *Highway Rider* might mean; it is a way for Mehldau to conceptualise his worldview (or rather his persona), his esthetic process, through the medium of music. However this leads to a second and equally important aspect that Salles discusses, namely the narrative architecture of the road movie:

[R]oad movies cannot be circumscribed by the traditional three-act structure of so many mainstream films. Road movies, for instance, are rarely guided by external conflicts; the conflicts that consume their characters are basically internal ones.<sup>329</sup>

This means that road movies are not ‘what can be seen or verbalized but about what can be felt – about the invisible that complements the visible.’<sup>330</sup> It deals with the internal transformation of the character, which makes room for unpredictability in the story narrative. Altogether this makes *Highway Rider* even more complex. The architecture of the narrative script does not follow the three-act structure – and so consequently the music doesn’t either.<sup>331</sup> Furthermore I suggest that Mehldau’s use of a two-part melody can be compared to the internal transformation of the main character that Salles speaks of. The melody is transformed in different ways throughout the whole musical work, sometimes clearly audible and sometimes in a new rhythmic context, sometimes only as a suggestion showing how the protagonist struggles with himself throughout his journey in the vast American landscape. The two-part melody in this sense has a narrative quality, and it shows a *temporal* change that emerges in and through time,

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328. See section “Semiotic Analysis as a Formal Approach to Music,” in Chapter 1. See also Elleström “Modalities of Media,” 36.

329. Salles, “Notes for a Theory of the Road Movie.”

330. Salles, “Notes for a Theory of the Road Movie.”

331. The narrative and cyclic structure will be discussed and analysed in Chapter 5.

thus simultaneously creating a unified context. The transmedial features discussed here deals with how both the content and structure of the road movie genre are transformed into a musical context. These features must be further explored in the acoustic material traces of the music. This will be the focus in the next section of this chapter.

## Second Level of Materiality

### *The Material Traces of Highway Rider*

With the two types of paratextual contexts at hand it is now time to turn to the acoustic material traces of the music. These traces manifest themselves in different ways with regards to *Highway Rider*: the score on the one hand and the recording on the other. Mehldau's work is furthermore placed *between* through-composed music, score-dependent music and improvised music. This means that there is a certain ambiguity within the work's topical sign and that one must be very careful when analysing the music as a whole. For instance, when considering how the compositional and improvisational parts are related to each other: Should they be regarded as two separate features or as integrated? If integrated, in what way? When there is a written score at hand, it is sometimes incomplete with regards to the *acoustic* trace in terms of the recording and performance of the music. The scores are sometimes written as it should be performed, and they are sometimes reduced to only indicate ways to interpret the music, as is quite usual within the jazz music tradition (sometimes marked in the score). Between these two types of material traces there are no scores at all. This means that one must, on any level of analysis, *listen* to the music – including the reader of this essay. Thus there are three sub-levels of materiality with regards to the material traces of the music: 1) the acoustic trace of the music as in the recording; 2) the trace manifested as the incomplete written score; and 3) the trace as the complete written score.

### *Two Types of Semiosis and Two Types of Unity*

One of the aspects considered when analysing the musical work was based on what Mehldau writes about connecting the two-part melody with the

larger tonal architecture of the whole. Questions such as how the melody creates a unity *within* the musical work and how the music is related to the narrative script *outside* the work suggests an analytical framework that combines the two. Musicologist Kofi Agawu, for instance, makes a distinction between *introversive* and *extroversive* semiosis, corresponding to the analysis within and outside the musical work.<sup>332</sup> By introversive he means ‘the reference of each sonic element to the other element to come’ and by extroversive he means signs that ‘denotes “the referential link with the exterior world”’.<sup>333</sup> The introversive semiosis consists of so-called pure signs, ‘signs that provide important clues to musical organization through conventional use.’<sup>334</sup> When it comes to signs referring to the external world, Agawu discusses the concept of topical signs. A topical sign is a musical sign that consists ‘of a signifier and [...] a signified.’<sup>335</sup> The signifiers (expression) are represented by melody, harmony, rhythm, etc., whereas different historical conventional labels represent the signified (content), such as genres, styles and extra- and intertextual musical features. This distinction is further motivated by the discussion of genre held in Chapter 2 and the understanding of *Highway Rider* as an imaginary musical road movie. However it is important to be aware that topical signs are open and that the perception of the topics at the same time is dependent on the competence of the listener.<sup>336</sup> Topical signs are thus never pure. The study of these signs will be apparent in parts of the subsequent analysis of the acoustic material traces.

One way to put these two types of semiosis together in an analytic framework is to work from the inside out, thus working both with how Mehldau uses the two-part melody within the whole musical work, and how the rest of the musical structure is related to the outside of the work. This means that other musical segments, which are not linked to the two-part melody, might better work as signs related to the narrative script:

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332. Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs. A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 26–79.

333. Agawu, *Playing With Signs*, 23.

334. Agawu, *Playing With Signs*, 51.

335. Agawu, *Playing With Signs*, 49.

336. Agawu, *Playing With Signs*, 49.

segments that add weight to the descriptive character of the music. A short answer to the question about unity and its relation to the two-part melody would be that while the purpose of the two-part melody is to give a sense of unity within the musical work, other musical motifs have the purpose of aligning the extra-musical aspects and creating another type of unity. Unity thus works at two levels simultaneously.

*The Process of Segmentation and the  
Coding of Musical Motif and Musical Form*

There are a few methodological issues that need to be discussed before continuing onto the hermeneutic analysis of the three sub-levels of materiality and the two types of semiosis. The first deals with the musical form and the second with identifying and segmenting the relevant musical motif. According to Samuels, the coding of musical form is one way to start the semiotic analysis of a musical work: ‘To the extent to which formal archetypes can be identified in a piece of music, they necessarily invoke some sort of relationship to the previous history of the use of that form.’<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, the choice of form ‘can only be understood within the context of a governing institution of compositional practice.’<sup>338</sup> However since *Highway Rider* does not have a conventional form with regards to other similar types of works in music history (as far as I am aware of), this work can be seen as an indication for some kind of hetero-referentiality – at least if we go with Wolf’s reasoning.<sup>339</sup> This not only means that the form is governed from *outside* the musical structure but also that ‘the listener is challenged to find an alternative principle of coherence [the two-part melody] – which the narrative and descriptive programme in fact offers.’<sup>340</sup> This alternative principle will be my starting point. The process of coding

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337. Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, 64.

338. Samuels, *Mahler’s Sixth Symphony*, 64.

339. Obviously, there are other musical works with clear extra-musical references and where verbal framework structures narrativity like *Highway Rider* – both historical genres like symphonic poems and in the form of concept albums. My point here is that there seems to be no similar works like Mehldau’s in terms of both its form and content.

340. Wolf, “Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation,” 68.

the musical form will have the shape of an inverted cone, starting with a description of the ‘grand form’ of the whole work to a rather detailed analysis of different and selected parts of the musical work. However, choosing the parts for further analysis – the choice of *segments* – is one of the most problematic methodological aspects within semiotic analysis.<sup>341</sup> Even though what actually motivates a certain segment to be analysed is more or less based on a subjective process, it nevertheless *must* be motivated beyond this subjectivity. Thus the issue of evidence is quite important here. In this case, the musical segmentation not only finds its evidence in the narrative script but also in the poietic writings of Mehldau – in, for instance, his writings about the compositional practice and his musical influences. Additionally, the segmentation of the music is dependent on not only the narrative script as it is laid out but also how the script is segmented with regards to the different musical compositions analysed. Therefore the credibility of the interpretation depends on how both these types of media are segmented.

In *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (1992), musicologist Raymond Monelle argues that segmentation is based on pertinence, which means segments ‘isolated [...] to simple principles of repetition and recurrence.’<sup>342</sup> This is similar to the description and analysis of the narrative architecture of the CD where repetition (reminders) of visual and verbal aspects of the peritext showed the ‘pertinence’ of the chosen segments. The process towards these isolated segments can be put forward as follows in a rather condensed form: 1) ‘The only musical unit that seems universal and objective is the note [...]. This has a number of properties, to do with pitch, value, dynamic, rhythm, timbre and attack’; 2) ‘Segmentation in music will always be ultimately based on intuition’; 3) ‘Analytical segmentation should be based on rational and explicit principles. [But it] is not necessary for every worker to agree on the definitions of terms like “motive”

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341. Samuels, *Mahler's Sixth Symphony*, 64–90. To mention but one example of how problematic the segmentation can be at the formal level, in his study on composer Gustav Mahler's sixth symphony, especially on how the Finale of the symphony is structured, Samuels shows how different musicologists, such as Theodor W. Adorno, Paul Bekker, and Erwin Ratz disagree on the structure.

342. Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, 63.

and “phrase”, provided each analysis is backed by a clear explanation of the terms employed.<sup>343</sup> Cook’s methodological approach of chopping up the music into units possessing some degree of signification, discussed earlier in this essay, can specify the principles of repetition and recurrence: 1) Aligning recurring rhythmic and/or melodic motifs – recurrences that may either be literal or modified; this means classifying the musical units in accordance with a list of characteristic features, such as structures based on pitch, tonality and rhythm. Since we know from the epitext of Mehldau’s writings that he elaborates on a single two-part musical motif, this will be one such aligning musical unit. This list of characteristics is sometimes called *paradigmatic analysis* and occurs on a vertical level; 2) The temporal aspect of music is the next step. This involves how the paradigmatic units are distributed in time, throughout the musical piece, and with the purpose to discover some kind of underlying rule (for instance, it could be the single composition within a song cycle or the whole song cycle). This step is sometimes called *syntagmatic analysis* and occurs on a horizontal level.<sup>344</sup> The paradigmatic and syntagmatic levels of *Highway Rider* will be only partly analysed and only when it is motivated to bring light to the narrative of the story.

The relationship between *Highway Rider* and the different genres explored in Chapter 2 now need to be put into work by both implicitly and explicitly asking the following questions: 1) How are the individual elements/compositions connected to the whole work? 2) What topics does the work employ? 3) Does the work excerpt or entail a narrative? 4) What techniques can be associated with the music? 5) Does the work unite piano pieces with the thematic and motivic manipulation? 6) Does the mere fact that it is a recorded album make the music of special interest? Finally, 7) does the fusion of through-composed music with improvisation make any difference to understanding the work in one way or another? These questions overlap and can even be hard to separate from each other. For this specific purpose, they may work as guidelines to help put the music into a wider cultural-historical and even social and technological musical con-

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343. Monelle, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*, 89.

344. Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, 165.

text. Yet in themselves, they hardly provide a deeper hermeneutic understanding of the work. The higher order of analysis, which will be presented in the next chapter (section “The Imaginary Musical Road Movie as an Imaginary Signifier”), will explore this kind of understanding in detail.

Since the musical work at hand has a clearly formulated narrative script (storybook) as a framework, these qualities might assist in structuring the musical work as a whole (the inverted cone), and will provide some answers to the questions raised. The narrative script can be divided into six sections, seen in Figure 4.

The two last musical compositions (in section VI), called “Always Departing” and “Always Returning,” could be regarded as a separate symphonic poem and furthermore as a kind of a meta-reference of the whole story of *Highway Rider*. I will discuss these two pieces separately and

<b>Section I:</b> includes the first four compositions	The compositions are separate, i.e. they each relate differently to the idea of leaving <i>home</i> .
<b>Section II:</b> include the fifth composition	This is partly linked to section I in that it deals with a sense of <i>freedom</i> , which is apparent in the last composition of section I.
<b>Section III:</b> includes the sixth and seventh composition	The compositions cannot be separated and deals with the idea of being <i>alone</i> .
<b>Section IV:</b> include composition number eight	This composition represents the idea of being <i>together</i> .
<b>Section V:</b> includes compositions number nine, ten, eleven and twelve and is divided into two parts	This section deals with different dualities with regards to the previous themes – that of being alone <i>and</i> together. Compositions nine and ten deals with <i>freedom</i> and <i>time</i> , whereas compositions eleven and twelve deals with the <i>city</i> and the <i>landscape</i> .
<b>Section VI:</b> includes compositions number thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen	This section can also be divided into two parts: the first as a kind of resolution of the previous sections – the feeling of being <i>together</i> (composition thirteen) – and the second as a kind of metaphor for the whole story (compositions fourteen and fifteen).

FIGURE 4. The structural division of the narrative script.

in detail due to their compositional complexities – both in themselves and how they relate to the rest of the work (see Chapter 6). This means that the issue of transmediality will be put into a somewhat new theoretical context than what was discussed previously, and deal with issues of self-reference and meta-reference in instrumental music and whether this could be the case in Mehldau's work.

*The Study of Language about Music: Subjectivity and the Implied Listener*

In the preface I emphasised that language about music is not only culture-bound but also subjective. I also claimed with reference to Kramer that the link between the cultural study of music and the study of language about music is the subject who both *hears* and *speaks*. With this in mind, it would not come as a surprise that the purpose is not to 'decipher' any inherent meaning within the musical piece simply because it is impossible, but rather show how, where and when the receiver might produce meaning. This means that I do not claim to draw general conclusions applicable to other similar works, but that each study brings its own conclusions within the same area of study (which means that similarities may also be applied). This gives the listener's position special focus on the specific musical work under scrutiny.

In his text "Do Musical Works Contain an Implied Listener? Towards a Theory of Musical Listening" (2010), musicologist John Butt pays special attention to this focus. He discusses three modes of listening, which owns its relevance to the current analysis of *Highway Rider*: 'from "mere" hearing [...] towards listening as an activity of consciously mapping the music in time and, finally, one in which the "implied listener" might be more specifically determined.'<sup>345</sup> The third mode, the implied listener, concerns a specialised type of listening and is accordingly 'narrowly bounded historically' since it is 'pre-supposed by certain pieces of notated or performed music.'<sup>346</sup> This specialised type of listening, I would say, is required in order to understand the production

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345. John Butt, "Do Musical Works Contain an Implied Listener? Towards a Theory of Musical Listening," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135:1 (2010): 8–9.

346. Butt, "Do Musical Works Contain an Implied Listener?," 9.



of meaning not only in Mehldau's work but specifically in those types of musical works like Mehldau's that deal with the concept of narrative:

While this category [the implied listener] is clearly tied closely to repertoires that place engaged listening at a premium, it suggests something rather more than merely the sense that the music might play directly to our expectations, with the transformations of state that it may bring. This makes us remarkably close to recent discussions of the role of narrative in music: namely, that if music is directly modelled on a plot and the events implied by a text it is essentially reinforcing a narrative that is already there, as if a sort of mime or the gold plating on a statue. Music *possesses* an independent narrative function only when it does something exceptional, something that runs counter to the demands of the existing narrative.<sup>347</sup>

This 'possessing' is reminiscent of Ryan's distinction between being a narrative and possessing narrativity. The independent narrative function in *Highway Rider* corresponds to the narrative script.

Therefore the listening process has implications on how to *speak* and *write* about music. Verbalising musical experiences are part of a specific type of metalanguage, which can never substitute the lived experience of the music (see the discussion on musical semiotics). They are always, as Nattiez says, 'full of gaps'.<sup>348</sup> However, the gap between what one hears and writes in the production of musical meaning creates a certain *imaginary* space between the listener and the work. With reference to literary scholar Wolfgang Iser, Cook argues:

In other words, literature [music] as such arises from the gaps between the literal significations of the text; 'whenever the reader [listener] bridges the gap,' [...], 'communication begins.'<sup>349</sup>

What is important here is that this type of verbal description and analysis is concerned with the three basic levels discussed previously, namely the

347. Butt, "Do Musical Works Contain an Implied Listener?," 9. My emphasis.

348. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 153.

349. Nicholas Cook, *Music, Imagination & Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 18.

poietic, the neutral (material trace) and the esthetic levels. With this said, at least for this specific case, the *intention* of the author/composer is as important for the analysis as the listener's position to the work. For instance, the intention is the central part to making a concept album.<sup>350</sup> Furthermore, the analyst will always occupy the esthetic position in relation to the musical work, while at the same time leaving traces which are open for further discussion and analysis. Metalanguage, however, tends to be rather complex – especially language about music – which cannot be avoided altogether. In some cases I will have to illustrate these verbalisations with parts of the printed score. These should be seen as evidence for my reasoning. Additionally, a few comments will be made about properties which will be discussed.

Monelle speaks of properties – such as pitch, rhythm, and dynamics – and of terms such as a motif and phrase. These properties and terms are not innocent and neutral. They depend on the *experience* of the music and on what can be identified as salient features. So what constitutes a musical unit, motif or phrase? These definitions have varied between different studies, therefore I will only explain how I use these terms – which are more or less based on Nattiez's discussion. A motif is a 'small element characteristic of musical composition, which guarantees in various ways the unity of a work or part of the work.'<sup>351</sup> A motif can furthermore be assimilated into a cell and have three different aspects: rhythmic, melodic and harmonic.<sup>352</sup> A cell, in turn, can be defined as 'a small rhythmic and melodic design that can be isolated, or can make up the part of the thematic context.'<sup>353</sup> For example, a cell could be a source for the whole structure.

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350. I disagree with William K. Wimsatt & Monroe C. Beardsley in that I do believe that the intention is sometimes an important aspect if we want to understand a specific work. See William K. Wimsatt & Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954), 3–18. This does not mean that we cannot enjoy listening to the same piece of music, only that we should not conflate meaning as pleasure with meaning as understanding.

351. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 156. I would add to this notion timbre as another characteristic of musical composition that may function as a unifying feature.

352. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 157.

353. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 156.

This *could* be the case for Mehldau's two-part melody; parts of this melody could either be regarded as a motif or be assimilated into a cell constructed of a small rhythmic and melodic design. This also fits into Mehldau's own definition of how the melody is used throughout the work as connecting the two-part melody with the larger tonal architecture of the whole by generating melodic material from a motif and larger tonal relationships that unfold and span the entire work.<sup>354</sup> I will try to limit my metalanguage to melody and motif and, when it is motivated, extend the language to other terms such as gestures, figures, and dynamics. In some respects the analysis could be regarded as non-formalised rather than formalised, which means that it partly consists of an explanation of the musical material (melody, motif, content, etc.), a paraphrase of the music in words and a hermeneutic reading of the work.<sup>355</sup> The analysis in one way or another always aligns the musical segments with the narrative script. Also, when it is motivated, I will comment on the whole or parts of the whole corpus of the work in order to classify the music by genre or style.<sup>356</sup>

### *The Musical Story of Highway Rider*

Let us go back to the discussion of narrativity and semiotics in music. To say that music can possess narrativity, and that music may evoke the semantic content of the narrative script, must now be empirically analysed. The definition of the sign as containing a signifier and a signified may shed some light on this discussion. To say that music evokes the semantic content of the narrative is the same as saying that music expresses the content of a sign. The signifier normally occurs in two steps: first through denotation, then connotation.<sup>357</sup> So, the next question to be analysed empirically is whether there are signs in *Highway Rider* that express the semantic content of the narrative script. This will be the main task in the following

354. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 156. Sometimes this is called a generative cell.

355. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 161–163.

356. Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 163. This is an example of formalised analysis.

357. With regards to music this division almost seem impossible (and one may even argue whether it is possible to separate them at all). This is, however, a theoretical as well as empirical issue and cannot be answered in a generalised way.

analysis when having the general story of *Highway Rider* in mind. The analysis will merge the non-formalised analysis with a hermeneutic reading of the compositions in their six different sections, while having the theoretical and methodological framework at hand. The hermeneutic reading represents the interpretant in Peirce's view, which is the effect the sign has on the recipient.

### Section I: Home

Section I is comprised of four separate compositions, starting with a presentation of the main character, the protagonist John Boy, with piano, percussion, tenor saxophone, horn and English horn [cor anglais], and ending with "Highway Rider." The cycle *Highway Rider* starts with the composition "John Boy" – a 4/4 time signature with a steady 220 beats per minute in F-sharp Major. The music is up-tempo and has a 'rolling' repeated triplet rhythm, a quaver-note figure on an F-sharp Major chord on the piano (without the third), synchronised with the same rhythm on a tabla-like drum. This distinctive rhythmic character sets a feeling of a 'restrained' expectation, but also a feeling of certainty about leaving home that continues throughout the piece. Having read the narrative script, we know the protagonist John Boy 'feels peace and contentment, but also that he must leave.' After four measures the melody enters – with F-sharp in the bass and A-sharp in the melody in the right hand climbing up and down – through a dominant F-sharp<sup>7</sup> chord down to a dominant C-sharp<sup>7</sup> chord before it ends in the tonic. The melody is then repeated. In mm. 76–80, however, there is a tenor saxophone and English horn [cor anglais] that emerges with short 'impulsive' rhythmic elements, almost like honking a car horn, which together with the rolling rhythm creates a sense of a traveller on the road. These musical elements almost work as sounds that belong to a *diegetic* world, a spatiotemporal universe within which the story occurs, by *imitating* real sounds<sup>358</sup> –

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358. Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 22–26. The rolling triplet rhythm within this context might also by way of metaphoric association make an aural (and visual) impression of someone riding a horse in the American western landscape. The allusion to the title of the story,

The musical score for 'John Boy' (mm. 76-80) is presented in a multi-staff format. The instruments and their parts are as follows:

- TEN. SAX.**: Tenor Saxophone, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- ENG. HN.**: English Horn, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- HN. 1**: Horn 1, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- HN. 2**: Horn 2, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- HN. 3**: Horn 3, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- HN. 4**: Horn 4, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- TELA. DRM.**: Tuba/Euphonium, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.
- TAMS.**: Tambores, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.
- PHO.**: Piano, playing a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes.

The score includes a tempo marking of 75 and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked 'JURKY TONED' and the rhythm is described as 'SIMPLE EIGHTH NOTE RHYTHM WITH LIGHT TYPING AND SHAKING'.

EXAMPLE 3.1: The sensory iconicity/weak diagram in mm. 76–80 of “John Boy”. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

typical examples of sensory iconicity/weak diagram (see Example 3.1). The ‘impulsive’ rhythm recurs twice – last time a bit more ‘restrained.’ Parts of the melody also come back at the end of the composition, ending in F-sharp Major.

At this point, the listener does not really know the significance of the melody within the *whole* musical story, but the accentuation of the rolling rhythm, together with the melody, works at certain moments as signs that provide clues to what the music might mean.

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*Highway Rider*, reinforces this impression. From a film genre and historical perspective this makes sense. Film director John Ford’s now classic Western Movie *Stagecoach* from 1939, which is about a journey set in the late 1800s, alludes to this impression. As it says on Internet Movie Database: ‘A group of people traveling on a stagecoach find their journey complicated by the threat of Geronimo and learn something about each other in the process.’ This movie is regarded as an early example of a road movie. See imdb, *Stagecoach*.

Thus the general impression of the piece is movement towards some unspecified goal of the protagonist, which fits into the general framework of a road movie as the genre. The iconographic symbol of a road movie, the *car*, is here metaphorically transferred to the rolling triplet rhythm of the drum, accentuated with the impulsive rhythm of the tenor saxophone, and back again. This is, however, not only a metaphoric reciprocal transfer between two distinct and separate conceptual ‘spaces’ (words and music), as Cook and Zbikowski might have described it,<sup>359</sup> but also a transfer of metaphoric attributes between an acoustic material trace (the music space), and a discursive or an *imaginary* trace – the road movie (the imaginary, ‘filmic’ space). The movement is projected into the listener’s musical experience by way of already having a general *idea* of the road movie as a genre there in the mind. It thus deals with a mental image of a driver on a highway embodied in a musical framework. Furthermore, put into the theoretical context of intermediality, it shows an extracompositional quality that deals with transmediality. The imaginary trace, in this case a seemingly medium-specific genre, here is transformed into a new medium-context. At the same time, the extracompositional quality is dependent on how to interpret the intracompositional quality as described. The transmedial aspect thus deals both with the narrative as a *concept* and the road movie as a *genre*.

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The F-sharp Major and the 4/4 time signature of “John Boy” slows down (from 220 to 92), turns to G Major/E minor and becomes a ‘trailing’ waltz in the next composition “Don’t Be Sad.” It begins with a repeated piano introduction on G Major/add2, G minor/F and Eb Major7, with a descending left-hand bass line (G, F, Eb, D) that sets the mood – especially the second time through when a bassoon enters, putting a ‘damper’ on the music. The melody has a characteristic falling motif, repeated in small variations. For example, the B-flat note in the second chord, shown below, makes one immediately feel the sadness which is described in both the title

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359. See section “Music and Multimodal Metaphor” in Chapter 1.

and in the narrative script: ‘There is sadness and consolation as he says goodbye, and then he departs.’ The dotted minim [half note] played by the bassoon (mm. 9–16 in Example 4.1) gives the impression of a mournful lament, and when the following melody enters, the lament is not only

The musical score is for a piece in 3/4 time, consisting of two systems. The first system (mm. 9-16) includes staves for Tenor Saxophone, Bassoon, Horn in F, Pump Organ, Piano, Drum Set, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Violoncello, and Rhythm Section Bass. The Piano part has a marking 'add lib:' and a tempo indication '♩ = circa 92'. The Bassoon part plays a dotted half note. The second system (mm. 17-24) includes staves for Bassoon (Bsn.) and Piano (Pno.). The Bassoon part has a marking 'p' and a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part has a marking 'p' and a triplet of eighth notes. The Piano part also has a marking 'Melody - ad lib:' and a triplet of eighth notes.

EXAMPLE 4.1: The mournful lament in the bassoon (mm. 9–16) and the gloomy sigh in the melody (mm. 17–24) in “Don’t Be Sad.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

emphasised, but it's also turned into a gloomy sigh (minor second) due to both the B-flat note and its descending gesture down to G (a minor third), also shown in Example 4.1.

The melody is played first on the piano, and then on tenor saxophone. The next time the melody is played, violins emerge and the saxophone 'lays out for a moment' to 'gear up for [the] solo,' as the score says. The falling musical motif, mentioned above, appears in the strings at mm. 102–104 before a soaring saxophone solo enters at m. 105, leaving the strings in silence, while at the same time letting the horn play parts of the melody. The string section emerges again; the violins play triplet figures (moderately strong); then the viola also plays triplet figures, with a gradually building crescendo towards another saxophone solo – now with the full orchestra – which neatly slides into a second part of the melody (played *ad. lib.*). At the top of the crescendo, the piano first enters and plays parts of the melody, which is now transposed, and then a lonely bassoon solo – the music ends on an F Major7/C chord.

The peace and contentment that characterised the previous piece has now turned into introspection and reflection. Besides the bassoon's dampening effect, this becomes even clearer from m. 89 when the piano is doubled with pump organ which creates a sense of melancholy or even longing for something unknown (see Example 4.2). At the same time, the waltz-like rhythm has a soothing effect for the sad person. In the sadness, consolation emerges – something new is about to happen. From an inter-medial perspective, this is an example of media in combination (inter-reference), or more specifically: an intermedial reference between words and music.<sup>360</sup> These seemingly 'innocent' relationships between the two types of semiotic signs (symbol and icon) do more to the experience and understanding of the music than what one might think. There is a semantic priority in the title that focuses or fixates one's listening by selecting elements in the music that may stand as a representative for the whole composition in question.<sup>361</sup> This is not only an example on how cross-

360. Lund, "Medier i samspel," 21.

361. Lawrence Kramer, *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 153, and Jerrold Levinson, "Titles," *The*



89 sax lays out for a moment, sort of gearing up for solo...

Ten. Sax. *ad lib.*

P. Organ

Pno. *play sparsely, marking downbeats, adding comments...*

Dr.

EXAMPLE 4.2: The doubled piano with pump organ in mm. 89–96 in “Don’t Be Sad”. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

domain mapping between two conceptual spaces occur;<sup>362</sup> it also gives the effect of what Levinson would describe as ‘a more determinate content than it would otherwise have had,’ that is, the listener hears the music *as* something.<sup>363</sup> But what does it mean to perceive an object *as* something? This Wittgensteinian question keeps popping up in different ways by different authors. For instance, in his *Truth and Method* (2004/1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer says that:

Even perception conceived as an adequate response to a stimulus would never be a mere mirroring of what is there. For it would always remain an understanding of something *as* something. All understanding-as is an *articulation* of what is there, in that it looks-away-from, looks at, sees-together-as.<sup>364</sup>

Kramer continues the thought of understanding-as, as articulation, and the Wittgensteinian question. He specifically makes a case of the concepts of *articulation* and *expression* and says that articulation ‘is always also performative; it has an expressive dimension. Just so, expression is always also articu-

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*Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44:1 (1984): 35.

362. See section “Music and Multimodal Metaphor” in Chapter 1.

363. Levinson, “Titles,” 36. See also section “Music and Multimodal Metaphor” in Chapter 1.

364. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 79. My emphasis.

late; it entails substantive claims,' which means that both contribute to 'what they describe.'<sup>365</sup> The key to this description is in the experience and understanding of music as something put into the following question: 'How, exactly, do I act when I perceive an object "as" something?'<sup>366</sup> Through this question emerges a performative aspect, which goes both ways: 'How does the perception act on me?'<sup>367</sup> According to Kramer, and following Wittgenstein, the answer deals with changes in the aspects of the experience of music as music. When I hear a melody *as* longing, as in the case of "Don't Be Sad," I hear (and experience) the music as a transition 'from nonsense to sense': 'what is heard is only ambiguously present in [...] the music's sounding presence.'<sup>368</sup> In this case, the title is the trigger that (so to *speak*) literally transforms the composition from nonsense to sense in a metaphorical way.

However, the hearing-as description has more to it. Kramer further suggests that '[t]he content of musical expression is neither in the music nor outside it.'<sup>369</sup> The prerequisite for interpretation of hearing music as something is that it must first be described. This may sound a bit odd, but is actually what this whole essay is about. The meaning becomes 'perceptible only when I [...] *perform* a certain kind of description' by way of opening 'up interpretative possibilities.'<sup>370</sup> These possibilities, however, are always contestable from an esthetic position as put forward previously.<sup>371</sup> Following Iser, this is also where Cook's idea of gaps between when what one is hearing and writing (describing) becomes intelligible. As Kramer puts it:

From a hermeneutic standpoint [...] it is precisely the semantic gap between interpretation and the object interpreted that is constitutive of meaning.<sup>372</sup>

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365. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 4–5.

366. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 10.

367. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 10. These two questions bear relevance to the field of ecological psychology. Ecological psychology deals with how perception and action is linked. I will return to this in the last chapter.

368. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 11.

369. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 12.

370. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 14 (my emphasis) and 19.

371. See section "The Study of Language about Music" in this chapter.

372. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 19.

The gap cannot under any circumstances be closed like a hermeneutic circle. It is there to be filled with descriptions *if* one wants to understand it's meaning – not least since music seems to be unable 'to speak for itself.'<sup>373</sup>

Furthermore, the title *itself* is suggestive in its character, even performative; in this case it speaks directly to the protagonist by saying it is ok, and this 'speaking' is embodied by the music. From the perspective of speech-act theory sentences like "Don't Be Sad" belong to a specific class of illocutionary acts termed *directives*;<sup>374</sup> it designates those types of acts that cause the receiver to take an action which is always an expression of desire. As philosopher John R. Searle writes, 'the illocutionary act is the unit of *meaning* in communication.'<sup>375</sup> Thereby, the title anchors not only a projected sadness into and onto the musical experience, but also other related adjectives such as melancholy and longing. One could, of course, ask whose voice it is that speaks; if music is unable to speak for itself someone has to speak *through* it. The type of speaking melody previously discussed in relation to Mehldau's composition in *Elegiac Cycle* may clarify this. 'Someone' speaks in *silence* through the music and this someone's voice is, as Kramer writes, 'unheard, has no tone, no timbre, no material identity':

It belongs to no one, especially not to the one who hears it. The voice is not a person's but a persona's; it issues music from the music as if from behind a mask.<sup>376</sup>

In the case of *Highway Rider* it is as if the voice is coming both from inside the mind of the protagonist and the composer's persona.<sup>377</sup>

Now, this composition is of particular interest from another perspective as well. In a discussion on the theory of the musical topics, Monelle describes an interesting case on how signification can be both symbolic and iconic: 'most icons have to be interpreted with reference to symbolic

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373. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 19.

374. John R. Searle, *Mind, Language, and Society: Philosophy in the Real World* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 148.

375. Searle, *Mind, Language, and Society*, 137.

376. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 41.

377. See Chapter 3, "The Poietic and Esthetic World of Brad Mehldau."

features.<sup>378</sup> The gloomy sigh as an example of diagrammatic iconicity should not (only) be interpreted as a 'pure' icon; it should rather be interpreted with reference to a specific symbolic feature in the sense of what the 'mournful lament' might mean. This is one of the topics explored through the sounding form in "Don't Be Sad"; the topic is a symbol. This specific topic, as a *sign*, can be further explored through Peirce's *third* concept – namely index. As Monelle writes, the index is 'a sign that signifies by virtue of contiguity or causality.'<sup>379</sup> Index points to something not present in the 'text' itself. How is this possible in music, and more specifically, how is this possible in "Don't Be Sad"? Topics, Monelle continues, 'may be glimpsed through a feature that seems universal to them: a focus on *the indexicality of the content*, rather than the content itself.'<sup>380</sup> Indexicality of musical content should not be conflated with musical indexicality; rather, 'it is possible for a musical syntagma to signify iconically an object which itself functions indexically in a given case.'<sup>381</sup> One such case in music is what is known as *pianto*. *Pianto* is a specific musical motif of a descending minor second, such as the case of the sigh mentioned above:

The *pianto* [...] is iconic with regard to its object, because it originally imitated the moan of someone in tears; it is indexical with regard to its ultimate signification (the 'indexicality of the object'), because it came to mean the emotions associated with one kind of weeping.<sup>382</sup>

The object of the sign in the case of "Don't Be Sad" is signified iconically; it is an example of diagrammatic iconicity. However, the sadness/lamentation in itself is also, as Monelle continues, 'the signification of the object-as-sign, and is signified indexically.'<sup>383</sup> The mournful lament is an index for something else and something that is only present through the iconic

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378. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 14–15.

379. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 15.

380. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 17.

381. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 17.

382. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 17.

383. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 18. Monelle explores the concept of *pianto* in more detail in chapter three, 66–73.

## Iconic topic



FIGURE 5: Signification of the object-as-sign signified indexically (this figure is taken from Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 18.)

character. I would say that this is a special case for how semiotic modality can be expressed, as shown in Figure 5.

Moreover, the analysis of the whole composition shows both what the music describes and how it describes it. It is both intra- and extracompositional; besides its indexical character, the analysis also shows how the music exemplifies metaphoric illustration/iconicity (the slow and trailing waltz-like rhythm), as well as the so-called cross-domain mapping. Overall, the music is highly descriptive but hardly narrative. Even more important, the description of “Don’t Be Sad” effectively shows not only how I interpret *this* particular composition, but also how I produce meaning from a *general* perspective under such description of what experiencing music is like. I hear it *as* something under that description.

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Genre-wise the next composition, “At The Tollbooth,” functions as an ‘intermezzo,’ a composition between movements of a larger work, and moreover as a character piece (*Characterstück*) with an intention ‘to arouse, through the performer, a passive listener’s feelings or associations.’<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, the genre often ‘suggest a literary connection without specifying any actual story or subject matter.’<sup>385</sup>

The composition is a slow (approximately 100 bpm), short (at little more than a minute long) solo piano piece in a minor key. The music does not

<sup>384</sup>. Nicholas Temperley, “Character piece,” in *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press.

<sup>385</sup>. Temperley, “Character piece.”

move in any direction – one might even say that it stands still in the sense that its structure does not compel change in any radical way. The structure has a simple 32-measure sonata form, with an exposition, development, recapitulation and a short coda, circulating around a theme with only small variations – the composition is structured through repetition and difference in its simplest way. If the previous composition “Don’t Be Sad” was both an expression for sadness and consolation from leaving home, “At The Tollbooth” becomes the entrance into the imaginary space within which the journey is expressed. The title becomes a *transit metaphor*, a gateway into the exploration of the self and culture. The trip thus cannot continue unless John Boy makes a performative act and pays the fare. The short time it takes him to pay forces him – and us listeners – to pause for a moment and contemplate *what he leaves* and *where he is going*.

[He looks] back at the local small roads of his hometown, and then, he is off, onto the open road, a highway rider.

The transit metaphor might also be interpreted as a kind of *hesitant* desire to move on. The semantic content of the title is embodied in the music – the interpretation leaves for a brief moment an uncertainty. John Boy is about to leave the security of his hometown to head out to a yet unexplored imaginary space. Here it seems that the types of iconic relations put forward by both Wolf and Elleström do not contribute to any substantial meaning production – at least no more than through a rather vague *feeling* evoked by the music’s relationship to both the title and the narrative script. For instance, one might ask for the directionality in the metaphoric transfer between words and music. As discussed in Chapter 1, when mapping occurs from language to music it tends to focus on the static aspects of the musical domain. In this case, could it be that there is a *dominant* directionality from language to music in terms of meaning production that can only occur when it is embodied by the musical structure? Imagine a complex musical structure with a full orchestra and a structure that deconstructs itself, thus creating a sense of forward motion instead of the existing ‘stagnant’ experience. This little mind game should be enough to understand that there would be another meaning production. The words say

‘stop’ whereas the music says ‘forward motion.’ So, although the only common feature between the sign and the object *seems* to be a rather vague feeling focused and fixated by the words, the directionality of the metaphoric transfer goes both ways. The words and the musical structure are mapped *onto* each other and create an emergent quality of both contemplation and hesitation.<sup>386</sup>

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Sometimes it can be difficult to identify a musical motif that signifies anything beyond triviality and beyond its *intra*-musical function (introversive semiosis). In such cases, one must take a closer look at the communicative context within which music is performed. “Highway Rider” is such a case. What is evident from a musical point-of-view is a composition which follows the simple structure of an ABA-form, with an open coda. It starts with an eight-measure introduction in C minor (four measures of C minor, E-flat Major7/B-flat, A-flat Major7 repeated once), which is rather subdued, before the drums and bass enter together with a distinctive, syncopated rhythm which presents a musical motif. The motif itself can be divided into two parts: a kind of question-and-answer (see mm. 9–12 in Example 5.1) before a bridge enters (with no rhythm section). This whole section is repeated once, though the second time there is a four-measure prolongation before a new bridge enters in D Major. To conclude: this *A-section* moves from C minor to D Major.

The *B-section* starts in the same manner as the A-section, but this time it leads to a piano solo which is played on top of the same harmonic structure. Soon parts of the motif enter before the whole composition ends on an open coda and on an A Major7 chord. In conclusion, although the formal musical structure of “Highway Rider” is simple, by starting in C minor and then going through D Major to end in A Major, this might contribute to an understanding of what the composition means.

What happens here, or rather what the communicative context within which the listener construes musical meaning through, is the *paratextual*

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<sup>386</sup>. See Chapter 1, “Music and Multimodal Metaphor.”

9 **BASS/DRUMS IN:**  
C- E<sup>b</sup>Δ7/B<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>Δ7

13 E<sup>b</sup>Δ<sup>add2</sup>/G G<sup>b</sup>Δ<sup>dim</sup> F-<sup>b</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

17 C<sup>Δb5</sup>/E G<sup>b</sup>-<sup>7</sup>Δ<sup>add4</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>Δ7

21 A<sup>Δ</sup>/C<sup>Δ</sup> G-<sup>7</sup> F<sup>Δ</sup>-<sup>7</sup> F7

EXAMPLE 5.1: Musical motif in mm. 9–24 in “Highway Rider.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

context: the peritext, the title “Highway Rider,” the epitext and the narrative script. But there is also the idea of a road movie in the receiver’s mind, a cultural category that frames the understanding of the story. Although Mehldau does not provide much information on this specific piece in the narrative script, the listener knows by putting the pieces together – through the emergent attributes of the first composition of “John Boy” driving on the highway; the sadness and consolation of the protagonist leaving something (home) in “Don’t Be Sad”; and, finally, the contemplation, and perhaps the hesitation, of leaving this something in “At The Tollbooth” – that the main protagonist heads off, onto the open road. Altogether, this helps to understand the *extra*-musical features of “Highway Rider.” From a musical and emotional point-of-view, the transformation from C minor towards A Major creates a sense of going from



uncertainty to certainty; finally, the *sound* of the music contributes to a dreamlike sense of freedom through Mehldau's use of an almost inaudible sound played on a Yamaha CS-80.

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This first section of the story, which I have termed 'Home,' sets the agenda for what is *coming*. In light of this, I propose a comprehensive interpretation based on the model of multimodal metaphor or conceptual blending presented by Cook and Zbikowski. The metaphor model can explain how meaning emerges. With this said, I further argue that the model should not only be used on separate musical works but also on works that are part of a larger whole – in this case section-wise. It is also important to notice that some mappings between metaphors are more effective than others; the reason for this has to do with the specific culture that supports the mapping (Western art music differs from the music in Bali).<sup>387</sup> The theory of conceptual blending, it should be noted, was first developed in relation to linguistic phenomena but was later developed in non-linguistic areas such as images and music. The reason for this is that blending involves 'mental spaces [...] rather than conceptual domains.'<sup>388</sup> What Cook and Zbikowski do is differentiate between *mental* spaces: 1) the space of words (titles and the narrative script); 2) the space of image (the front cover of the record sleeve); 3) the space of music (the titles and the musical structure); 4) the generic space; and 5) the blended space. The relationship between spaces 1–3 is based on similarity, where the generic space should be understood as a site for imagination through which the receiver enters an 'imaginary domain' and to which imaginary traces become objects that move through the musical space.<sup>389</sup> The blended space should be understood as resulting from the combination of spaces 1–3, that is to say, what these represent (in Cook's terms of the so-called ena-

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387. Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70–72.

388. Zbikowski, "Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor," 370.

389. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 77.

bling similarity). This model is usually termed *Conceptual Integration Networks* (CIN), and was originally developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner.<sup>390</sup> In the specific section under scrutiny, the generic space should be regarded as the background or foundation for this network; the structural division of the narrative script presented functions as this background: the representation of the idea of leaving home is the site for imagination through which spaces 1–3 are concretized and further projected within the blended space.<sup>391</sup>

Furthermore, even though it may seem somewhat redundant to point out, it is important to understand this whole section to continue the analysis of the other sections of the story. The ‘added’ compositions in the section function as an on-going *structural trope*. It compels change through the whole narrative script. Each of the separate sections therefore introduces a new understanding of the story – not only for the present tense in the specific composition being described but also of the past and future. This means that though the separate pieces may be perceived as descriptive/dramatic in character, together they become part of a larger narrative. The compositions also function as *cultural tropes* by way of alterity. As Kramer points out, the relationship between these types of tropes is a ‘shift in emphasis from the capacity of structures to act *as* tropes to the proclivity of cultures to act *through* tropes.’<sup>392</sup> So, what is this culture that acts through the tropes one might ask? According to Kramer, there is a specific ‘logic of alterity’ that functions as oppositions that deals with cultural identity: ‘It works by setting oppositions between a normative, unitary self [...] and a plurality of deviant or imperfect others.’<sup>393</sup> This logic of alterity is explicitly expressed through the structure of the four compositions in this section and provide a cultural framework for how to understand the whole story. The oppositions between expectation, certainty and movement

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390. See Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s model of conceptual blending presented in the article “Conceptual Integration Networks,” *Cognitive Science* 22:2 (1998): 133–187.

391. See Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 77–95.

392. Lawrence Kramer, note number 3 to “From the Other to the Abject: Music as Cultural Trope,” in *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 261.

393. Kramer, “From the Other to the Abject,” 34.

on the one hand, and the sadness/lamentation, subdued feeling and hesitation on the other hand, fit into the cultural framework of the road movie genre within which a specific cultural identity is explored: *dreams and hopes vs. tensions and anxieties*.

To conclude: this section has not only set the agenda for what is coming, it sets the agenda for the cultural framework through which to understand this cultural identity. This will be explicitly explored in the section “The Imaginary Musical Road Movie as an Imaginary Signifier” in Chapter 5.

## Section II: Freedom

The emergent quality from the previous composition manifests itself quite clearly in the E Major composition “The Falcon Will Fly Again.” The setting is piano, soprano saxophone, percussion and ‘la la la’ in the vocals which represent a quite simple jazz setting. First the title, then the narrative script: Similar to “Don’t Be Sad,” the title of this composition can be approached from a speech-act perspective which asks what the title says and how to make sense of it. Strictly speaking it is an illocutionary act whose verb (will) and adverb-use (again) could be interpreted as directed to the subject as a command (as a *directive*);<sup>394</sup> It could also be interpreted as an expression of something more specific: meaning, if the protagonist performs a specific act something will happen to him. Then there is the subject of the title – *falcon* – which connotes freedom and hope. With the narrative script at hand, which says that John Boy embraces the feeling of being alone since ‘there are great things that he can only experience in solitude,’ it is as if John Boy takes on a desire that is culturally embodied in the word falcon: as an aspiration for freedom, reminding him of something previously experienced (a freedom he once had), or at least a longing for this freedom. The falcon thus metaphorically and psychoanalytically embodies a symbolic desire towards a previous yet imagined experience of freedom.

The solitude expressed through the narrative script is prominent in the first part of the composition. It starts off with the odd time signature of 7/4, a tempo at 130 and a four measure repeated introduction in the piano

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394. Searle, *Mind, Language, and Society*, 137 and 148.

with a chord progression that continues throughout the melody that follows (see Example 6.1). This chord progression could be interpreted as starting within the key of E Major and later transposed to D Major. Although the chords are ‘coloured’ (typically jazz way), the harmonic function – a clear, though prolonged, tonic-subdominant-dominant relationship (E-A-B7) – enables Mehldau to improvise freely on the chord progression. The melody can be split into three separate sections: 1) mm. 5–8: a descending gesture; 2) mm. 9–12: an ascending gesture; 3) mm. 13–20: a combination of the above two sections. Within these ‘melodic’ sections, there are a few repeated musical units – both by the rhythmic and pitch rate. In Example 6.1, a similar rhythmic pattern appears in measures five and nine, and seven and eleven (with the exception for the dotted minim [half note] and the dotted crotchet).

The melodic gesture comes back in Mehldau’s improvisation starting with E (as in m. 5 shown in Example 6.1) and a descending gesture, and then G-sharp (as in m. 9 also shown in Example 6.1) and an ascending gesture (see Example 6.2). The gravity towards E (the tonic) in the im-

MELODY:

5  $E\Delta^{ADD4}$   $F\#-11$   $E\Delta^{ADD4}/G\# D\Delta6$   $C\Delta6/7$   $G\Delta6/9$   $A\Delta^{ADD2}$  876/5

SIMILAR RHYTHM AS ABOVE. AD L18

9  $E\Delta^{ADD4}$   $F\#-11$   $E\Delta^{ADD4}/G\# D\Delta6$   $C\Delta6/7$   $G\Delta6/9$   $A\Delta^{ADD2}$  876/5

EXAMPLE 6.1: The descending and ascending melodic gesture and the rhythmic similarities in mm. 5–12 in “The Falcon Will Fly Again.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

41

Pno. Eadd4 F#m11 G#min Dmaj9 Cmaj13 Gmaj9 A Bsus4

45

Pno. Eadd4 F#m11 G#min Dmaj9

47

Pno. Cmaj13 Gmaj9 A Bsus4

EXAMPLE 6.2: The first eight measures of Mehldau's improvisation in "The Falcon Will Fly Again." Transcribed by Francois Jalbert.

provisation, which is more or less salient, creates a presence of freedom. The soprano saxophone then continues with this presence, and the melody returns, now a bit more 'freely' played.

After the solo, a short break enters: the music changes its key from E Major to C minor and becomes somewhat softer. The melody is still the same as in mm. 5–8 but in a more trailing and prolonged form, repeated and synchronised with a 'la la la'-composition. There are children's voices in the background and the composition ends with laughter. The narrative script says:

When he is back among others for a short time, though – when he is among children in particular, he feels stronger than ever how precious it is to be with people. Then he leaves them again to continue his journey.

The structural trope that occurs at the break is not only a break *away* from one key *towards* another, it is also a metaphoric *shift* from the earlier sense of uncertainty towards self-confidence as a *consequence* of personal exploration, and self-confidence that becomes clear when meeting other people.<sup>395</sup>

395. Kramer, "Tropes and Windows", 10.

The listener hears the music *as* something – *as* an expression of freedom and *as* an expression of self-confidence. What is particularly prominent and what makes the listener experience *change* from a narrative perspective is the ‘simplicity’ or ‘lightness’ that emerges *between* the musical structure and the verbal description that the music embodies.

### Section III: Alone

This section comprises of a two-part symphonic poem – the first part with full orchestra, the second with piano, bass, drums, tenor saxophone, orchestra and orchestral bells. The first part, “Now You Must Climb Alone,” deals with a psychological test. The title suggests that the protagonist John Boy has to make his own decisions and not rely on others. He leaves something behind him and embraces the feeling of being alone. In contrast to the previous composition, which embodied a certain simplicity and lightness, this composition rather embodies what it feels like to experience an inner mental struggle. As the third-person storyteller says: ‘He must resist his desire to give up and return back, because he has come so far now that turning back would be almost as long as continuing forward’<sup>396</sup> – once again, he is hesitant to move on.

The tempo is slow and the composition continues for more than four-minutes. The two-part melody on violins, which begins at the start of the piece, oscillates between two tonalities – F-sharp minor and C-sharp Major. The melodic motif from measure five of the previous composition ‘lingers’ in the mind as some kind of distant memory. The orchestration thickens as the piece unfolds in time and rises in intensity throughout the music. It expresses a certain ‘romantic’ melancholy and becomes increasingly dissonant. Moreover, the harmonic structure evokes, as suggested above, an ambiguity by showing how the melody does not really know where it is heading – perhaps this is a sign for crisis, or still a sense of insecurity? Furthermore, there is no real pulse until the end of the piece when a ‘careful’ rhythmic structure in the bass allows the listener to pause and feel stability for a moment. Finally, the struggle seems to have come to an end when he reaches the peak:

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396. Mehldau, “Motif/Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.”

From the peak, everything looks different. There is no clear line in any direction; everything surrounds his view like one great circle. He realizes that his journey is also a circle, and he is halfway around the circle. He had never grasped this until now, and is intoxicated by what he sees and realizes.

“Now You Must Clime Alone” has several examples of how the signifying practice emerge. For instance, the increase in dissonance and the strength and intensity that characterises the composition represents a change in the musical structure that metaphorically deals with a personal struggle, and which corresponds with the psychological test previously mentioned. The narrative script with the music also evokes a kind of ‘realistic’ inner-image of what it might look like to be on top of the peak. The music thus embodies an *expressive* act within a specific cultural framework and so provides an opportunity to explore tension and crisis typical for the road movie.

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This piece slides neatly into the next part of the narrative script, “Walking the Peak.” John Boy stays at the peak ‘for a while, walking around, looking ahead to where he will go, looking behind from where he has come, looking all around him.’ This is reflected in the music. Behind the violins and toms emerge ‘bombastic’ block chords in the piano which use the same melodic material as in the two-part melody in the previous composition; the chords are perceived as excessively heavy in order to highlight the feeling of being ‘high up on the top.’ The music further intensifies and climbs before it allows a tenor saxophone and the drums to enter. Above the saxophone improvisation violins emerge; the saxophone is then ‘scaling’ up and down while the rest of the music is further intensified. There is a tension and *drama* in the strings that ‘symbolises’ the *walking* to and staying at the peak.

*Then a change:* a rhythmically-based piano solo enters, which is smoothly integrated into the orchestra. Finally a dramatic coda tries to find its way home, with bells ringing, and a repeat of the excessively heavy feeling, signifying that the protagonist has come to the conclusion that everything

is a circle. It is at this point, I presume, that the protagonist makes his decision to turn back 'home.' This is the actual turning point where the crisis has come to an end. Cultural theorist Mieke Bal would term this part of the story a *dramatic climax*:

The so-called 'dramatic climaxes,' events which have a strong influence on the course of the fabula – the turning-points, moments at which a situation changes, a line is broken – are presented extensively in scenes, while insignificant events – insignificant in the sense that they do not greatly influence the course of the fabula – are quickly summarized.<sup>397</sup>

As should be noted, a fabula 'is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.'<sup>398</sup> What the story here conveys or exhibits is part of what Bal defines as a narrative *cycle*. The events which occur in the story are part of a process that can be expressed through the following three phases: 1) as a *possibility*, that is to say, the decision for John Boy to turn back home; 2) as a *realisation*, meaning the actual event of turning back home; and 3) a *result* or conclusion of the process of turning back home. The result is still awaiting, but phases 1–2 can be said to be fulfilled at this turning point.<sup>399</sup>

All this should be understood *within* and *under* a specific cultural framework: within, as being part of an imaginary musical road movie (a specific story plot); and under, as an expression of repressed (psychoanalytic) desires. The whole section leaves the listener wondering how to come to terms with life. Part of this cultural framework will be further explored in the last section of the next chapter.<sup>400</sup>

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397. Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 102.

398. Bal, *Narratology*, 5.

399. Bal, *Narratology*, 195–196.

400. See section "The Imaginary Musical Road Movie as an Imaginary Signifier" (Chapter 5) where I suggest one way to culturally understand not only the specific two pieces analysed above but also the whole story, namely a psychoanalytic framework. The identity crisis expressed through the music is typically something that emerges at the level of what Jacques Lacan describes as the Symbolic, in which there emerges a desire for the wholeness, for the ego of the subject in question. However, at this point it is enough to have the



## Section IV: Together

[John Boy is finished walking the peak, and realises that] he no longer needs to be alone. For the next part of his journey, he finds others along the way who travel with him, who go where he goes – for a time at least. They travel together, and see a wide river ahead. Helping each other, they cross the river together. They are bound to each other by what they surmount together.

“We’ll Cross The River Together” slowly starts with a two-part melody on horn, parts of which are repeated by the English horn [*cor anglais*], followed by an introduction on strings, piano and tenor saxophone. The whole composition is based almost solely on this melody, thus creating a ‘self-contained’ form with an ending that points to its beginning.

The general narrative structure basically consists of three larger sections. Shortly after the introduction and repeated parts of the melody, the dynamics rise in intensity; this *first* section, which begins with orchestral bells, has a rather ‘fumbling’ character enhanced by a rhythm section and a semi-improvised piano part. This section continues with orchestral bells and violins playing a repeated musical four-note gesture ‘on top,’ before the piano part enters with fragments of the two-part melody. The music then slows, and the bass and drums emerge while a tenor saxophone plays fragments of the melody in various forms. The fumbling character that emerged in the first section now changes in the *second* section, which consists of ‘fiery’ strings chasing each other to reach a climax, continuously synchronised with louder dynamics explicitly marked with orchestral bells. Section two ends with an improvisation on the tenor saxophone, while a background strings part vaguely suggest some of the two-part melody. The *third* and final section starts with the piano before the strings, horns and other instruments again play fragments of the two-part melody, and a contrabassoon climbs deep down – which signifies a feeling of relief from having accomplished some things along the way.

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simple notion in mind of knowing that the music not only deals with this expressive act but also reflects it through the sounding tones.

In this specific context, I find it interesting how the semantic content of the narrative script corresponds to Mehldau's own idea of transposing narrative structures into wordless music. A recap of Chapter 3 (section "Form, Style, and Narrative") may clarify this notion:

[A] book could be like a picture of one section of a river: Where the frame ended, you could not see anymore which way the river went, but by viewing what was inside the frame, you could deduce certain things about where it came from and then explore its sources.

Mehldau's idea, expressed in this quotation, is that a piece of music has a frame, – a beginning and an end – which encourages the listener to 'speculate' on what is outside of that frame. The question within this specific context is whether the listener, by viewing the 'inside' frame (the narrative script), can really deduce and explore its sources. The only information available is what the narrative script provides; the previous section ended with a walk to the peak and the next section starts, as will be clear below, with a rather abstract image of the protagonist continuing the journey both in solitude and joined by others. The imaginary space where the listener/reader can speculate the content is limited. However, although this suggests that the music in relation to the whole story should be regarded as descriptive rather than narrative, there is simultaneously a narrative quality that cannot escape our musical experience. The two-part melody with the structural changes creates not only a sense of unity within this composition but also something dynamic – a sense that something is 'happening.' Moreover the music has a beginning and an end. From this perspective, as Levinson would argue, the music is more similar to a play than to a narrative form like the novel. The features that are present in a play, the series of actions, are experienced, as Levinson writes, 'as occurring as they are perceived, and which form a plot, or at least, make some kind of sense as a whole.'<sup>401</sup> This gives the music a dramatic character. The more fumbling character in the beginning, the fiery strings chasing each other

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<sup>401</sup>. See Chapter 1, "Narrativity in Music," and Levinson, "Music as Narrative and Music as Drama," 433.

in section two, and the low deep tones of the contrabassoon at the end loop together constantly around parts of the two-part melody as if something is moving and circulating around a narrative *event*.

Musically the section belongs to the idea of third stream. It has the vitality and spontaneity of jazz and the compositional procedures and techniques of western classical music that allows for an exploration of the semantic content of the narrative script. Still the question remains somewhat unanswered: What type of content can be deduced from the script in terms of sounding forms? From the surface it is as if the content of the music's sound-image is too abstract for the receiver to grasp. However the rhythm section can be perceived *as* a fumbling character; the string's dynamics *as* a chase; and the low deep tones of the contrabassoon *as* a relief. The abstract entity here is the *as-if*. The music articulates a specific expressive dimension, as Kramer would have said.<sup>402</sup> Finally, this understanding is hermeneutically motivated in terms of iconicity – metaphoric as well as diagrammatic.

#### Section V: Alone and Together

This section comprises of four separate compositions divided into two parts; the first deals with the topics of time and freedom, the second with the relationship between an urban setting and landscape – though the different topics intertwine. *Capriccio* means free composition, a sudden start, motion or change of mind.<sup>403</sup> This is captured within the first composition of this section called “Capriccio.” After experiencing a feeling of having ‘landed softly’ in the low deep tones of the contrabassoon in the previous composition, one almost gets carried away towards another emotional state in “Capriccio.” This signifies a structural change *between* these two compositions.

This C-sharp Major composition deals with the idea of catching time. It starts with four measures of an intensive 3/4 rhythm, which is repeated before a somewhat awkward melody is introduced. The melody is then doubled with soprano saxophone before Mehldau ‘flies’ away with a piano

402. See analysis of “Don’t Be Sad.”

403. See Erich Schwandt, “Capriccio (i),” in *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

solo using parts of the melody as his central point. There is a prominent, steady handclap with a tempo at 184 that continues throughout the whole piano solo. The melody then returns before a breaking point: at m. 46 the music shifts both in tempo (almost doubling the tempo) and in chord progression. The handclap, which is now even more prominent, becomes a metaphor for time. The narrative script says:

With the other travelers, he sees more of his surroundings than he did when he was alone, because there is another set of eyes to look through. Those others come and go, though, and sometimes he is alone. As his surroundings and his companionship constantly shifts, he experiences the way time passes: Something is capricious and ephemeral, you hold it in your hand and take pleasure in it; you feel its immediacy.

The highly fragmented rhythm becomes embodied from m. 46 when the chord progression changes from C-sharp Major to B-flat Major, and where the soprano saxophone is ‘up in the air’ desperately trying to catch time. This immediacy which is described in the narrative script is *felt* paradoxically only when the music has *stopped* playing – leaving the handclap/time in the thin air as if it were an entity *outside* the body. Against this background, one might say that the whole composition moves between metaphorical iconicity, both through its speed and steady rhythm, *and* weak diagram, creating a specific feeling of freedom.

3

EXAMPLE 7.1: The changes of chord progression in “Capriccio.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

Time as an entity outside of the body becomes somewhat unclear put into the context of the composition “Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith).”<sup>404</sup> That ‘something’ which John Boy takes pleasure in when time passes may even be time itself – time in the sense of feeling bound by time. Time within this context becomes something that weighs one down and offers freedom to another state of mind: ‘Then it [the ephemeral] leaves you, and you feel the weight of its absence; the sky turns grey.’

The piano introduction sets a melancholy mood, turning the previous B-flat Major composition into a B-flat minor key. The tempo is slower (144–152) and the melody, played by a tenor saxophone, appears in two distinct sections: 1) mm. 5–12 (C down to E-flat); 2) mm. 13–17 (ending on D-flat, while the chord progression continues to its subdominant E-flat and dominant F-flat). Thus the melody consists of a kind of question and answer relationship. The second time the melody is played, the answer is prolonged with stepwise descending figures (mm. 27, 29, 31, and 33) before the answer enters in m. 35 and ends on B-flat in m. 39. The descending figure is then repeated to make sure that the answer has been established. Along with the melody there is a trailing rhythm that sometimes pushes and sometimes holds the melody back within its beats. Next an improvisation section starts in a similar manner, following the same gesture as in mm. 5–12 (C, F, E), that is, using this motif as its material. The structure of the composition further enables Mehldau and Redman to improvise freely – though never really departing from the melodic motif.

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404. As the title of this composition suggests, it is a dedication to the late singer-songwriter Elliott Smith, which Mehldau worked with (misspelling his name “Elliot”). Dedications can be expressed in two different ways: as the action involving the work or the action involving the particular copy of the work. In Mehldau’s case, the dedication ascribes the first category. The natural question in this context is in what way the dedication has any relation to *Highway Rider* as a whole, that is, if it means something to the understanding of the story. I would say probably not, although the rest of the title suggests a melancholy mood – as the music does – which unmistakably captures Smith’s ill-fated destiny. See Genette, *Paratexts*, 117–143, in which he discusses the concepts of dedications and inscriptions in books.

♩ = CIRCA 144 - 152 **SKY TURNING GREY (FOR ELLIOT SMITH)** MEHLDAU, BRAD

PIANO INTRO:

5 BAND IN. TENOR SAX DOUBLES TOP MELODY NOTE W/ PIANO. INNER VOICES ONLY INCLUDED AS REFERENCE, NOT ABSOLUTE.  
GROOVE SIMILAR AS ABOVE...

13 BASS NOTES GIVEN HERE JUST TO SHOW SCALEWISE MOTION AND SUGGEST OCTAVE REGISTER (GIVEN HERE IN CONCERT PITCH).

21

28

36

44

52 TO CODA

BLOW ON 1-59. TAKE CODA LAST X ONLY ON HEAD OUT.

EXAMPLE 8.1: First page of the score to “Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith).” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

Even though “Capriccio” and “Sky Turning Grey” both deal with the concept of time, they do it differently. This makes it worthwhile to reflect upon how time as a concept may function in music that specifically deals with narrativity. Monelle makes a distinction between time and temporality. Time, he says, can be understood as something natural: ‘It is a condition of life [and is] continuous and irreversible.’<sup>405</sup> Everything happens *in* time. From the perspective of the story of *Highway Rider*, time occurs as something natural within the diegetic world without the listener actually thinking about it – at least not more than when characters come and go, that John Boy is sometimes alone and sometimes with others. The listener does not know how time is extended in and through the diegetic world: Is it days, weeks, months or years? What is clear is that there are events that take place in the story. Temporality, in contrast, is defined as cultural time. Sign systems, such as music or literature, proceed in time. However, this makes one ask whether the levels of expression (signifier) and content (signified) also acknowledge the same temporality. Monelle writes: ‘the time within which music is structured is not necessarily connected to the time [it] may *mean*.’<sup>406</sup> This means that in order for music to signify time – as it does in “Capriccio” – the syntactic features (how the music is structured) acquire a certain semantic aspect that is linked to a non-musical feature. According to Monelle, this is most often done indexically. With regards to “Capriccio” time is primarily signified syntactically through its apparent openness – the music stops but time continues by way of the handclap – thus emphasising a short fragment of natural time. The symbolic feature of this fragment points to something else not present in the musical structure – it is an index of freedom.

The tricky question here deals with “Sky Turning Grey” and how to distinguish between natural and cultural time; for instance, how is the title related to the music? The relationship can either be interpreted as indicating the protagonist’s internal state of mind or some external (natural) aspect in the diegetic world. The relationship between cause and effect

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405. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 81.

406. Monelle, *The Sense of Music*, 82–83.

is unclear. For instance, while it would be rather absurd to interpret the sky turning grey as *causing* the melancholy mood; one should instead interpret it allegorically as something that points to something else. From a multimodal perspective the melancholy feeling is the result when the musical space and the word space (script and title) are blended, that is, what the similarity enables – an unfree state of mind.

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[T]ime never stops. He travels further, always moving onward, through the throng of cities.

Suddenly the listener finds him- or herself in the centre of a fiery urban setting, which is shown in the repeated four-measure rhythmic pattern in the introduction of “Into The City” (see Example 9.1). This pattern continues in the background of the composition which a musical motif rests on – a motif that creates a delusion – before chaos emerges. Since there is no sense of direction, this points to a confused state of mind. The urban setting is further enhanced by the harsh, metallic sound of percussion along with a musical motif on piano, which together conveys a sense of stress and an unhealthy lifestyle. Philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) ascribes these kinds of fiery, unhealthy rhythms in his study of time and space in urban everyday life as arrhythmic.<sup>407</sup> These types of rhythms emerge at the intersection between space (the urban setting) and time and the energy it produces – in this case negative energy. The medium of music *embodies* these kinds of rhythms literally since they are *physically* felt – the sound of the music sets the body into vibration. In contrast to the reference of time in the composition “Capriccio” where time was experienced as something *outside* the body, time has now entered the blood system – it is *inside* the body. The metaphoric illustration has thus become a *literal* illustration – the musical metaphor of rhythms becomes flesh and blood, similar to an arrhythmic heart pulse.

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407. Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Time and Space in Everyday Life* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).





EXAMPLE 9.1: The rhythmic pattern in the introduction to “Into The city.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

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There are a few aspects in this interpretation that need to be commented upon: The music’s emotional nuances pave the way for an interpretation that *emerges* when paired with aspects of the text and the tropes associated with these alluded to cities. This pairing, or rather cross-domain mapping between words and music, highlights differences. Words like those expressed in the title and the narrative script seems to have problems embodying processes of various kinds – like emotions and movements of bodies through space. The function of language in the composition can only ‘direct our attention of [John Boy] to’<sup>408</sup> the concept or idea of what it feels like being in the throng of cities. This feeling can only be embodied by the music. This means that when both the words and music might share similar patterns separately, the production of meaning only occurs when they are blended. To conclude: It is a continuous hermeneutical process of connecting what Nattiez would perhaps describe as the esthetic tools through knowledge of the poietic reality to the music’s ‘immanent’ nature.

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In his text “As If a Voice Were in Them’: Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction,” Kramer uses Jacques Derrida’s essay “Force and Signification” to examine structural tropes in Beethoven and Schumann. Kramer writes: ‘Jacques Derrida considers the historical antagonism between two prin-

408. Zbikowski, “Music, Language, and Multimodal Metaphor,” 363.

ciples of understanding, structure and force.’<sup>409</sup> Structure is the organised totality, the order, while force is temporal and dynamic, associated with feelings that are graspable ‘as it disrupts structure and compels change.’<sup>410</sup> Using a structural trope during various forms in the analysis is one way to perform the interpretative act and therefore one way to produce meaning. Yet what about music that does not clearly evoke changes, or music where there is no clearly articulated structural trope? Can music mean anything *without* force? The next composition, “Old West” in C-sharp Major, seems to lack force, but at the same time it does mean something. The contrast between “Into The City” and “Old West” could not have been greater. It is almost a physical relief leaving the ‘throng of cities,’ to head out to the ‘dry land’ of the west where ‘there are fewer people.’ The pace is still relatively high (between 160 and 168 bpm), but the feeling is different. One can literally feel the *absence* of chaos when hearing the ‘free floating’ soprano saxophone improvising with the piano in the opening. The opening is ‘dream-like,’ with the piano almost ‘imitating’ a harp, followed by a soprano saxophone, which increases in intensity and pitch before landing softly on a rhythmic figure in the piano on the following chord progression: C-sharp Major, A Major7, F-sharp Major7 and A Major7/E.

The opposite of chaos is order; in this case the order gravitates around a centre – a melody that circulates in, through and around a dominant G-sharp, moving towards its tonic centre of C-sharp Major. As exemplified below (Example 10.1), the recurrent rhythmic feature in mm. 9–10, 16–17, and 20–21 is the difference that produces the meaning. However the difference is not primarily articulated *within* the composition. It is a difference that is produced by an extroversive semiosis, that is, in relation to the narrative script and the previous composition. To put it another way: there is a structural trope, which appears *between* the two compositions. Thus emerge a meaning created in and by the *space* that occurs between chaos and order. Understood this way, it is as if these two compositions in sound-

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409. Lawrence Kramer, “‘As If a Voice Were in Them’: Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction,” in *Music as Cultural Practice 1800–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 176.

410. Kramer, “‘As If a Voice Were in Them’: Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction,” 176.



EXAMPLE 10.1: The recurrent rhythmic feature (mm. 9–11; 16–17; 20–21) in “Old West.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

ing tones clearly embrace what Mehldau writes on the relation between chaos and order – that we are looking for order in chaos and ways of representing the journey from chaos to order.

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Taken as a whole, this section exemplifies the exploration of a nation’s culture: the *space* between city *and* landscape, utopia *and* dystopia. Therefore this section is worthy of the name *Highway Rider* as a musical road movie in terms of its musical content because it represents the core of what this genre is most often about: the blended space which is used to explore tension and crisis, thus capturing American dreams, tensions, and anxieties.<sup>411</sup>

### Section VI: Home Again

The last section of the narrative script has now entered the musical analysis, where the storyteller says that John Boy is close to where he began.

<sup>411</sup> See “*Highway Rider* as an Imaginary Musical Road Movie” in this chapter.

Here one may notice the result or conclusion as the third phase in Bal's idea of a narrative cycle. The narrative script says:

[H]e is close to home again. For one last time, he asks his friends to come with him. They make their last journey together. He leaves his friends, saying goodbye to them at the entrance to his hometown, where the roads get smaller again. He is home again.

The composition "Come With Me" is perhaps the most abstract and spontaneous when compared to the rest of the music. It invites a certain descriptive 'clumsiness,' and its abstract character has little room for interpretation beyond its pure material presence. However in this case, perhaps even more than the other compositions in the story of *Highway Rider*, the presence is *performative* – it is an act of resolution. Most of the music is improvised. It starts with distinctive rhythmic chords in the piano, which reoccur more or less throughout the whole composition, before the bass, drums and soprano saxophone enters. This builds a strong sense of 'togetherness' and 'freedom.' Furthermore, jazz improvisation is a social act which makes room for individuals to express themselves within a specific ideological framework – it is built on trust and self-awareness.

Similar to "Don't Be Sad" this title can also be approached from a speech-act perspective; both titles are illocutionary acts termed *directives* and both can be called commanding. However, in this case I would say that the title specifically invites the listener to be a part of the journey in its most abstract musical form as it reconnects the theme of the narrative. The title is performative (it has a dimension of intentionality, a directedness towards something or someone); not only does it describe a reality by being part of something imaginary, it *changes* this reality through describing it. Furthermore, some illocutionary acts in communication are *expressive* – they express the 'condition [...] of the speech act.'<sup>412</sup> The issue addressed within this communicative act is that while the title could be said to articulate a specific thought – in the *writings* of the narrative script – the performance of the music expresses this thought without thinking – in that

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<sup>412</sup>. Searle, *Mind, Language, and Society*, 149.

it ‘consumes itself in the moment.’<sup>413</sup> According to Kramer, articulations will always also have expressive dimensions: ‘Like articulations, expressions also contribute to what they describe.’<sup>414</sup> Moreover, ‘[i]n their illocutionary dimension, speech acts exemplify a larger category of expressive acts through which illocutionary forces pass into general circulation.’<sup>415</sup> Kramer suggests that:

If we can learn how to recognize [musical processes] as [expressive acts], to concretize the illocutionary forces of music as we concretize its harmonic, rhythmic, linear, and formal strategies, we can then go on to interpret musical meaning.<sup>416</sup>

Kramer’s techniques of interpretation discussed in the last section of Chapter I here function to concretize what the musical expression makes apparent: textual inclusion of both the title and the narrative script; citational inclusion of inferring the two-part melody in the saxophone improvisation (though in a very subtle way);<sup>417</sup> and structural trope by being the most abstract character compared to the other compositions – although in a somewhat strange way, as explained below.

This composition’s abstractness is more concrete than the other compositions, and the presence is not only physical but also *metaphysical*. Instead of hearing-as I want to approach the experience of the music as a feeling-as. Thus, the object of expression is not something external but internal. The act of resolution expressed in, by and through the music correlates to this internal aspect. This composition embodies this very idea through considering the essence of road movies, and the invisible feeling that complements the visible.<sup>418</sup> Furthermore, it is not necessarily the case that this metaphysical aspect should be interpreted as something unfathomable.

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413. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 5.

414. Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 4–5.

415. Kramer, “Tropes and Windows,” 9.

416. Kramer, “Tropes and Windows,” 9.

417. I will return to the issue of using the two-part melody throughout the whole cycle in the next chapter.

418. See “*Highway Rider* as an Imaginary Musical Road Movie” in this chapter.

Spitzer, for example, examines how metaphor and musical thinking is related to this metaphysical aspect:

*Meta* (to rise) informs both the passage from physis to 'meta'-physis (a process of 'rising up,' [...]) and the action of 'meta'-phor ('a movement of spatial translation,' giving a thing a name that belongs to something else). According to this narrative, language was originally figurative, so that concepts such as 'to grasp' or 'to apprehend' carried a metaphorical sense of physical action.<sup>419</sup>

The music becomes the metaphysical experience of living – it is the metaphor in its pure physical 'sounding form.' "Come With Me" therefore embodies both the process of rising up and the movement of spatial translation. Following this reasoning, one interesting parallel can be drawn to art historian David Summers and his concept of 'real metaphor.' This concept describes how something is substituted for a real thing and how the metaphor tends to create subjunctive spaces 'in which desires are fulfilled, created and sustained through their capacity to serve as substitutes.'<sup>420</sup> This can be interpreted as the space where *extended* metaphors are explored and realised; by this I mean those metaphors, which ask what it means to fulfil the desire to come home from a journey. In addition, the title functions somewhat differently, in relation to the subject listener, in its isolation from the narrative script than if they were integrated: the title is directed at the listener, while the narrative script is addressed to the characters in the diegetic world. The voice that speaks through the music functions in two ways.

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The observant reader knows that the concept album does not end with the composition "Come With Me." However, I would argue that the *cycle* ends

419. Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, 129.

420. Susan L. Feagin, "Painting and Their Places," in *Art and Its Messages: Meaning, Morality, and Society*, ed. Stephen Davies (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 22.

with this composition. In the next chapter I will focus on this issue in more detail by contextualising the work in terms of the different types of song cycles and the two-part melody.

## FIVE

### Cyclic, Narrative and Psychoanalytic Aspects of *Highway Rider*

So, how *does* the listener know when a cycle has ended? Does the answer lie somewhere within the musical structure or in the narrative form of the music? Rather, does it lie somewhere outside the music? Normally, asking these questions would be strange. Often the listener knows when a piece of music has ended – its internal structure has signs that point to its end, whether it be a II-V-I progression in a piece of jazz music or a IV-V-I cadence in a classical sonata, etc. Furthermore, the listener can *feel* when the music is complete. However these examples are not cycles, they are individual compositions. In the case of *Elegiac Cycle*, Mehldau uses the same melodic material to link the first and last composition within the cycle, which relate to the same topic. With regards to *Highway Rider*, knowing when the cycle has ended not only seems relevant, but also important. A song cycle, which *Highway Rider* can structurally be compared to, firstly is not the same as a mere collection of independent pieces of music within the cycle. To be regarded as a song cycle the work must be connected to some kind of narrative form – a cyclic movement in which *unity* is created by an ending that points back to the beginning. It must also follow its own internal structure, which means that it must be *coherent*. As has been shown, this can take the form of at least four types of cycles: 1) the topic cycle; 2) the external-plot cycle; 3) the internal-plot cycle, and 4) the musically constructed cycle. Since these cycles are primarily songs with lyrics compared to Mehldau's unsung words (instrumental music), they cannot simply be transferred to the construction of *Highway Rider*. The narrative function therefore differs due to how the words and music are related – for instance, whether they are integrated, combined or transformed. In one sense, *Highway Rider* may incorporate an external-plot cycle since these compositions are 'excerpted from larger-scale



narratives.<sup>422</sup> Yet as Tunbridge says, they most ‘often make no sense as stories in themselves.’<sup>423</sup> This is true for the individual compositions in *Highway Rider*: they do not make sense from this perspective, nor should they. Instead, they are bound together with the two-part melody and *transformed* from an external coherent narrative script. Mehlau’s work should be considered to be an internal-plot cycle whose order of compositions ‘should be respected.’<sup>424</sup> These types of cycles are those whose poetry entails a narrative, once again showing how the music in Mehlau’s work possesses narrativity rather than being a narrative by transforming an external coherent narrative script into instrumental music.

The following chapter is divided into two parts. The first part will take unity as an intra-musical feature under scrutiny, while the second part will focus on the extra-musical aspects that contribute to a deeper understanding of the semantic content of the work.

### First Part: Unity as a Musical Experience

In the text “Concepts of Musical Unity,” Fred Everett Maus explores unity as a criterion of value for a musical work and shows how important unity was for evaluating instrumental music during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century. However, he also shows how unclear this criterion is:

Perhaps we do not always know what we mean by ‘musical unity’: perhaps unity (whatever it is) is not as important or as central as we have sometimes believed.<sup>425</sup>

However, I would argue that musical unity, at least in this study, is central to understanding the whole story, although it is not quite clear how this is manifested. Maus continues by saying that the discourse about musical unity is closely associated with technical musical analysis. Implicitly, this

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422. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 4.

423. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 4.

424. Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle*, 4.

425. Fred Everett Maus, “Concepts of Musical Unity,” in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 171.

could be interpreted as one of the goals of the essay, though never clearly articulated. In terms of semiotic analysis at the paradigmatic level one may even argue that the discovery of some kind of underlying rule that spans the entire work is the same as displaying musical unity. The logical connection between different musical units in the case of *Highway Rider* could be interpreted as the two-part melody; however, this logical connection does not really say anything about the semantic content of the work. As Maus says, 'it would be wrong to identify discourse about musical unity with music-analytical discourse.'<sup>426</sup> Thinking about unity does not necessarily 'require, or invite, explicit verbal description of musical detail.'<sup>427</sup> With this in mind he puts forward three critical issues that need to be explored: 1) unity is an important musical value; 2) critics have over-emphasised unity at the expense of other values; and 3) the attribution of musical unity should not be a goal at all.<sup>428</sup> It would be wrong to argue against the importance of unity, but there are other aspects that make the music at least as valuable from a narrative perspective like the non- and extra-musical features that align the music with the narrative script. One of the questions that I asked in my discussion about narrativity in music is where the story/narrative takes place, meaning whether it is in the mind of the reader/listener, in the written text that accompanies the music, or somewhere *else*. This is where Maus' discussion becomes important. He says that a 'relevant description of various properties of a composition [must contribute to the] experiences in interacting with that composition.'<sup>429</sup> This means that even though one may identify different forms, variations and disguises of the two-part melody in the score, this identification does not necessarily contribute to the *experience* of musical unity. So, what '[besides] a composition could be "musically unified"?'<sup>430</sup> This question could also be put the other way around: 'When one has an experience of musical unity, *what is it* that is unified?'<sup>431</sup> Maus' starting point for his

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426. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 171.

427. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 172.

428. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 173–175.

429. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 175.

430. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 178.

431. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 178.

reasoning is philosopher John Dewey's ideas of the concept experience.<sup>432</sup> According to Dewey there are two types of experiences: one that occurs continuously (the everyday life experience), another that is integrated and 'demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences.'<sup>433</sup> Maus' conclusion is that when listening to a piece of music:

... one may have an experience that is demarcated from experience-in-general as a distinct event. This experience consists of interaction between the listener and the music, in which the listener both 'does' and 'undergoes' – that is, construes the music, and responds continuously on the basis of previous construals, new sounds. The experience can be described as unified, and the occurrence of such experience is one reason to associate music and unity.<sup>434</sup>

Aside from the obvious similarity with Monelle's distinction between natural and cultural time (or between time and temporality), the musical experience may be further described as a musical world (or a fictional world, a story). As Maus says: '[a musical] unity belongs to a story somehow communicated in or by the music.'<sup>435</sup> This not only has consequences for experiencing *Highway Rider* as a story by means of the topical and external-plot cycle in relation to the narrative script. It also has implications for deciding, through the musical experience, how the story ends. The general topic, the journey away from home, and the return home, seems to naturally end with the composition "Come With Me." *Highway Rider* has a plot-structure characteristic for a road movie both with regards to form and content. The work tells a story by aligning dramatic and descriptive gestures (e.g. melodies, motifs) using both verbal and visual resources. To be more specific: the story takes place when the narrative script, the image, the titles and the music are put together as a whole.

So much for the cyclic aspect, but what about the work's narrative aspect? At this point one can understand how the music relates to what Ryan describes as a narrative script: 1) that it creates a world and populates

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432. Here Maus refers to John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (New York, 1934).

433. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 179.

434. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 180.

435. Maus, "Concepts of Musical Unity," 182.

it with characters: a world that is set in the vast American desert populated with the protagonist John Boy, children and other 'unknown' characters; 2) that it undergoes changes of state, which creates a temporal dimension: a journey (external as well as internal) away from home, alone and together with others, and back home again; and 3) that the story allows the reconstruction of an interpretative network of goals, plans, causal relations and psychological motivations around the narrative event. However this last point is a tricky one. As I already have argued, instrumental music seems to have problems in meeting such a criteria. If the reconstruction is set within the framework of a non-formalised analysis of the different compositions using a metaphoric metalanguage as exemplified in Figure 6 (below), the reconstruction might be possible.

With the reconstruction in mind, two transmedial features can be identified: *dynamic* (narrative) and *static* (description). Wolf elaborates on the difference between these two features and shows that they are usually in opposition. With regards to the music, this opposition implies that it cannot be narrative, and at most possesses narrativity and in certain cases it can describe objects in a narrative framework. However, this opposition should be regarded as 'an oversimplification and must be rejected.'<sup>436</sup> Wolf argues that dynamic processes cannot be excluded from descriptions, such as in film where it 'can occur from the point of view of observing agencies in motion.'<sup>437</sup> I would add that dynamic processes cannot be excluded from description in music either. Furthermore, the same object of representation 'can be involved in both a description and a narrative irrespective of its static and spatial or dynamic and temporal quality.'<sup>438</sup> Put into the narrative framework of *Highway Rider*, the metaphoric metalanguage shows that the story is dynamic and static, narrative and descriptive.

Before leaving the discussion on the cyclic and narrative function of *Highway Rider*, the two-part melody needs to be further discussed to see whether it works as a unifying feature in the story. This will be the issue of the next section of this chapter.

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436. Wolf, "Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation," 23.

437. Wolf, "Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation," 23.

438. Wolf, "Description as a Transmedial Mode of Representation," 24.

## CYCLIC, NARRATIVE AND PSYCHOANALYTIC ASPECTS

Sections	Compositions	Metaphoric metalanguage
I: Home	“John Boy”	Moving toward an unspecified goal
	“Don’t Be Sad”	Damper; sadness; lament; sigh; melancholy; longing for something unknown
	“At The Tollbooth”	Contemplation; stand still ( <i>not</i> moving); transit; gateway; hesitation of desire
	“Highway Rider”	Moving again – now towards certainty; freedom
II: Freedom	“The Falcon Will Fly Again”	Freedom; hope; happiness
III: Alone	“Now You Must Climb Alone”	Ambiguity; crisis; uncertainty
	“Walking The Peak”	Tension; drama; realisation
IV: Together	“We’ll Cross The River Together”	Fumbling; fragmentation; dream-like
V: Alone and Together	“Capriccio”	A sudden change of mind; catching time; immediacy
	“Sky Turning Grey”	Melancholy mood; longing for freedom; letting time go
	“Into The City”	Chaos; delusion; stress; arrhythmia
	“Old West”	Absence of chaos; dream-like; towards home; gravity
VI: Home Again	“Come With Me”	Togetherness; freedom; trust; self-awareness

FIGURE 6: Reconstruction of the interpretative network around the narrative event.

### *Silent/Salient Units as Unifying Narrative Features: Meaning and Effect*

One way to consider the two-part melody is to look at it as both a *salient* unit that connects the different compositions and a *silent* unit that acts by being felt rather than ‘heard.’ By silent I mean that the melody is *there*,

lingering in our mind as something familiar without being able to pinpoint exactly what it is and become integrated into different musical textures. In this respect the melody has the *effect* of creating musical unity. Moreover, this also corresponds with Mehldau's compositional strategy of using a single musical motif in order to create a specific narrative quality: rhythmically, in different tempos, using different parts of the melody, etc. Again it is important to point out that this narrative quality does not really say anything of the *semantic* content of the music, only that it creates a sense of a closed, coherent form. Thereby in this context, it is important not to confuse meaning and effect. For instance, as Cook says, 'what distinguishes the concept of meaning and effect is that the former is predicated on communication, on human agency, whereas the latter is not.'<sup>439</sup> This is one reason why I have emphasised the communicative context within which *Highway Rider* occurs since it enables us to approach the questions of how, where and when musical meaning is produced. Even though these two concepts must be kept apart, they cannot be separated altogether with regards to the narrative aspect of the story. The effect of using a single musical motif may be for creating a sense of coherence or unity and therefore a sense of the fictional world. However in order for the music to possess narrativity and say something about the semantic content of the fictional world, it must rely on some kind of extra-musical aspect. I will return to this in the second part of this chapter.

The identification of the two-part melody in its various forms is problematic. To locate the *sense* of the musical unity in the score can be deceptive. It's like looking for unity in a random slideshow, where the images are not related to each other; as human subjects we tend to create unity even when there is nothing that links the images together. For instance, the mere fact that two images or musical motifs are juxtaposed affects our perception and meaning production. The human mind needs to create order out of chaos – even in music. In the following section I will highlight the purpose of understanding their possible functions while asking whether these examples contribute to the experience of musical unity. At this stage it is important to be reminded of the implied listener and that I am focusing

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439. Cook, "Music and Meaning in the Commercials," 28.

on a special type of such a listener – the informed and engaged listener. Therefore the examples will be as descriptive and concise as possible.

Let us start with how the two-part melody sounds as it appears in the beginning of “Now You Must Climb Alone” (Example 11.1). The composition starts off slowly with the violins – from soft (*p*) to moderately soft (*mp*) and to soft again, following the gesture of the melody. The first part moves slowly from C-sharp, F-sharp and G-sharp up to B before it moves down again to temporarily ‘land’ in F-sharp; the other part continues where the first left off and moves up from the enharmonic E-sharp/F before ending on a C-sharp which is one octave higher than the beginning. Thus emerges an ambiguity in the tonality, oscillating between C-sharp Major and F-sharp minor:



EXAMPLE 11.1: The beginning seven measures of “Now You Must Climb Alone.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

As indicated in the analysis of “Now You Must Climb Alone,” parts of this melody already emerged in the previous composition “The Falcon Will Fly Again” – most notably in mm. 5–6 compared to mm. 3–4 in the two-part melody (see Example 11.2 below). Moreover, in various forms, parts of this melody emerged from the very beginning of the entire work and it will continue to emerge throughout the rest of the compositions – both in ‘silence’ and in more prominent forms. The first eight measures of the melody in “John Boy” (mm. 5–12) have the same melodic gesture (rolling quavers) but in a ‘reduced’ form as in mm. 1–4 in the two-part melody. If this example is somewhat vague regarding the similarity between the melodic gestures, the next two examples are more prominent (Example 11.3). The beginning melody (mm. 17–20) of “Don’t Be Sad” is similar to mm. 1–4 (Example 11.4), as is the case with mm. 9–12 and 13–16 of “Highway Rider” (Example 11.5). In comparison with “John Boy” but unlike the two examples above, “At The Tollbooth” disguises the first part of the two-part melody.

MELODY:

5  $E\Delta^{ADD4}$   $F\sharp-11$   $E\Delta^{ADD4}/G\sharp$   $D\Delta6$   $C\Delta6/7$   $G\Delta6/9$   $A\Delta^{ADD2}$   $B7\sharp15$

SIMILAR RHYTHM AS ABOVE. *ad lib*

EXAMPLE 11.2: “The Falcon Will Fly Again”: The similarity between mm. 5–6 and mm. 3–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

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TELA DOM

PNO.

NOW, CONTINUE ROLLING EIGHTH NOTES, BUT BRING OUT TOP VOICE IN RIGHT HAND AS MELODY:

EXAMPLE 11.3: “John Boy”: The beginning of the melody compared with mm. 1–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

17 Melody - *ad lib*:

Pno.

EXAMPLE 11.4: “Don’t Be Sad”: The similarity between mm. 17–20 and mm. 1–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

“Walking The Peak” literally uses the two-part melody in the block chords in the piano. Mehldau elaborates with the melody in order to create a sense of drama in the composition. At the end of the piano solo the melody enters again. “We’ll Cross The River Together” is, just like “Walking The Peak,” interesting for several reasons which will be apparent soon (in the





EXAMPLE 11.5: “Highway Rider”: The similarity to mm. 1–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.



EXAMPLE 11.6: “Capriccio”: The similarity between the opening melody to mm. 5–7 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

next chapter). The whole composition begins with a two-part melody played in the horn, of which the first part is similar to the first four measures of “Now You Must Climb Alone.” Yet throughout the composition, fragments and pieces of the melody emerge in different instruments – such as the English horn [cor anglais], tenor saxophone, and strings – and the composition also ends using fragments of the melody. The composition itself has a clear closed and coherent form, creating a strong sense of musical unity. Furthermore, the opening melody of the highly rhythmic composition “Capriccio” is the exact same as mm. 6–7 of the two-part melody but put into a new rhythmic context (Example 11.6).



EXAMPLE 11.7: “Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith)”: The similarity between mm. 9–11 and mm. 3–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.



EXAMPLE 11.8: “Into The City”: The similarity between the beginning to mm. 5–7 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

In “Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith),” parts of the two-part melody are integrated into the first part of the composition’s melody (Example 11.7). For instance, mm. 9–12 resembles the descending motif of mm. 3–4. The two-part melody is also transformed into the stressful feeling in the beginning of “Into The City” as shown above (Example 11.8).

As we may recall, the contrast between “Into The City” and “Old West” could not have been greater – the urban versus the western environment. The use of the two-part melody is also different in character; furthermore, in “Old West” the two-part melody is not distinctive. However one could interpret the melody in mm. 5–12 as a kind of extended variant of mm. 1–4



EXAMPLE 11.9: “Old West”: The similarity between mm. 5–12 to mm. 1–4 of the two-part melody. © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

of the two-part melody. First and foremost, the tempo in “Old West” is quicker; secondly, the descending movement occurs in two steps before the melody cadences to G-sharp (the fifth to C-sharp). This interpretation might be regarded as rather vague; yet it can be accepted if one considers the rhythmic aspect of the melody in m. 9: a dotted minim [half-note] followed by two crotchets compared to mm. 3–4 of the two-part melody: a dotted crotchet followed by a quaver and a semibreve (Example 11.9).

As previously argued, “Come With Me” is perhaps the most abstract composition; it is difficult to identify any trace of the two-part melody. However, the very first motif in the tenor saxophone solo – a three-note motif which is repeated once and then developed into a ‘free’ improvisation – shares certain similarities with mm. 6–7 of the two-part melody.

Whether these examples are convincingly enough are debatable, but they can be motivated by Mehldau’s poetic writings as well as the act of listening. The act of listening or the musical experience of a recurrent motif (whether it is objectively deducible from the two-part melody or not) is central for our experience of unity. Here the melody contributes by creating a sense of musical unity – albeit intra-musical.

In light of this conclusion the concept of unity must be further approached from the perspective of extra-musical features. I will therefore conclude this chapter by taking a cultural perspective, or more precisely a psychoanalytic framework, within which the position of the subject listener (esthetic process) will be at centre. This will also allow me to revisit one of the questions put forward in Chapter 1, namely where the story/narrative takes place.

## Second Part: Psychoanalytic Aspects of the Imaginary Movie

From the narrative script as a whole, first without listening to the music, emerges a cyclic movement from ‘we meet the traveller at home’ to ‘he is home again’ – an ending that points to its beginning. The experience of this movement (though the concept of experience is less than sublime in this case) is integrated and demarcated, as Dewey would have said, in the general stream of experience from other experiences.<sup>440</sup> The cyclic movement is the thin line that demarcates the so-called diegetic world, the spatiotemporal universe within which the story takes place, from the non-diegetic. When this universe is further integrated with the *musical* experience the work is transformed into something which is not real (at least not in the same sense as a novel, a poem or a movie) but rather into something *totally imaginary*: the narrative script is transformed into an imaginary musical road movie that *only* takes place in the mind of the listener; the experience is only as real as a fictional movie *within* the listener’s imagination. So, even though the narrative script and the music exist as real material entities, the imaginary movie is dependent on the experience of these real but fictional material entities. Put into the context of Elleström’s model for understanding intermedial relations one could say: 1) that the *material modality* of *Highway Rider* consists of the flat surface and the three-dimensional object in terms of the Digipak as a whole and the latent corporeal interface of the music through its sound waves; 2) that the *sensory modality* consists of hearing and listening to the music and the looking of the photograph on the front cover of the record sleeve; 3) that the structuring of the sensorial perception of the material interface by way of *spatiotemporal modality* consists of the experience of time (natural and cultural time) and the construction of a virtual space which I define as *the imaginary musical road movie*; and 4) the understanding of this imaginary road movie further depends on how the material, the sensory and the *semiotic modalities* are related through different symbolic, iconic and indexical relations between musical and non-musical features. To conclude: *I suggest that the imaginary musical road movie should*

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440. See “First Part: Unity as a Musical Experience” in this chapter.

*be understood as the creation of meaning in the spatiotemporally conceived medium by way of sign interpretation.*

The dependency on the real material entities has a performative aspect. An informed/engaged listener must in some way or another *activate* the movie. Moreover, this makes one wonder what function music has in relation to such an imaginary fictive movie. Normally, when analysing film music, one tends to look for traces in the movie narrative where the music (or sounds) either enhances the visual aspects by using cultural conventions from a non-diegetic perspective, or where the music acts as an agent as something that performs the narrative from a diegetic perspective – and sometimes the spectator is not sure whether the music is diegetic or non-diegetic. This plays with the imagination of different spatiotemporal dimensions. As shown in parts of my analysis of the material traces, as in the case with “John Boy” in which there occurs a conceptual metaphoric transfer between two distinct and separate spaces, the music functions both as diegetic and non-diegetic: both by infusing musical elements into the diegetic world through the imitations of real sounds and by transferring ‘its own attributes to the story-line.’<sup>441</sup> The music also enhances the feeling of being contentment – it thus both denotes and connotes. However, instead of regarding music as something that disguises ‘its participation in the diegetic illusion’ as film theorist Claudia Gorbman suggests in her *Unheard Melodies* (1987),<sup>442</sup> it does the opposite. It is the very condition for the diegetic illusion – the melodies are not unheard, they are spoken out loud. Of course one could similarly turn Gorbman’s reasoning upside down and speak of *unseen images*;<sup>443</sup> however, there is a difference in the case of *Highway Rider* compared to Gorbman’s as both music and moving images in the latter case has a *material* presence whereas the moving images in *Highway Rider* only has a *mental* presence.

441. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 21.

442. Cook, *Analysing Musical Multimedia*, 21–22. See also Cook, “Music and Meaning in the Commercials,” 38, and Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies*, 64 and 72.

443. Compare the idea of ‘unseen’ images with the discussion on ‘unsung’ voices, in which the music lacks words, but still encompasses what the words say. Unseen images could therefore be interpreted in the same way: music that lacks images but still encompasses what the images shows.

Another way to understand music's function in the imaginary movie is how the two-part melody becomes part of the diegetic world. Recent studies in film musicology have begun to question the distinction being made between the diegetic and the non-diegetic. Musicologist Ben Winters even argues that the distinction 'threatens to separate it from the space of the narrative, denying it an active role in shaping the course of onscreen events, and unduly restricting our reading of film.'<sup>444</sup> As an example of how this problem can manifest itself, he mentions how the character of 'Indiana Jones cannot exist without [his musical] theme. And, of course, that theme would be nothing without Indiana Jones.'<sup>445</sup> Now, I do not propose that *Highway Rider*, or rather the main protagonist in the diegetic world (John Boy), cannot exist without the specific two-part melody in the same sense as the leitmotif ("The Raiders March") is associated with the character of Indiana Jones.<sup>446</sup> However I will argue that the two-part melody plays an active role in the narrative and is part of the creation of the events that are taking place in the diegetic world. The melody can be understood as a reflexion of an internal transformation of the character.<sup>447</sup> Thereby the melody can be interpreted as an intra-musical aspect and, at the same time, it contributes to a semantic content.

*The Imaginary Musical Road Movie as an Imaginary Signifier*

The mental presence of the imaginary moving images opens itself up to interpretation of what the story as a whole might mean. One way to approach this type of interpretation is through what I would define as a *higher order of analysis* in which the *subjectivity* of ourselves becomes the central point in the production of meaning. This may appear somewhat contradictory due to the discussion of musical unity. However, the move

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444. Ben Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music, and Narrative Space," *Music and Letters* 91:2 (2010): 224.

445. Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy," 224.

446. The theme of "The Raiders March" has become a cultural icon, which is not always the case of leitmotifs.

447. See discussion in Chapter 4, "Analysis of Two Levels of Materiality" – particularly the discussion dealing with the narrative structure of the road movie.

from the music and the work itself, as if it were some kind of an autonomous, self-contained entity, which of course it is not, to the subjective experience of the work bears its relevance through Mehldau's poietic and esthetic processes; his way of using the two-part melody to represent 'the journey from chaos to order, no matter how inverted the approach'<sup>448</sup> motivates the higher order of analysis. So, the questions that need to be explored are: What is the relationship between the idea of unity and chaos/order? How can an understanding of this relationship be approached? I suggest that Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis can shed some light on this by way of how it is used within film studies.<sup>449</sup> It is after all a movie that has been discussed, and even if the movie is imaginary and something the receiver 'projects' onto an empty white cinema screen in his/her mind, the images are 'triggered' by the different levels of the material traces and the levels of paratexts. This theory may shed some light on the question which Mehldau himself asks in his writings, namely whether a piece of music with its wordless language of tones could tell us something about discursive thought. The theory may help us to understand the recurrent references in his writings on subjects such as emptiness, freedom and desire like those expressed in Rilke's sonnets. Kochhar-Lindgren's interpretation of Rilke exemplified in Chapter 3 now becomes relevant in relation to the Lacanian psychoanalysis; as mentioned, Kochhar-Lindgren reveals in his analysis of Rilke's poem how the human subject longs for the freedom implied by emptiness, and that the subject is also terrified that this longing 'requires the surrender of the ego, which is our death.'<sup>450</sup> These concepts are more or less inscribed in Lacan's psychoanalysis. This is what the following section is about: to understand the discursive thought through such concepts as freedom, longing and desire. The use of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is also motivated by the inference of the concept of real metaphor

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448. Mehldau, "Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative."

449. I am quite aware of that Lacan's theory differs from others', such as Julia Kristeva's, and that some may disagree with my way of using psychoanalysis. However, my main point is not so much about giving a full account of how to use psychoanalysis with a musical work as *Highway Rider* but rather to show one way to interpret such a work.

450. See Mehldau, "Looking Back on Elegiac Cycle;" Section "Form, Style and Narrative" in Chapter 3; and Kochhar-Lindgren, "Slipping Through the Strings," 44.

discussed in the last section (“Home Again: ‘Come With Me’”), a type of metaphor that creates a space within which there emerge a desire ‘to come home.’ Here the space of desire is the spatiotemporal universe within which the story takes place. However, since the receiver creates meaning through the material traces (immanent structure) by way of a hermeneutic process, this can also be interpreted as if the subject listener projects his or her own desire onto the story. The hermeneutic process defines the signifying practice in that it puts *culture* into work.

In the article “On the *Lost Highway*: Lynch and Lacan, Cinema and Cultural Pathology,” literary scholar Bernd Herzogenrath argues that the road metaphor serves ‘as a trope not so much for freedom and rebellion, but as life as such as detour.’<sup>451</sup> Here he turns to Lacanian psychoanalysis in his study of David Lynch’s movie *Lost Highway* (1997) and shows how such an analysis can be applied to movies in general. There is one specific concept that I will dwell on: *the imaginary signifier*. Herzogenrath uses this concept in relation to the question of what ‘we are doing when we are watching a film.’<sup>452</sup> Furthermore, the road metaphor and its relation to the imaginary signifier seems to be suited for interpreting *Highway Rider* as a road movie for at least two reasons (aside from Lacan explicitly using the word ‘highway’ as metaphor).<sup>453</sup> The road is a central aspect of the story – it makes the narrative possible, and it serves as a means to understand the relationship between chaos and order. From a syntactic perspective the musical structure is transformed to a metaphorical level where chaos and order are culturally unfolding.

Lacan makes a distinction between three basic concepts: the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic.<sup>454</sup> Simply put, the Real is the first stage of the

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451. Bernd Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*: Lynch and Lacan, Cinema and Cultural Pathology,” *Other Voices: The (e)Journal of Cultural Criticism* 1:3 (1999).

452. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.” The concept of the imaginary signifier comes from Christian Metz’ study of film, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982).

453. Herzogenrath refers to Lacan’s text “The Highway and the Signifier ‘Being a Father’,” published in *The Psychoses: Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III 1955–1956* (New York and London: Norton Company, 1993), 285–294.

454. See Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*,” and David Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*:



human being; it deals with chaos and loss of control; the Imaginary deals with the subject's ego and the notion of wholeness in which the subject reflects him- or herself in their own mirror image through the mother; and the Symbolic deals with language and the sign system within which the subject incorporate cultural norms, values and laws for desire. At this third stage, the subject is not only trapped within language; he or she is also metaphorically castrated from being in the centre (ego). The consequence of this castration is that the subject longs for the wholeness of the Imaginary – but it is a longing whose desire never can be fully achieved. The Symbolic introduces a specific *desire* for that wholeness for the subject's lifetime. Desire, accordingly, deals with a unity that is forever lost and where the subject aims to recreate that lost unity. As Herzogenrath says:

The 'strategy' of desire emerges as a result of the subject's separation from the real and the 'means' by which the subject tries to catch up with this real, lost unity again. It is thus desire that accounts for the subject's trajectory through the human world, which according to Lacan 'isn't a world of things, isn't a world of being, it is a world of desire as such'.<sup>455</sup>

The constant feeling of lacking which is brought about this desire becomes part of a creative process as well as what *Highway Rider* is all about. As Mehldau says: 'A desire for unity is [...] part and parcel of my own creative drive, and manifests itself strongly on Highway Rider [sic]'.<sup>456</sup> To anticipate the upcoming discussion I would say that the concept and phenomenon of desire constitutes the main theme of the narrative. Here the desire for unity is represented by the journey from chaos to order, where chaos is framed within Lacan's concept of the Real and order with the Imaginary.

The question asked above, 'what are we are doing when we are watching a film,' can be rephrased through another question: 'what is the position of the spectator with respect to a film?'<sup>457</sup> It is within this second question that the concept of the imaginary signifier can be explored. However it is

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*Music, Psychoanalysis, Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 16.

455. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*."

456. Mehldau, "Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative."

457. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*."

important not to mix the diegetic illusion of a real but fictive movie with the diegetic illusion of an imaginary musical road movie since the diegetic reality is not only an illusion but also that 'the unfolding itself is fictive: the actor, the "décor," the words one hears are all absent, everything is *recorded*.'<sup>458</sup> There is therefore a 'dual character of [the diegetic illusion's] signifier [in that] the spectator and the spectacle do not share the same space.'<sup>459</sup> This is the point where the concept of imaginary signifier emerges and where Lacan's psychoanalysis enters.

The imaginary signifier, as a concept, was first developed by French film theorist Christian Metz. Cinema, he says, is a 'technique of the imaginary' in two senses: first since 'most films consists of fictional narratives and because all films depend even for their signifier on the primary imaginary of photography and phonography' (that is, on the visual and the auditory); second, in terms of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in which:

... the imaginary, opposed to the symbolic but constantly imbricated with it, designates the basic lure of the *ego*, the definite imprint of a *before* the Œdipus complex (which also continues after it), the durable mark of the mirror which alienates man in his own reflection and makes him the double of his double, the subterranean persistence of the exclusive relation to the mother, desire as a pure effect of lack and endless pursuit, the initial core of the unconscious (primal repression).<sup>460</sup>

This rather complex quotation needs to be discussed further. The first point is that it is virtually impossible to speak of the Imaginary *without* relating it to the Symbolic (and in some sense to the Real). In relation to cinema, the Imaginary is 'reactivated by the actions of that *other mirror*, the cinema screen.'<sup>461</sup> This leads to a second notion, once again emphasising the importance of not mixing the diegetic illusion of the real movie

458. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*."

459. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*." Compare this reasoning with the so-called imaginary fourth wall in a theatre, which deals with an imaginary boundary between a fictional work and its spectator.

460. Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 15.

461. Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, 15.

with the diegetic illusion of the imaginary movie, namely that the other mirror of the diegetic illusion is only created in the mind of the listener. The primary imaginary has no 'real' moving images, so to speak, only words and music. The empty white cinema screen here functions as a symbol for the imagination as if it were a screen in front of the inner eye. The relationship between the Imaginary and the signifier, 'the semiotic imprint of the Law' as Metz writes, or the cinematic code, which emerge in the Symbolic order as that which regulates the desire for the Imaginary now becomes even more complicated with regards to the spectator's/listener's emotional and intellectual *investment* into and onto the story.

Herzogenrath's interpretation of the imaginary signifier and its relation to film is explained by the wishes with which the film wants to fulfil 'and at the same time what it is always careful to leave gaping in order to survive as desire.'<sup>462</sup> All objects in the film are regarded as substitutes in that they '[pursue] an imaginary object (a "lost object") which is its true object, an object that has always been lost and is always desired as such.'<sup>463</sup> This means that 'the subject is always split, and [that] traumatic loss is central to subjectivity.'<sup>464</sup> The process towards the lost object functions as a 'circle that cannot close.'<sup>465</sup> From a cultural perspective one might even say that the interpretation of the individual's ontological status (the desire towards the lost object) is that of a hermeneutic spiral rather than a circle.<sup>466</sup>

This rather condensed description of the imaginary signifier makes it possible to compare it to Lacan's theory of desire. However, this description also leads to the more important question of how desire for the imaginary signifier is realised – both in relation to film and particularly to an imaginary musical road movie such as *Highway Rider*. A common theory

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462. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*." Compare this reasoning with what I put forward previously about the imaginary space which is created in the gap between the listener and the work.

463. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*."

464. Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*, 68.

465. Schwarz, *Listening Subjects*, 69. The circle is blocked by 'objet a.'

466. Johan Fornäs, "Post Anti-Hermeneutics: Reclaiming Culture, Meaning and Interpretation," in *Hunting High and Low: Skriftfest til Jostein Gripsrud på 60-årsdagen*, ed. Jan Fredrik Hovden et al. (Oslo: Scandinavian Academic Press, 2012), 490–518.

within film studies is that the spectator not only identifies with the main character of the film but also that the spectator – *simultaneously* – identifies with a specific camera position.<sup>467</sup> The specific position with which the spectator has in relation to film is called *suture*, meaning, ‘to stitch the spectator into the filmic text.’<sup>468</sup> In the theory of Lacan, suture specifically ‘denotes the conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic,’<sup>469</sup> that is, suture denotes the desire for re-creating the lost unity:

[T]he subject’s identification with the movie fundamentally relies on this ‘conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic’ levels within the cinematic discourse itself.<sup>470</sup>

Suture thus ‘ties the spectator into the movie by mapping the visual/aural [...] means of representation onto the narrative.’<sup>471</sup> I will return to suture in a somewhat different context below.

Moving from film to the imaginary musical road movie of *Highway Rider*, the relation between the spectator and the spectacle is somewhat strange. The imaginary boundary between the spectator/listener and the road movie is erased in the sense that the movie is constructed only in our mind; the shared space between the spectator and the spectacle should be interpreted as a cognitive issue, meaning a sign that *only* exists as meaning since it is created in the mind by the receiver.<sup>472</sup> This further relates to the spatiotemporal modality in that a virtual/cognitive space (a mental rather than a material space) is created through an esthetic process by way of the poietic process. Unlike a real movie where the moving images support the narrative fiction, in *Highway Rider* it is the narrative script that supports the narrative fiction. The real movie relies on a desire on the spectator, whereas in the imaginary musical road movie it is the narrative script that

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467. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

468. Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 378.

469. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

470. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

471. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

472. Elleström, *Visuell ikonicitet i lyrik*, 58.

relies on the desire on the reader/listener. However this way of differentiating a real movie from an imaginary movie is somewhat unclear. Unlike a real movie, which is an audio-visual medium where sound/music and moving images are all present simultaneously as the spectator watches the film (whether or not the music is diegetic or non-diegetic), the music in *Highway Rider*, though regarded as the primary medium of the story, is dependent on the verbal descriptions expressed in the narrative script. One might even say that the narrative script works in 'silence' in the sense of unspoken words: the verbal descriptions are not spoken through the sounds of words but through the sounds of music. Once again this emphasises the difference between an imaginary musical road movie and the idea of unheard melodies in a real but fictive movie.

If the spectator identifies with the main character of the film, and therefore with a specific camera position, one might ask how this relates to the listener's identification with the main character of the imaginary musical road movie.<sup>473</sup> Where is the equivalent of the camera position located in *Highway Rider*? This question is central to the issue of meaning production. One possible answer can be found in how the narrative script is written; the story, it seems, is written from a third-person perspective marked by words such as 'he feels peace,' 'he is off,' 'when he is among children,' and 'they cross the river,' etc. The narrator is some kind of unspecified imagined person and, in this respect, is distanced from the receiver (that is, the composer's persona). However, the narration becomes complicated by the fact that the titles of at least some of the compositions are from a first-person perspective; this is clearly the case with titles such as "Now You Must Climb Alone," "We'll Cross The River Together," or "Come With Me." It is almost as if the main character in the narrative script, John Boy, is transformed to the listener subject: it is the listener who drives the car; it is the listener who is travelling; it is the listener who is searching for order out of chaos; and it is the listener who has a desire for wholeness (the

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473. This could be further explored through the concept of *focalization*, which is the perspective through which a narrative is presented. For a short overview of the concept see Manfred Jahn, "Focalization," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 173–177.

listener can at least mirror itself in this desire). The equivalent of the camera position in *Highway Rider* is not posited in the narrative script alone but rather in how the music relates to the titles and the script by way of the *recorded* medium.<sup>474</sup> The listener's position to the narrative script is that which stitches the Imaginary with the Symbolic in the form of the two-part melody and where the imaginary musical road movie becomes the imaginary signifier for the desire to recreate a lost unity. With this psychoanalytic framework at hand, it is possible to understand what *Highway Rider* might mean. It also shows how meaning is produced by way of Nattiez' conception of the relationship between music and narrativity: music as an *incitement* to make a narrative rather than being a narrative.<sup>475</sup> This incitement is embedded within the narrative script and the music in which the purpose of applying Lacan's psychoanalysis can be understood as capturing what the music is able to express *without* words while still encompassing what is outside the music – a discursive thought: a deep, unresolved, human feeling of lost unity and a desire to recreate that unity.

Looking at the reconstruction of the interpretative network around the narrative event presented earlier, and specifically the metalanguage, this shows how Lacan's concepts of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic appear in the story. The first section, for instance, starts off at the Symbolic level; John Boy's desire to head off onto the open highway away from home ("John Boy"); the longing in "Don't Be Sad"; the transit composition of "At The Tollbooth" as a kind of 'hesitation of desire'; and the sense of freedom of "Highway Rider." These compositions are all different ways of expressing a desire to recreate a lost unity of the Imaginary – they all deal with the concept of lacking. Sections two and three follow this interpretative network: the concepts of hope and freedom in "The Falcon Will Fly Again"; the identity crisis of "Now You Must Climb Alone," and the tension of "Walking The Peak," are also part of an drive towards a recreation

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474. The impact of recording on listening is something I will return to in the last chapter when I discuss the ecological approach to musical meaning. In this chapter I will also discuss concepts similar to the camera position, such as subject position, tracking shot and listener position.

475. See Chapter 1, section "Narrativity in Music."

of lost unity. Section four, however, rather, seems to be an expression of how the protagonist senses what it is like to be on the Imaginary level: the fumbling melody at the beginning of the composition; the feeling of fragmentation; and the dream-like expression at the end. But it may also be interpreted as Symbolic in that it produces imaginary effects, not least since the Imaginary always is structured by the Symbolic. The first two compositions of section five, “Capriccio,” and “Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith),” have the Symbolic character of desire and longing for freedom, whereas “Into The City” is rather an expression of the Real, meaning something beyond the Symbolic bringing forward of something traumatic; the Real is thus quite the opposite of freedom and opposed to what the Imaginary is about. Sometimes the Real is interpreted as something that ‘designates the world and mind as we should experience it without language, personal history or cultural representation.’<sup>476</sup> Put into the framework of music, the Real is most often represented by ‘unprocessed noise,’ that is, ‘to hear noise at an unpleasant level that blocks social functioning and makes us feel trapped in something alien.’<sup>477</sup> The Real clearly emerges in the most chaotic of the compositions of the story. The composition is unpleasant in that it makes the listener (and the main subject) feel ill, thus creating a delusion – he cannot function socially.

Suture, that which stitches the spectator into the filmic text, can be further explored through Lacan’s notion of the so-called *quilting point*, by which the point in the narrative, ‘which makes sure that some temporary notion of meaning can be created in language.’<sup>478</sup> Like suture, the quilting point deals with the metaphor of stitching the signifier with the signified at the Symbolic level. It is a point in the narrative, which holds the ‘system of discourse together,’ and which is ‘necessary for a human being to be called normal.’<sup>479</sup> A brief review of the poietic and esthetic world of Mehldau can make this intelligible. Mehldau’s ambition to con-

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476. Alastair Williams, *Constructing Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 71.

477. Williams, *Constructing Musicology*, 71 and 74.

478. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

479. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”

vey discursive thoughts or system of thoughts (inspired by verbal narratives), in wordless music becomes intelligible in and through the story of *Highway Rider* by way of interpreting the system of discourse as 'the highway amongst minor roads.'<sup>480</sup> This way of understanding the quilting point bears its relevance through the following question: 'what happens when the highway is lost?' According to Herzogenrath the answer is psychosis:

The foreclosure [...] of the primordial signifier [...] is a strategy for evading castration: the subject is 'castrated' by its entry into the symbolic, into language and society. Thus, the denial of this castration leads to psychosis.<sup>481</sup>

This denial not only leads to psychosis; it also means a "return of the repressed" in the Real.' Therefore, "Into The City" not only is an expression of chaos, creating delusion (or psychosis); it is also a return of the repressed in the Real – it is what happens when the highway is suddenly lost. However, it is also here where the quilting point emerges. The highway is found again through the composition of "Old West" when John Boy heads back home in "Come With Me." This is the point in the narrative, which eventually holds the system of discourse together. The meaning of the noise, not the noise itself, or psychosis, appears paradoxically in "Old West," where the story almost came to an end, meaning towards the Imaginary level. Thereby the *quilting* point should not be confused with the *turning* point in the narrative cycle – they are two different points in the narrative with very different functions. Finally, the first composition in the last section deals with what the Imaginary primarily is about: unity, wholeness, and togetherness. Again it is important to be aware of that the Imaginary and the Symbolic are always co-present.<sup>482</sup>

How should one understand this particular use of psychoanalysis? Two aspects should be highlighted here: firstly, what the road movie as a genre is often an expression of, namely that the identity crisis of the protagonist

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480. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*." See also Chapter 3, "The Poietic and Es-theic World of Brad Mehldau."

481. Herzogenrath, "On the *Lost Highway*."

482. Hayward, *Cinema Studies*, 378.



mirrors the identity crisis of the culture itself;<sup>483</sup> secondly, the discursive thoughts that Mehldau expressed in different ways, primarily his ideas of a democratic society in which something built into society itself keeps us forever short of utopia.<sup>484</sup> Should *Highway Rider* simply be understood as a way to reveal a malaise (an inbuilt crisis) of the society within which the subject lives, meaning that John Boy mirrors something other than his own desire? I would say that the discursive thought is partly what the recipient brings with him or her into the story. It is not there to be found. It is there to be created by way of the imaginary narrative.

To conclude shortly: Mehldau's 'technique of the imaginary,' to speak with Metz, here functions as an imaginary narrative in the sense that its signifier depends on the literary (narrative script), photographic (cover of the record sleeve) and the phonographic (the music), but also on the imaginary mirror which alienates the perceiver's own reflection thus designating a desire as a lack and an endless pursuit towards unity. Within this framework *Highway Rider* thus seems to embody the tension between chaos and order through the protagonist John Boy.

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Whether the deep, unresolved, human feeling of lost unity has been resolved is something that cannot be answered here. In addition, the concept album has yet to be fully analysed. Therefore the next chapter will study the last two compositions based on this question in detail and how they relate to the story in its entirety.

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483. See Chapter 4, section "*Highway Rider* as an Imaginary Musical Road Movie."

484. See Chapter 3, section "Music and Language."

## SIX

### A Modern Symphonic Poem: A Signifier without a Signified?

According to Liszt, the idea of the symphonic poem was to write a symphony without the traditional formal schema and to unite piano pieces with thematic and motivic manipulation. It is, as shown, a single-movement orchestral piece of symphonic dimensions with a programme from literature.<sup>485</sup> The two compositions under scrutiny in this chapter follow this idea. However the poietic process of the literary programme is not as obvious as the rest of the music on *Highway Rider*. On the one hand this has obvious consequences for how to *describe* the content of the music beyond its pure musical materials, such as e.g. melodies, motifs. On the other hand, this is quite symptomatic to the genre in the sense that its object represented often cannot be sought in empirically tangible entities.<sup>486</sup> The content (signified) seems to be too abstract to be described.

When Maus writes about the musical experience as a story and musical unity as something that belongs to a story communicated in or by the music, this opens up different ways to interpret the last two compositions of *Highway Rider*. One way to understand the relationship between the general story and these two compositions is to consider them as two separate and demarcated *experiences* – but not exactly in the same sense as Dewey argues.<sup>487</sup> Rather *Highway Rider* has two distinct parts that are separated by their different ways to create a musical unity. They both belong to a fictional world, where the first is self-contained and based on

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485. See Chapter 2, “Genre as Semiotic Code.”

486. See Chapter 2, “Genre as Semiotic Code.”

487. See previous chapter.

the narrative script (the first 13 compositions), and the second is interconnected to the first by way of *meta-reference*.<sup>488</sup> One obvious reason for this separation has already been suggested when I argued that the narrative script governs the (experience of the) musical structure. As the narrative script says, “Always Departing”/”Always Returning” deals with the protagonist John Boy’s realisation ‘that he is always departing from somewhere and someone and always returning to someplace and someone else.’ The music cannot actually transform these words into something that makes sense from an extra-musical and esthetic perspective. There is no immediate way of showing iconic connections between musical and non-musical features. Instead, the music seems to rise above the general story and looks at it from a bird’s eye perspective. The link between sensory and semiotic modality must be framed within a specific cultural perspective in order for the semantic content of the music to become intelligible for the listener.<sup>489</sup>

In his text “The Third Meaning. Research notes on some Eisenstein stills” (1977), cultural semiotician Roland Barthes differentiates between three levels of meaning: the level of communication, the level of signification and the level of significance.<sup>490</sup> This third level is of particular interest. It emphasises a specific type of relationship between a sign’s expression and content explained through the concept of ‘obtuse meaning’:

The obtuse meaning is not in the language system (even that of symbols). [...] No more however, is it to be located in language use. Obtuse meanings are to be found not everywhere [...] but *somewhere*.<sup>491</sup>

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488. Another way to understand this relationship is through the concept of disunity. As van Geest shows, there is nothing contradictory in the coexistence of unity and disunity; they are dependent on each other. There is however one difference between *Highway Rider* and most of the discussions on unity. *Highway Rider* is a collection of compositions which are interconnected by their relationship to a narrative script and by its silent and salient units of the two-part melody. This is not the case of van Geest’s musical examples – they are a single musical work.

489. See Chapter 1, “Theoretical and Methodological Framework.”

490. Roland Barthes, “The Third Meaning. Research notes on some Eisenstein stills,” in *Image-Music-Text* (USA: Hill and Wang, 1977), 52–68.

491. Barthes, “The Third Meaning,” 60.

This type of meaning has implications for how to describe the music because there does not seem to be an appropriate language to enunciate it: '[there is an] uncertainty when it is a matter of *describing* the obtuse meaning (of giving an idea of where it is going, where it goes away). The obtuse meaning is a signifier without a signified, hence the difficulty in naming it.'<sup>492</sup> Barthes' conclusion, simply put, is that the obtuse meaning cannot be described. This is even more prominent when it comes to instrumental music. However, in light of how meaning becomes perceptible when performing certain types of descriptions, it still is possible to find a relevant interpretative framework. The concept of 'somewhere' in the quotation above is sufficiently vague and simultaneously specific enough to frame the music within a specific cultural interpretation. In addition, assuming Mehldau's description of these two compositions, the concept of somewhere makes sense by denoting some indefinite unknown location nearby Las Vegas in the Nevada desert. The meaning of somewhere thus oscillates between the literal and the metaphoric highway.

Cook takes the concept of third meaning one step further. The musical objects are not only instanced by scores, performances or sound recordings, they are also forms of empirical resistance in both the semiotic process and its analysis. The meanings produced depend on and/or invoke both the poietic and the esthetic process. With this in mind, let us start with these two processes.

One of the musical works that has been highly influential for Mehldau's *Highway Rider* is Richard Strauss' *Metamorphosen – Study For 23 Solo Strings* (1945):

In most orchestral music, the strings are split into two sections – violin 1, violin 2, violas, cellos and basses. The composer may call for the sections to be divided in two or sometimes three parts, but usually there are no more than 5 to 8 distinct voices in the strings. Strauss scored *Metamorphosen* for 23 strings exactly – 10 violins, 5 violas, 5 cellos and three basses – but gave each player an individual part. Instead of Violin 1 and 2, there is Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, etc. all the way to Violin 10, and so on with the rest of the instruments.<sup>493</sup>

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492. Barthes, "The Third Meaning," 61.

493. Mehldau, "Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative."

With this type of orchestration there are, as Mehldau says, ‘endless options.’ He uses Strauss’ type of orchestration (23 strings) primarily in two compositions – “Now You Must Climb Alone” and the beginning of “Always Departing.” In “Always Departing,” he also uses horn, bassoon and contra-bassoon, and in “Always Returning” the orchestration also includes soprano saxophone, piano and orchestral bells.<sup>494</sup> In the next section I will focus on how Mehldau works structurally with musical motifs using the same kind of orchestration as Strauss to create musical unity, and discuss how these motifs are interconnected with the rest of the music.

### “Always Departing”/“Always Returning”

‘The shape of the two-part motivic melody,’ Mehldau writes, ‘suggests two tonalities, F# Minor and C# Major.’<sup>495</sup> The first two notes of this motif starts with a minim [half-note] on C-sharp and then up to another minim [half-note] on F-sharp. “Always Departing” starts in the same manner, but inverted: F-sharp down to C-sharp in violin 1. The two-part melody is embedded in the musical texture, making the music become a metaphorical signifier. The tempo is slow – 63 beats per minute. The beginning descends, then slowly ascends in minims [half-notes] in mm. 2–3 before the motif ends with another short (rhythmic) motif on A in measure four (see Example 12.1). This motif is then repeated: first by the cello 1 in mm. 4–5 and cello 4 in mm. 6–7 before it ‘ends’ on an F Major7+5 chord in m. 7 (or C-sharp minor chord with an F in the bass). The music does not sit on this chord long enough to create a sense of release. Rather it slowly climbs past that chord using the same motif that appears throughout the music but in different ways and with different instruments embedded into the musical texture.

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494. The true meaning behind *Metamorphosen* has been debated by several musicologists; either it’s some kind of commentary on Germany’s destruction during World War II or it’s a Goethean study about the cause of the war. As far as I know, Mehldau never makes any references to Strauss’ poetic and/or esthetic processes – though it would not be too far-fetched to make such a connection due to his recurrent references to both Goethe and to a Goethean theme through the words of Mann’s (and consequently Adorno’s) *Doctor Faustus*. See for example Kimberly F. Canton et al., “Politics, Creativity, and the Aging Artist: Narrativising Richard Strauss’ Last Years,” *Life Writings* 6:2 (2009): 211–227.

495. Mehldau, “Motif, Tonality, Chaos/Order, Narrative.”

**Always Departing** Mehldau

♩ = 63

Soprano Saxophone (concert)

Piano

Rhythm Section Bass

Drums

Bassoon

Contrabassoon

Horn 1 (3 horns concert)

Horn 2

Horn 3

Tubular Bells

Violin 1

Violin 2

Violin 3

Violin 4

EXAMPLE 12.1: The beginning of “Always Departing.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

Then the music slowly continues to create tension. In mm. 18–19 a similar descending motif from mm. 3–4 returns. This is an important repetition since it creates a *psychological* tension towards a release in much the same sense as the beginning. It reminds the listener of the previous motif but obviously not enough – the listener is still expecting release when in fact it creates even more tension. The vertical notes in m. 19 (in the violins, viola and cello) are highly dissonant (C, A, A-sharp, A, D, C). The music climbs its way up, still using the same (rhythmic) motif and leaves the rest of the violins, violas and cellos silent, resulting in a single, lonely violin in m. 36 playing a high C-sharp. The music sits in that high register for a few seconds (see Example 12.2).

5

The image shows a musical score for measures 29-36 of a symphonic poem. The score is written for a large orchestra, including Violins (Vln. 1-3, 4-6, 7,8, 9,10), Violas (Vla. 1, 2, 3, 4,5), Cellos (Vc. 1, 2-4, 5), and Contrabasses. The notation is in standard musical notation with treble and bass clefs, key signatures, and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The measures are numbered 29 through 36. The score is arranged in a system with multiple staves. The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *f* (forte). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be 4/4 based on the notation. The score is a reproduction of a musical score, likely from a published edition, and is used as an example in a book.

EXAMPLE 12.2: Measures 29–36 of “Always Departing.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

*Then a dramatic change:* from the high violin in C-sharp the music suddenly changes its sound and falls into the abyss among the contrabasses and cellos (in F). This slowly fades away before a repeated piano chord enters in double pace (124) and acts as an introduction to a solo piano section (see Examples 12.3 mm. 37–40, and 12.4 mm. 41–44 – also repeated in mm. 45–48).

Next comes a section with only the piano (mm. 49–70) playing a songful melody (almost as if it were ‘outside’ the distinctive rhythm) and a (rhythmic) motif that reoccurs throughout the section (see Example 12.5).

37

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

Vc. 3

Vc. 4

Vc. 5

Cb. 1

Cb. 2

Cb. 3

*p*

*f*

EXAMPLE 12.3: The dramatic change (the ‘abyss’ among contrabasses and cellos in mm. 37–40). © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

41 ♩ = 124 (Piano establishes tempo)

Pno.

*p*

♩ = 124 (Piano establishes tempo)

Vc. 1

Vc. 2

*p*

EXAMPLE 12.4: Introduction to the piano solo section of “Always Departing.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.





EXAMPLE 12.5: The first five measures of the piano solo section of “Always Departing.”  
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What is interesting in this section is how the bassline in the left-hand piano climbs up using the diatonic notes in the key of C Major (C, D, E, F, G, A and B) followed by a small change in the chord progression. The melody, starting with a minim and two crotchets, ascends in semibreves and falls down a fifth. This melody is followed by some kind of answer that ends on G Major, which in turn is followed by a small but important change when the melody in G moves up a small second to A-flat. This small change at m. 65 makes the music a little denser and lets the contrabasses 1–3 and violas 1–5 enter. Just before the next section (marked as *ritenuto*) there is a sudden decrease in tempo, as if to hold back a dramatic effect – only to return to the original tempo in the next measure (marked as *a tempo*). The music then changes again – this time to the key signature of C-sharp minor with an F-sharp in the bass in m. 82. The difference between this chord and the F-sharp7+5 chord in the beginning is the F-sharp, but it is this difference that is important within the musical context. The music thickens in texture.

The short (rhythmic) motif (see Example 12.5 above) has now entered the listener’s mind, so to speak, and has become a familiar entity. The music is almost fully orchestrated at this point and creates a tension little by little (marked as *poco a poco crescendo*), which is further accented with punctuated violins, ascending and ending with the piano ‘hammering’ the chords (now marked as *poco a poco accelerando*). The drums and bass enter and the tempo increases from 63 to 136. The music has now seamlessly become “Always Returning” (see Examples 12.6 and 13.1). In summary: In these sections the music can be described as having an ‘increase’ and ‘being intense’ through an effect of suspension by the simple use of small recurrent motifs, which appears throughout the orchestration’s individual parts.

144

Pno.

Dr.

drums enter....

♩ = 136

### Always Returning

148

Sop. Sax.

Pno.

Rthm Sectn Bs.

Dr.

A<sup>47</sup> B<sup>46</sup> C<sup>#A</sup> B<sup>46</sup>

A<sup>47</sup> B<sup>46</sup> C<sup>#A</sup> B<sup>46</sup>

now!

EXAMPLES 12.6 and 13.1: The seamless transition between “Always Departing” and “Always Returning” (mm. 144–151). © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

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“Always Returning” centres around two recurrent motifs, both of which are reminiscent of the previous composition. The first motif enters at m. 156 in the violins I (1–5) and the second in violins I (1–5), violas 1–5 and cellos 1–5 at m. 164. These two appear alternately throughout the music – and dispersed in the music are small motivic cells from “Always Departing” which emerge as short ‘reminders’ of the past. One such a reminder happens with the violins I (1–5) at mm. 188–189 and 190–193, which play the same part as the beginning of the piano solo (see Example 13.2 below):

## A MODERN SYMPHONIC POEM

Violins 1 (1-5)

Violas 1-5

Cellos 1-5

*mf*

*mf*

EXAMPLE 13.2: The reminder of the motivic cell of “Always Departing.” © 2010 Brad Mehldau / Werther Music (BMI). All rights reserved. Reprinted with the kind permission of Modern Works Publishing.

The second motif becomes a somewhat central theme which closes the first section before the ‘hammering’ piano chords enter again at m. 204 of another section. The first motif re-emerges now in both soprano saxophone and violas with synchronised orchestral bells. The music is more intense and denser: the soprano saxophone plays the melody *ad. lib.* before it improvises on the chord changes F-sharp minor, F-sharp minor/B, C-sharp Major7 and F-sharp minor. A third section enters, which decreases in tempo and consists of only the piano, with ‘falling’ motifs (D down to G; A down to D; Eb down to G; and A down to G) until the tempo slows down to approximately 100. Finally, a prolonged cadence begins; little by little the music becomes louder until an open, rolling cadence on the main theme, played by violins, turns into a glissando which ends on a C-sharp Major chord.

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Now, what does this description tell us from a semantic perspective? Perhaps the best way would be to divide the answer into two parts: intracompositional structures and extracompositional features. From an intracompositional perspective the music almost appears static and possibly dramatic in that the salient features the listener experiences occur as they are perceived and, in that sense, form a plot.<sup>496</sup> However, I would suggest that the intracompositional structure also contributes to an understanding of the music as a narrative in two ways: by using a recurrent musical motif that creates a sense of musical unity and by way of structural tropes. The organised totality is an example of how the musical structure is constructed such as connecting the motifs coherently. The music also shows how force is incorporated into the structure in terms of disrupting the structure. As Kramer says, force is temporal and dynamic.<sup>497</sup> Each time the structure is disrupted the music is compelled to change. As I have shown there are several examples of dramatic or other types of changes such as the dramatic change at m. 29; the small change at m. 65; and the change in dynamics and tempo in “Always Returning.” There is more to do with this description – not least since the semantic content still seems empty (where is the signified?). An initial conclusion drawn from this description of the intracompositional structure is that the music seems to point to itself by way of using a recurrent musical motif; the music carries a kind of self-referentiality that can be explored in more detail. This is where Wolf’s discussion on transmediality and meta-reference can be useful for further analysis.

### Meta-Reference and Transmediality

One definition of self-referentiality is a quality of any sign or sign system that points to itself within the same semiotic system – be it images, words or music. This is called intracompositional self-reference and contrasts with the broader definition of extracompositional self-reference, meaning:

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496. Levinson, “Music as Narrative and Music as Drama,” 403.

497. Kramer, “‘As If a Voice Were in Them’: Music, Narrative, and Deconstruction,” 176.

... 'intermusical' references between different compositions as well as intermedial references, for instance the relation between literary texts and music embodied in verbal descriptions of musical compositions.<sup>498</sup>

Furthermore, self-reference can be divided into either something that is 'pointing at without making or implying self-referential statements,' or as 'meaning [...] by making or implying self-referential statements.'<sup>499</sup> It is within this latter type of self-reference that meta-reference occurs. One important aspect for clarification is that meta-reference 'always implies an awareness of the medial status of the work or system under consideration.'<sup>500</sup> It is as much the implied as the engaged and informed listener that makes the subsequent discussion valuable and relevant. Furthermore, an awareness of the whole communicative process must be taken into consideration: the poietic process, the esthetic process and the material traces of the work.

Wolf is careful to point out that meta-reference is 'applicable to individual phenomena within certain works.'<sup>501</sup> This is the case of *Highway Rider* and the specific compositions which I will now focus on. These phenomena are defined as specific *meta-elements* that, if considered as salient features of a work as a whole, emerge as *meta-texts*. The two-part melody is such a salient feature that it emerges as a meta-text. Moreover, meta-elements can occur in different forms within a work. With regards to "Always Departing"/"Always Returning," the meta-element occurs as an implicit meta-reference; it 'refers to the semantic distinctiveness of the metareference as a quotable or nonquotable element.'<sup>502</sup> Once again, the two-part melody has such a semantic distinctiveness in different forms and variations that it is quoted throughout the work. According to Wolf, the application of meta-reference to music can only occur 'where music appears together

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498. Werner Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic: Exploring the Limits of Metareference," in *Self-Reference in the Media*, ed. Winfried Nöth et al. (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007), 305.

499. Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 306.

500. Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 306.

501. Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 307.

502. Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 308.

with words,' that is, in compositions with sung words.<sup>503</sup> However, in the case of "Always Departing"/"Always Returning," I would say that the music, through the two-part melody, not only *speaks* – as Kramer would argue – but it also carries the *force* of utterance. So, the question that needs to be explored is *what* this force of utterance says and *how* it says it, which leads to an empirical matter. In what follows, I have segmented recurrent motifs into different categories in accordance to their features such as e.g. four-note descending/ascending gestures, rhythmically similar motifs. I will also show (in the vertical left-hand side column) how the motifs are distributed in time and between different instruments (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). The main focus is on the paradigmatic level of the music. These examples should not be regarded as exhaustive, meaning that I do not intend to show every possible variant of the different motifs. Furthermore, by 'quantifying' music in this way I aim to primarily show how the internal structure is designed, namely through a motif with which the music is built around. In addition, I also want to show how the motif is connected to the two-part melody that also permeates the other compositions of *Highway Rider*, thus showing how the two compositions functions as meta-reference to the whole work. This is highlighted in the right-hand column. It is important to note that these relationships deal with similarities that are seldom, if ever, literal, but rather variants of the two-part melody. The letter 'i' in parentheses mean that there is an inversion of the musical gesture in relation to the two-part melody (though not a literal inversion).

The meta-referential potential in *Highway Rider* is not only prominent in these two last compositions, but by referring to the two-part melody throughout the whole work as a unifying theme, the whole work also creates a sense of unity. In a discussion on musical coherence and motif Zbikowski describes how important it is for the listener to grasp coherence in order to comprehend the work. The key concept in this context is the musical motif itself. He writes: 'According to Schoenberg, comprehension starts with recognition, and recognition starts with basic musical figures – that is, motives.'<sup>504</sup> Once a motif is recognised it can be easily remem-

503. Wolf, "Metafiction and Metamusic," 309.

504. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 25–26.

# A MODERN SYMPHONIC POEM




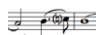



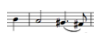



Measure/- Motif	Variants of the same motif	1. Descending motif	2. Ascending motif	3. Descending motif	4. Ascending motif	Relationship to the two- part melody
3-4. Vln. I	1a	 E, D, C#, A				3-4
4-5. Vc. I	1b	 C, B, A, F				3-4
6-7. Vc. 4	2a		 Bb, C, D, E			3-4
9-10. Vln. 1-3	2b		 A, B, C, B			3-4
11-12. Vln. 4-6	2c		 C#, D#, E, D#			3-4
13-14. Vln. 7, 8	2d		 B, C, D, C			3-4
12. Vln. 4-6	1c	 A, G, F, E				3-4
10. Vln. 7, 8	1d	 B, A, G#, F#				3-4
12. Vla. I	1e	 G, F, E, D#				3-4
9-10. Vc. 2-4	2e		 C#, D, E, F			3-4 (i)
13. Vc. 2-4	2f		 C#, D, E, F			3-4 (i)

FIGURE 7.1: The paradigmatic level of “Always Departing.”

# A MODERN SYMPHONIC POEM

10. Vc.. 5	2g					3-4 (i)
13. Vc. 2-4	2h					3-4 (i)
49. Pno.	3a					6-7 (i)
54. Pno.	3b					6-7 (i)
59. Pno.	3c					6-7 (i)
62. Pno.	4a					6-7
65. Pno.	3d					6-7 (i)
68. Pno.	3e					6-7 (i)
73. Pno.	1e					6-7

FIGURE 7.1: (continued)



# A MODERN SYMPHONIC POEM

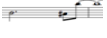



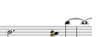






Measure/- Motif	Variants of the same motif	1. Down/ Up-motif	2. Up/Down- motif	3. Down/ Up-motif	4. Descending step-motif	Relationship to the two- part melody
156. Vln. 1 (1-5.)	1a	 B, A#, B				6-7
192. Vln. 1 (1-5)	1b	 A, G#, A				6-7
192. Vla. 1-5	1c	 F#, G#, C				6-7
224. Sop. Sax.	1a	 B, A#, B				6-7
224. Vln. 1 (1-5)	1a	 B, A#, B				6-7
166. Vln. 1 (1-5)	2a		 C#, D, A			6-7 (i)
166. Vla. 1-5	2a		 C#, D, A			6-7 (i)
166. Cellos 1-5	2a		 C#, D, A			6-7 (i)
175. Vln. 1 (1-5)	3a			 F, C, D		6-7
175. Vla. 1-5	3a			 F, C, D		6-7
175. Cellos 1-5	3a			 F, C, D		6-7

FIGURE 7.2: The paradigmatic level of “Always Returning.”

# A MODERN SYMPHONIC POEM

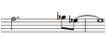

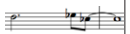
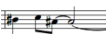



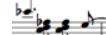
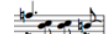
178. Vln. 1 (1-5)	2b					6-7 (i)
178. Vla. 1-5	2b					6-7 (i)
178. Cellos 1-5	2b					6-7 (i)
198. Pno.	2g					6-7 (i)
202. Pno.	2h					6-7 (i)
343. Pno.	4a					6-7 (i)
347. Pno.	4b					6-7 (i)
351. Pno.	4c					6-7 (i)
353. Pno.	4d					6-7 (i)

FIGURE 7.2: (continued)

bered.<sup>505</sup> The conception of coherence shown in the tables above against this background should not be regarded as something strange:

*Coherence* comes about when the various parts make up a musical entity are connected in such a way that those parts similar to other entities become prominent. The work is most *comprehensible* to the listener when the arrangement of these parts is such that their relationship to each other and to the whole is manifest.<sup>506</sup>

The effect of using a single motif in different ways can produce meaning from an immanent perspective. Furthermore, it creates traces of a *past tense* because it points back to itself. Yet how is it possible for music to have a past tense? This question reiterates the importance of studying narrativity in music. In his article “Music as Narrative,” Fred Everett Maus discusses this question, starting with a comparison of how literary theorists define narrative. Literary theorists, he says, ‘have sometimes distinguished between story and discourse in narrative,’ meaning a distinction ‘between what is told, and how it is told [or] between events and their descriptions or depictions.’<sup>507</sup> Discourse consists of verbal narration, whereas the story is about events that, ‘according to the fiction, occurred earlier than the narration.’<sup>508</sup> Put into the framework of music, Maus asks ‘whether a distinction between story and discourse is possible,’<sup>509</sup> and concludes that there seems to be no use for such a distinction since ‘there is no clear sense in which music has a past tense.’<sup>510</sup> In the specific case of *Highway Rider*, I argue that the story consists of events that, according to the fiction, occurred earlier than the narration – though the narrative script as a paratext is a prerequisite to this notion. The notion of desire discussed within the context of psychoanalysis now becomes important in relation to story and discourse in narrative.

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505. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 26.

506. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 27. See also Arnold Schoenberg, *Coherence, Instrumentation, Instruction in Form*, ed. Severine Neff, trans. Severine Naff et al. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 20–23.

507. Fred Everett Maus, “Music as Narrative,” *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 21–22.

508. Maus, “Music as Narrative,” 22.

509. Maus, “Music as Narrative,” 22.

510. Maus, “Music as Narrative,” 22.

Some have argued that desire can be located in both story and discourse ‘since narratives not only tell stories of desire but also arouse and deploy readers’ and characters’ desire for meaning.’<sup>511</sup> Desire can thereby be understood as the force of a narrative, and through the plots it hopes to ‘seek consummation that exhaust and resolve the energies it has mobilised within both the text and the reader.’<sup>512</sup> However, this should not be interpreted as if the narrative has necessarily come to a close – quite the opposite, at least from a psychoanalytic perspective. The goal of desire may equally be understood as a *denial* of ‘the narrative closure.’<sup>513</sup> Now, this appears somewhat contradictory in view of the earlier discussions on the cyclic and narrative aspect of *Highway Rider*. Desire as the denial of the narrative closure seems to contradict the closed form implied by the internal-plot cycle. This contradiction may be considered if, as I have suggested elsewhere, *Highway Rider* is divided into two parts: compositions 1–13 represent the closed form and 14–15 are the realisation that the narrative is utopian and therefore denies closure of the narrative. Moreover, as should be clear by now, this motivates the interpretation of the road movie as a genre. This specific interpretation works at the Imaginary level. Put in the context of psychoanalysis, “Always Departing”/“Always Returning,” most clearly symbolises the desire for the Imaginary by way of how John Boy realises that he is always departing and always returning – as if the travel on the road captures the process of an endless need of freedom that never reaches a closure – a circle that cannot close. Desire as a concept thus *metonymically* captures the idea of travelling; it works as a *cultural* trope by way of alterity between form and content, and between the signifier and the signified.<sup>514</sup>

The relationship between psychoanalysis and narrative can of course be explored in much more detail than I have pursued here; however, what I have wanted to clarify is how the production of meaning emerges in this relationship. As Marshall Alcorn writes when discussing this relationship:

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511. Susan Winnett, “Desire,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman (London and New York, 2008), 102.

512. Winnett, “Desire,” 102.

513. Winnett, “Desire,” 102.

514. See Chapter 4, “Section I: Home.”

‘[m]eaning emerges not naturally from events in themselves, but in the discovery of relationships between events.’<sup>515</sup> Although this may be at-risk for over-interpretation, I propose that the imaginary musical road movie should be regarded as a mirror image of the listener; it shows the subject listener’s inner most desires, dreams and hopes, and it shows a narrative that connects the present with the past and a utopia in an endless process of freedom, which becomes a longing for longing, which never really reaches its goal. With this in mind, the story of *Highway Rider* both tells the story of desire *literally* through the use of the two-part melody as the force of utterance and *metaphorical* through the narrative script and the titles, *and* as something which stimulates the listener’s desire for meaning – though not as a plot that seeks conclusion but as a narrative which realises that there is no conclusion. From a subject listener perspective one may say that it projects his/her desires onto and into the work, which is reflected back onto and into him/her. This raises the following questions: 1) How should I act when I perceive *Highway Rider* ‘as’ something? 2) How does this perception act on me?<sup>516</sup> The ontological status of the individual is clearly formulated through the lenses of a hermeneutic spiral – again, a circle that cannot close. Whether this interpretation also correlates with Mehldau’s personas’ poietic and esthetic worldview is less important; it is rather the paratextual descriptions inscribed in this worldview that may affect our perception of the work.

Finally, there is the perspective of an ‘embodied’ gender aspect – both in terms of the road movie genre and in Lacan’s psychoanalysis – which is worth noting. One of the four features that generally correspond to the road movie genre, according to Cohan and Hark, is that it is focused ‘almost exclusively, on men and the absence of women.’<sup>517</sup> This is also implicated in Mehldau’s work – it deals exclusively with the male protagonist John Boy. In the sense of Lacanian psychoanalysis, ‘Highway’ as a concept

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515. Marshall Alcorn, “Psychoanalysis and Narrative,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 470.

516. See Kramer, *Expression and Truth*, 10.

517. Cohen & Hark, introduction, 2.

‘is an undeniable signifier in human experience.’<sup>518</sup> It is a signifier of being a *father* that emphasises a specific cultural trope. Against this background, one should critically ask oneself what kind of listener perspective that I have assumed. In the next and final chapter, I will problematize the question about whose listening, which includes (without explicitly expressing it) this gender aspect.

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518. Herzogenrath, “On the *Lost Highway*.”



## SEVEN

### Towards an Understanding of *Highway Rider*: Culture, Materiality and Subjectivity Revisited

The purpose of this essay has been to understand composer and jazz musician Brad Mehldau's concept album *Highway Rider* within an inter-medial music culture. This has required a broad theoretical and methodological framework of interpretation coming from different disciplinary directions. In this final chapter I will sum up the main aspects of this essay by taking this idea of an 'intermedial music culture' as a departing point. This means that I will 'revisit' those parts of the essay that deal with culture, materiality and subjectivity – both in relation to the specific case under scrutiny and to the discipline of musicology. The chapter will begin with a theoretical reflection on issues of listening to and perceiving music, and I will ask the somewhat provocative question about whether the semiotic perspective I have undertaken also correlates with our perception of it.

#### Whose Listening? An Ecological Approach to Culture, Materiality and Subjectivity

The question posed in the subtitle may seem somewhat strange to ask at this stage. However, it is embedded in a long discussion about musical meaning, which musicologist and psychologist Eric F. Clarke raises at the end of his book *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (2005):

[I]f the principle of mutualism [of perceiver and environment] means that listening must be considered in relation to the needs and capacities of *particular* listeners, rather than in general or abstract terms, then whose listening is this book about?<sup>519</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 192.



In much the same sense this question can be addressed to the present study. The semiotic perspective on music that I have discussed throughout this essay aims to show the existence of music as a symbolic form. In the section “Semiotic Analysis as a Formal Approach to Music” I argued that any analysis of musical meaning must begin within the context where communication takes place – both with regards to history and to the specific listening environment. However how can the semiotic perspective also say something about how the music is *perceived*? To put the question this way: In what way does the semiotic perspective correlate with the cognitive perception of the music and of meaning production in general? Here I want to reflect on these issues to show that they are not necessarily in opposition to each other although they have often been portrayed as such. In fact, film studies is particularly useful here, similar to the previous discussion on psychoanalytic theory.

In her text “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” musicologist Nicola Dibben puts this conflicting perspective under scrutiny by saying that most research into the perception and cognition of music has mainly focused on sound as ‘raw’ parameters, such as pitch, tonality, and rhythm.<sup>520</sup> Furthermore, she says that some of this research ‘seem to bear little relationship to listener’s experiences,’ and similarly little relation to the ‘listener’s aesthetic appreciation of music.’<sup>521</sup> The study of the perception and cognition of music is therefore contrasted to semiotic theories, which rather ‘conceive of music [...] in terms of “topics” or “archetypes”,’ such as those exemplified by Agawu – such as in his discussion on the concept of extroverse semiosis.<sup>522</sup> Another way to discuss these conflicting perspectives is to say that while ‘music perception and cognition studies what listeners hear, music theory [semiotics] persuades the listener of what they might

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520. Nicola Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 343.

521. Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” 343.

522. See Chapter 4, section “*Highway Rider* as an Imaginary Musical Road Movie” where I discuss Agawu’s distinction between introverse and extroverse semiosis in relation to Mehldau’s musical work.

or could hear.’<sup>523</sup> The notion of raw parameters can be exemplified with the description of the pure musical materials of “Always Departing”/“Always Returning.” The difference is that I do not claim to know how listeners actually hear the music; the description is neither based on any psychological assumption about how *we* listen nor any semiotic assumption of what the music might mean; it only says something about my listening process. This requires that this discussion be placed into another theoretical context, such as meta-reference and psychoanalysis. Within this type of reasoning I agree with Dibben’s idea that listeners hear musical *materials* rather than ‘raw’ parameters and that these materials are ‘socially and historically constituted.’<sup>524</sup> She calls this idea the *associative structure theory*, which should be contrasted to a *hierarchical model of musical structure*. To be more specific:

The discourse surrounding music (program notes, narratives, lyrics, visual accompaniment, and so on) provides an interpretative context that reinforces those meanings [which the musical material are *associated* with].<sup>525</sup>

The idea of hearing music in terms of material is also ‘central [both] to the application of ecological psychology to music’ and to the notion of the concept of affordance.<sup>526</sup> Through empirical studies, Dibben shows how central the issue of *subjectivity* is in the production of meaning by emphasising the question of *whose* meaning is it that is produced.<sup>527</sup> Clarke also takes this issue into consideration: Firstly he says (in line with Dibben) that there is a reductionist aspect within most of the psychological studies on music which focuses on aspects such as pitch, tempo, etc., and which makes ‘little sense of an engagement with culture.’<sup>528</sup> Secondly he puts the

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523. Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” 344.

524. Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” 355.

525. Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” 346.

526. Dibben, “Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening,” 346; 347.

527. This way of putting subjectivity at the centre can be compared to Kramer’s argument that language about music is both subjective and culture-bound, and that language is a socially constructed position made available by the music and occupied by the listener. See “Preface” to this essay.

528. Eric F. Clarke, “What’s Going On: Music, Psychology, and Ecological Theory,” in

psychological study of music in opposition to musicology in order to show their different approaches to music: one mainly deals with the identification of general principles, the other deals with music as a particular phenomenon. One important conclusion that he draws from this distinction is that music listening and perception is 'contingent, situational, and subject to biases of culture and experience.'<sup>529</sup> The contingency of listening to music is not only relevant from a general point of view but also from the researcher's point of view (as suggested above). In addition, this also makes one wonder whether anyone other than the researcher can be included in this listening process. From the perspective of transmedial aspects this issue has relevance: Whose meaning do I have in mind besides mine? The short answer has been suggested continuously, namely the implied/informed/engaged listener. However, at this point I also want to highlight this issue from an ecological perspective since it deals with *ways* of listening and *ways* of producing meaning. In light of this, the following is a general review of current research studies of ecological approaches to musical meaning. Simply put, these approaches deal with the ways the subject listens to music, which are determined both 'by the needs and preoccupations of the moment [and] by a set of listening practices into which listeners are enculturated.'<sup>530</sup> In one sense this is reminiscent with Herzogenrath's question on what we are doing when we are watching a film – or in this context one might ask: What we are doing when we are listening to music?

One of the most important cultural moments in the changing history of the performance practice of music listening is the 'impact of recording technology.'<sup>531</sup> This has been thoroughly discussed by Clarke. Ecological theory, he says, emphasises 'perception as a relationship between perceiver and environment [where] perception is primarily concerned with knowing about what is going on in the world and acting appropriately [...] in relation to it.'<sup>532</sup> Perception and action are therefore closely related. This

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*The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 334.

529. Clarke, "What's Going On: Music, Psychology, and Ecological Theory," 336.

530. Dibben, "Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening," 350.

531. Dibben, "Musical Materials, Perception, and Listening," 351.

532. Eric F. Clarke, "The Impact of Recording on Listening," *Twentieth-Century Music*

relationship is furthermore expressed by the concept of affordance defined in the following way: '[I] hear the sound of gunfire and run away because I perceive that the situation affords danger.'<sup>533</sup> Music like many other aesthetic objects or events, however, sometimes differ from everyday sounds or objects (though gunfire may not be considered as an 'everyday' sound); the relationship between perception of sound and action in music is what Clarke describes as 'ruptured.' The environment within which music is perceived leaves the 'listener unable to act.'<sup>534</sup> Although one would like to rise up in a concert hall and jump in time with the rhythm he or she is prohibited due to conventional practices. Of course, this depends not only on the type of environment but also on the type of music – actions might be expressed and repressed in different ways. What is of special interest in light of the analysis of *Highway Rider* is the impact of the specific recording on listening. The difference between a recording and a live performance is that the music is 'heard out of sight of the performers' and that the music is 'portable and installable in a much more radical manner than is true of live performance.'<sup>535</sup> This means that the recordings allow the listener (implied/informed/engaged or not) 'to have control over the musical content [...] and through repetition to get to know a piece and its performance with unprecedented familiarity.'<sup>536</sup> For instance, improvisation tends to become reified through the recording in a sense that never could happen in a live performance which is partly the case of *Highway Rider*. When the music is recorded the opposition between composed and improvised music somewhat loses its signification since the recorded music becomes a norm in itself regardless of whether it was composed or improvised at the time of the recording. This is what musicologist Toivo Burlin terms hypnotation.<sup>537</sup> The in-the-moment improvised solo gets a kind of standardised significance by way of being presented on a record.

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4(1), (2007): 48.

533. Clarke, "The Impact of Recording on Listening," 48.

534. Clarke, "The Impact of Recording on Listening," 49.

535. Clarke, "The Impact of Recording on Listening," 50.

536. Clarke, "The Impact of Recording on Listening," 51–52.

537. By hypnotation Burlin means recordings that may present a musical work's so-called allographic realisation of an ideal version. Burlin, *Det imaginära rummet*, 12.

Live improvisation always has an implicit possibility of taking an unexpected direction implied by the sound-image (expression). With recorded improvisation it does not matter whether there were other possibilities – the improvisation becomes fixed as a kind of composition in itself. In light of this, it is worthwhile to consider how conductor Dan Coleman still tried to convey a live experience in the studio:

I wanted to record everything live whenever possible [...]. The first conversation with [producer] Jon about the music, that was for him a done deal – it had to be live, with the orchestra and the jazz group playing together. Jon had the foresight during the recording, and then a great deal of craft during the mixing, to bring it all together and sound like it does. And we were able to avoid what the conductor Dan Coleman jokingly referred to as ‘disco strings’ – that is, adding the orchestra onto the jazz group’s performance after the fact.<sup>538</sup>

Here we should be reminded of the discussion on the different material traces of music and that music, in contrast to everyday physical objects, is instanced by scores, performances and sound recordings. Additionally, the specific acoustic traces of *Highway Rider* which have been analysed are that of the score and the recording. At this point I also want to clarify that the recording could be understood as a form of performance. I do not want to fall into the ‘ideological’ trap of separating recorded music from live music by treating them as two separate cultural systems; rather, as Cook argues, ‘live and recorded music are so closely entangled with one another that [...] it makes more sense to encompass them within an enlarged concept of performance, and then deal with the divergences between them.’<sup>539</sup> As I understand from Cook, he does not seem to want to do away with the obvious differences between a live performance and recorded music; rather the point is to elevate recorded music as a kind of work of art in itself, but which requires ways other than traditional music analysis to understand the music. However, in view of the Mehlau-quotations above, I would still argue that the recording could be understood as a specific performance,

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538. Brad Mehlau, “Albums.”

539. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 357.

perhaps as a virtual performance rather than an actual performance. Even though the part of the music is improvised, it differs from the parts composed. The Mehldau-quotation also shows an aesthetic ideal intended to create a specific virtual world. This ‘aesthetics’ of sound recording can be compared to the post-war classical record producer John Culshaw, which saw recording as a kind of ‘art form in itself.’<sup>540</sup> As the authors of the article “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds: John Culshaw and the Art of Record Production” says:

[T]he creation of a recording is always the creation of a virtual world. Just what *kind* of virtual world is created then becomes a question of musical aesthetics as much as technological possibilities – an expression of the virtual musical world that the record producer conceives as their ideal.<sup>541</sup>

The authors compare the recording session with film production by showing how the concept of subject position in film theory can work in music. By subject position they mean ‘the way in which cinematic techniques encourage or oblige viewers to adopt a particular relationship with the subject matter of the film, while recognising that every viewer comes with his or her own particular experiences, preconceptions, and perceptual sensitivities.’<sup>542</sup> The idea of subject position can also be understood in relation to the concept of camera position which was discussed within the

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540. David N. C. Patmore and Eric F. Clarke, “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds: John Culshaw and the Art of Record Production,” *Musicae Scientiae* 11: 269 (2007): 271.

541. Patmore and Clarke, “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds,” 271. Burlin, in his study on the recording practice and production of art music in Sweden 1925–1983, developed a model for analysing the recording of musical representation. He makes a distinction between four types of representation: 1) historical representation; 2) aesthetic representation; 3) musical representation; and 4) hypernotation. Put into the context of both Culshaw and Mehldau, the model of aesthetic representation can shed some light. As Burlin writes: ‘The recording was made with a specific [...] aesthetics or aesthetic ideals as a basis. The recording is marked by documentation and hyperrealism, which are two aesthetic ideals of music and recording.’ Burlin, *Det imaginära rummet*, 124. My translation. The concept of hyperrealism seems to be of special relevance in light of the intention to create a virtual world. The way the music is recorded functions as a gateway into a fictional world (diegetic world).

542. Patmore and Clarke, “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds,” 284.

context of the imaginary signifier and is also suitable for the interpretation of *Highway Rider* as an imaginary musical road movie. I argued that the position with which the spectator has in relation to the film deals with the process of stitching the Symbolic with the Imaginary; I also argued that there are two possible ways to locate the camera position in relation to the imaginary musical road movie: one in how the narrative script is constructed (the third-person perspective), another is the way the music is related to the titles through the recorded medium (the first-person perspective). Furthermore, as we have seen, road movies are iconographically marked through the so-called tracking shot. The concepts of the *tracking shot*, *camera position* and *subject position* here are used to describe the same phenomena.

Applied to music, subject position is put in relation to the recorded work where the record producer ‘establishes’ a listener position ‘by means of microphone placement, sound treatment, spatial positioning and pacing.’<sup>543</sup> One might ask whether Coleman’s aesthetics was to create ‘a virtual world for the listener, rather than *capturing* the reality of a [live] performance’<sup>544</sup> – a question that cannot be answered in a direct way. The sense of ‘liveness’ for the recording of *Highway Rider* definitely makes it possible for the listener to both create a virtual world while experiencing it as if it were a live performance; the ‘as if,’ or ‘liveness,’ is understood as that which emerges at the *interface* between recorded and live music. The difference that arises between recorded and live music is dependent on how music technology has emerged.<sup>545</sup> As musicologist Paul Sanden writes:

Live music does not exist without its recorded other. In other words, the concept of *liveness* in music was unknown until there was something *not live* – recordings – with which to compare it.<sup>546</sup>

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543. Patmore and Clarke, “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds,” 285. Compare with Burlin’s musical representation. Burlin, *Det imaginära rummet*, 124.

544. Patmore and Clarke, “Making and Hearing Virtual Worlds,” 286.

545. There is of course another perspective on the relationship between recorded and live music, namely the recordings of live performances. This is something very different than creating a sense of ‘liveness’ in the studio.

546. Paul Sanden, “Hearing Glenn Gould’s Body: Corporeal Liveness in Recorded

Recorded music can be considered to be a qualified medium in Elleström's terminology but as a medium that only slightly differs from live music. The definition of music as a qualified media is too narrow. From an ontological perspective music differs from other objects. It is instanced, as Cook argues, in different ways: as a live performance; as a recorded live performance; as a recorded performance; or simply as a score. The technological development of sound recording has not only differentiated the concept of medium but also generated new genres that could be termed or included in the category submedia, like the concept album. Elleström defines this concept in the following way:

Transmediated media products and their targets belong to all types of qualified media and submedia. [...]. The existence of various submedia designed especially to be transmediated is evidence of the significant importance of transmediation processes.<sup>547</sup>

As examples he states the libretto as a submedium to opera and the musical score as submedium to music, which is actually quite different from how I use the term – even though his definition may be included in my study. The narrative script for instance may be regarded as a submedium designed to be *transmediated* into a musical context.

Furthermore, implied within the relationship between live/not live lies the idea of a truthful or not so truthful representation of the performance – as if the live performance is regarded as the original from which (the performance on) the recording should be truthful to.<sup>548</sup> The question above

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Music,” *Current Musicology* 88 (2009): 7. The concept of liveness goes back to Philip Auslander who traces the word to the year 1934 though ‘the word became commonly used in relation to music only in the 1950s’ most notably in relation to the emerging Hi-Fi culture. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 352. See also Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

547. Lars Elleström, *Media Transformation: The Transfer of Media Characteristics Among Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 26.

548. The relationship between live and recording in the sense of the latter being truthful/faithful to the former could be compared to the debate within film adaptation studies where some would argue that a film should be truthful/faithful to the novel, which is obviously not always the case.



on whether Coleman's aesthetics was to capture the *reality* of the performance of *Highway Rider* makes the concept of liveness even more pertinent for the perception of the music. Sanden continues by saying that '[i]n many instances, liveness persists *within* [...] *mediatized music*, or more specifically *mediatized performance*.'<sup>549</sup> This, I would say, captures Coleman's aesthetic quite well, meaning that *Highway Rider* should be perceived as a mediatized performance. Once again, this emphasises the importance of discussing how material modalities are characterised within the framework of intermediality.

To my knowledge, *Highway Rider* has not been performed live in its completion more than a few times. By studying the reviews one could get an idea of the differences in experiencing the two types of performances. In one example: On 9 November 2010, the work was performed live in its completion at Carnegie Hall in New York by St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the original jazz orchestra. According to the concert reviewer David Miller, the live performance in contrast to the recorded album:

... [had] an urgency, and a power not present on the record. Live, the importance of silence revealed itself. Live, the audience was able to fully comprehend the great emotion behind Mehl dau's compositions, and connect the dots in a circular journey *about* journeys.<sup>550</sup>

The suggestion above may be that the recorded improvisations make up the difference in the experience: the implicit possibility to take an unexpected direction becomes explicit and realised. Any specific description of the sound experience or spatial experience is absent in the review; however, with regards to understanding the meaning of the work, Miller writes that listening to the live performance 'provided a fuller understanding.'<sup>551</sup> Whether this description also shows the difference in experiencing the music in its two types of performances clarifies my point is debatable, though it does show that there exists a difference worth noting. Moreover,

549. Sanden, "Hearing Glenn Gould's Body," 7.

550. David Miller, "Brad Mehl dau Highway Rider Live At Carnegie Hall," *All About Jazz*, December 3, 2010.

551. Miller, "Brad Mehl dau Highway Rider Live At Carnegie Hall."

the way one listens to the music regardless of whether it is live or not depends on how informed the listener is. In this particular performance, the listener had the opportunity to get to know what the music was about – the material was, as Miller writes, ‘played in advance’ of the concert.<sup>552</sup>

The ruptured relationship between perception of sound and action appears problematic when it comes to instrumental music – unless it deals with a musical work such as Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* (1882), in which one can hear cannons fire at the end as a non-musical object. An uninformed listener might perceive and act in accordance to the cannons fire in much the same way as when hearing gunfire. As music psychologist W. Luke Windsor and musicologist Christophe de Bézenac says in their article “Music and Affordances”:

It is unusual within the ecological approach to consider the perception of semiotic acts in any detail, and where such acts are considered they are often treated as special cases, as indirect, rather than direct perception.<sup>553</sup>

The perception of the semiotic act of hearing cannons fire in Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* as something integrated into the musical structure is special – especially if the music is performed live using real cannons. So is the case with *Highway Rider*: The music affords meaning to the words and the image as well as how the words and the image afford meaning to the music through an *indirect* perception.<sup>554</sup>

In the preface I claimed that even when you think you are solely listening to music, the word solely is filled with content that affects the production of musical meaning. This can now be clarified; not even instrumental music is perceived in isolation from other basic and/or qualified media. The musical material which is perceived is socially and historically constituted, or as Clarke says: ‘music almost always has a multimedia quality to it, and musical meaning is always the consequence of a context that is

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552. Miller, “Brad Mehldau Highway Rider Live At Carnegie Hall.”

553. W. Luke Windsor and Christophe de Bézenac, “Music and Affordances,” *Musicae Scientiae* (2012): 114.

554. See Chapter 1, “Theoretical and Methodological Framework,” section “Music and Multimodal Metaphor.”

wider than the “sounds in themselves”.<sup>555</sup> This context should be considered more closely in relation to both the music and the listener when studying the concept of affordance.

What makes the discussion of instrumental music especially interesting in relation to the ecological approach to music listening is the idea of musical autonomy – not so much that the idea is culturally embedded in Western classical music but rather that it is embedded within an *attitude* on how one should listen to music in general, namely structural listening.<sup>556</sup> The roots to this way of listening and the corresponding ‘roots of the concept [of musical autonomy] lie in the changing constructions of musical meaning, especially the meaning of *instrumental music*, at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.’<sup>557</sup> From a historical perspective autonomous music is music ‘whose meaning is not dependent on accompanying text or imagery.’<sup>558</sup> This also brings us to Kivy’s dictum of ‘music alone.’ However structural listening, implied in this perspective, and its relation to the ecological approach is peculiar since, as Clarke says, it encourages the ‘listener to turn away from the wider environment in searching for meaning.’<sup>559</sup> Within the development of sound recording, Cook’s comment that the idea of music alone ‘was most perfectly realized in the hi-fi culture,’<sup>560</sup> makes the ecological approach even more peculiar. At this point it should be clear that music, even though perceived ‘on headphones in a darkened room,’ is almost always received within the context of different paratexts.<sup>561</sup> There is no such thing as music alone, not even when perceived on headphones in a darkened room. It should also be clear that the production of meaning never (or only) occurs at the *immediate* experience of the music – the actions produced by the perception

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555. Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 88.

556. Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 127–128.

557. David Clarke, “Musical Autonomy Revisited,” in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 174.

558. Clarke, “Musical Autonomy Revisited,” 174.

559. Clarke, “Musical Autonomy Revisited,” 134.

560. Cook, foreword to *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*, v.

561. Cook, foreword to *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*, v.

of the music may be and are often delayed (indirect perception). Meaning production and music listening therefore appear on a time and space continuum – it begins when the listener least expects it: When he or she first encounters the album cover, reads reviews, or discusses the music, and it is activated and reactivated when the subject listens to the music uninterrupted and/or in fragmented forms – at home on headphones in a darkened room – or on the way to work, and it continues to be created, negotiated and renegotiated long afterwards. So, a paradox seems to emerge here: Autonomous music is music whose meaning is *dependent* on e.g. accompanying texts, imagery, which once again brings the issue of the communicative context(s) within which the music is perceived to the fore. Clarke further stresses this when discussing the relationship between the ecological approach and structural listening. For instance, he suggests that four factors might have given rise to structural listening: 1) *The listening environment*: this encompasses an ideological component that assume a listening process, which is silent and uninterrupted; 2) *The relationship between perception and action*: recorded music encourages a type of listening within which the listener is ‘cut off from the world.’<sup>562</sup> The subject is immersed in the music in a way that is different from listening to live music and, as a consequence of this immersion, the listener tends to focus both on the music’s structure and how the music is constructed, rather than what he or she can do with it. According to Clarke, this is a type of musical autonomy as well.<sup>563</sup> I would add to this Dewey’s discussion on the different types of experiences dealing with the idea of musical unity – one that occurs in everyday life (perhaps equivalent of the perception of gunfire), another that is demarcated in the general stream of experiences from other experiences, such as with music. Musical autonomy and musical unity thus suggests a structural listening to music;<sup>564</sup> 3) *The compositional characteristics of the music*: this deals with an ‘idealized structural listening’ that specifies the ‘condition that must be met if a listener is to recover the structure of

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<sup>562</sup> Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 137.

<sup>563</sup> Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 138.

<sup>564</sup> See Chapter 5, “Cyclic, Narrative and Psychoanalytic Aspects of *Highway Rider*.”

the music from its sounding surface.’<sup>565</sup> As I have suggested more than once, the study of *Highway Rider* demands a certain degree of competence and engagement of an ‘implied listener.’ Others, such as Agawu, Wolf, and Butt have also stressed this in their writings; 4) *The predispositions or habits of listeners*: as Clarke says, is perhaps the most difficult to talk about since there is a lack of empirical studies on different ways of listening. Furthermore, it is not uncommon in discussions such as these to mention Adorno’s text “Types of Musical Conduct: A Theory of Listening and Listeners,” published in the *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, in which he differentiates between eight listening types.<sup>566</sup> As Richard Leppert writes, Adorno ‘outlines a typology of listeners, rooted in the principle of structural listening, that is, by listening that concentrates on musical content via music’s structural unfolding in time.’<sup>567</sup> This typology has had a major impact in and on musicology but also highly, and correctly, criticised by the musicological society; the critique is primarily directed to how Adorno ‘rewards’ the type of listener that not only focuses on the structural logic and thus on musical autonomy, but also that listeners ‘are inflexible bounded according to’ this specific type of listener.<sup>568</sup> Although the jump between saying Adorno’s listening types and those modes of listening that Butt discusses on the implied listener is a big one, one cannot help but wonder if there is a way to associate an autonomous way of listening with flexible listening. For *Highway Rider*, which consists of different genres, this flexibility is more or less a prerequisite which Adorno would see as an impossibility. I would even argue that they are mutually dependent and part of our everyday life.

To conclude this essay from an ecological perspective I would suggest that it should be seen as an attempt to show: 1) that music listening is always intermedial; 2) that the way we listen to music is always changing; 3) that the way we listen to music depends on our degree of engagement;

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565. Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 140.

566. See Theodor W. Adorno, “Types of Musical Conduct: A Theory of Listening and Listeners,” in *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 1–20.

567. Richard Leppert, “Commentary,” in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 228.

568. Clarke, *Ways of Listening*, 172.

4) that if we *want* to understand a specific musical piece in a special way it *demand*s personal engagement; 5) that associative listening does not contradict structural listening; and finally 6), that the production of musical meaning for the concept album *Highway Rider* as an imaginary musical road movie circulates in and through different cultural and symbolic systems, and it is constantly negotiated and renegotiated between the subject position and the subject matter.<sup>569</sup>

### Musicology, Intermedial Studies and the Concept of Culture

An underlying theme, though not explicitly expressed, has been to show how musicology as a discipline requires to be 'expanded' in order to understand the intermedial music culture. One might understand this as a 'prolongation' of Joseph Kerman's ideas in his much acclaimed book *Contemplating Music* (1985), in which he criticised the nature of the established discipline of musicology,<sup>570</sup> and which has further led to the emergence of the new musicology during the 1990s and of today's cultural and a critical approach of musicology.<sup>571</sup>

In an article published 2012 I introduced the concept of intermediality into the discussion of musicology as a discipline through a number of other disciplines and fields of study.<sup>572</sup> Moreover, I explained possible reasons why intermediality as a concept seems to have had a hard time being accepted within traditional musicology. One possible explanation can be found in the departmental division of aesthetic disciplines based on ideological aspects of what the different art forms aspire to. Another is in the

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569. I consciously use the personal pronoun *we* here to demonstrate some kind of generality in my reasoning.

570. Arvidson, "Music and Musicology in the Light of Intermediality and Intermedial Studies." See also Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

571. See Walter Bernhart, introduction to *Word and Music Studies: Defining the Field*, ed. Walter Bernhart et al. (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 1, and Arvidson, "The Impact of Culture on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies," 20.

572. Arvidson, "Music and Musicology in the Light of Intermediality and Intermedial Studies."

fear of losing the core matters of the subject as such – the fear of losing the knowledge of music as a *sounding* form. I believe the main focus of inter-medial studies are to understand how meaning is produced either in a very narrow way (the object itself) or in a broad way (the system within which art and media products circulates in, through and around culture). This implies that art and media cannot be separated regardless of ideological reasons. At the same time I have criticised intermedial studies for sometimes being too narrow by focusing on the different intermedial relations either *between* art forms (extracompositional intermediality) or *within* a specific art form (intracompositional intermediality) instead of considering them in a broader cultural, historical and medial perspective. In addition to these critiques I have argued that intermedial studies could learn from how cultural studies and media studies approach the concept of intermediality in order to embrace both the historical and the cultural developments of different art and media forms, that is to say, how they emerge and how they are used today. One can also add to this notion how intermediality has become part of a larger cultural economy, explored through concepts such as convergence culture and transmedia storytelling.<sup>573</sup>

In another text, published in 2014, I developed and deepened some of these aspects. However, there I mainly focused on the impact of cultural studies on musicology within the context of word and music studies.<sup>574</sup> Although the field of word and music studies is relatively narrow, especially in relation to the study of a work such as *Highway Rider*, there is much to learn from how the field has developed during the last decade or so. One particular focus is how to understand the concept of culture in cultural studies – not least since cultural studies is considered to be one of the driving forces in both the development of new musicology and of word and music studies. Another focus, which derives from the first, has to do with the relationship between musicology at large and word and music studies. First of all, it is quite interesting to note how musicology has experienced the same kind of fear of losing its core matters as comparative literature

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573. Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

574. Arvidson, "The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies," 17–29.

has.<sup>575</sup> Secondly, I suggest that cultural studies should be understood as something that explores culture as a signifying practice, which emphasises the importance of formal and structural analysis without abandoning subjectivity. The expanded intermedial perspective, that which not only focuses on the formal aspects but also on culture as a signifying practice, enables a deeper understanding of music as a symbolic form and a deeper understanding of how the listener, as Cook argues, uses music as an important instrument of subjectivity.<sup>576</sup> The concept of culture that this essay uses should be understood as an *attempt* to merge formal and structural analysis with cultural, historical, technological and psychoanalytic aspects of music, and emphasising the role of subjectivity in the production of meaning. For some, this perspective is in line with the new musicology tradition. I personally try to avoid such designations, as they tend to stigmatise one's analytical perspectives. Instead I want to see the present study simply as musicological but with a particular focus on intermedial issues. Overall this study deals with the hermeneutic concept of culture, which takes the whole communicative process into consideration: The process of creativity, the symbolic form embodied in physicality or materiality (the material traces of music) and the process of perception. The relationship between the symbolic character of the music, subjectivity and psychoanalysis is central to understanding culture as a signifying practice in this particular case study (other case studies may make use of other cultural perspectives). For instance, as Fornäs writes: 'Subjects swim in symbolic streams, but are also pervaded by them.'<sup>577</sup> This opens up questions like: What kind of symbolic stream are we speaking of in the listening process of *Highway Rider*? How does the listener mirror him/herself in the music/story? The answers to these questions can, of course, only be hypothetical due to the contingencies of the listener's position to the work in question. Simply put, the answer is found in the listener's historical, cultural and social position

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575. Arvidson, "The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies," 17–29.

576. Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 344.

577. Johan Fornäs, *Cultural Theory & Late Modernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 222.



in relation to the music, meaning the specific discourse of symbolic values, norms and laws of desire that the listener brings with him or her and which becomes part of the act of listening. From a semiotic perspective the symbolic forms of *Highway Rider* not only involve the acoustic traces as such but everything that precedes it and everything that makes the traces possible through a materiality. The traces themselves are thus the results of contingencies.

### Concluding Remarks:

#### Modalities and Intermedialities of *Highway Rider*

The two-part title, *An Imaginary Musical Road Movie: Transmedial Semiotic Structures in Brad Mehldau's Concept Album Highway Rider*, demonstrates two aspects that have permeated this essay which deals with the issue of meaning production – both of which correspond to how the semiotic modality can be transgressed. The *first* part deals with a special way of *mediation* by way of how qualifying aspects/media realises the *content* of one medium through technical media, such as the CD/record sleeve/concept album. The *second* part deals with a specific type of *transformation*, namely that of transmediality by way of how basic media, such as words and images, relate to music. One might even suggest that the basic media in *combination* with each other are essential to interpret *Highway Rider* as an imaginary musical road movie. From a conceptual level they cannot be separated without the work *as* an imaginary musical road movie falling apart. *Integration* is embedded in the very idea of the concept album. But the title also has a double meaning into it; the concept of the imaginary partly points to the imagined story, partly as the perceiver's imaginary mirror.

So, let us start from the beginning to end this essay: What is at stake here? I would argue that intermediality as both a concept and an idea from the outset is embedded in the expression 'music is never alone.' For instance, the development of music technology has enabled new signifying practices that previously did not exist. Technologies such as new recording formats have provided different types of spaces for elaborate commentaries

and thus new ways of listening to music.<sup>578</sup> Some technologies may even be regarded as *qualifications* for new genres to emerge. *Highway Rider* as a concept album is such a qualified medium. With this said, one can clearly see how Elleström's distinction between basic, technical and qualified media coalesce into a complex medium that cannot be disassembled. This study also shows how the semiotic modality and the qualifying aspects of media are transgressed through mediation – the CD and its 'package' (record sleeve) realises the semantic content of music by way of putting the musical and non-musical relationships together. It is this relationship that *defines* the transmedial aspects of *Highway Rider*. The non-musical information belongs to the poietic process, while the musical information belong to the different levels of material traces, such as the score, the recording and the 'recorded' performance. The fact that this work belongs to the genre of concept albums further suggests a specific way of listening since it frames the listener within a specific cultural and historical context. As listeners, we are bound to that genre in order to understand the music in a special way. However genre is not only a qualified medium; it is also a transmedial concept. In the case of *Highway Rider*, the concept of genre functions at two levels simultaneously: 1) as a musical aspect: the work as a whole, as a concept album, where the different parts of the whole consists of different types of genres; 2) as a non-musical aspect: this essay has demonstrated how the work transforms the genre of road movie into sounding forms.

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578. See Straw, "Music and Material Culture."



## Afterword: Is Music Really a Stone?

This essay has encountered at least two challenges which I could have never predicted. I will therefore comment upon them and try to shed light on their importance.

The first challenge has been to define the object scrutinised: What form does the object have? How does the object relate to the listener as well as the researcher as separate subjects? In what way does it infiltrate the recipient's way of living, thus becoming part of a specific meaning production? These questions are further framed within the definition of music that I explicitly have undertaken throughout the essay, namely as the work's being located somewhere between 'its symbolic components.'<sup>579</sup> However, these questions may be regarded as rather compelling. As already indicated in the acknowledgments, one can get the impression that many musicologists are not allowed to ask themselves these types of questions, perhaps because they show a weakness in the ability to adequately arrive at an analysis that can be truthful to the *object* in question – as if the object were a self-contained, autonomous entity. Let me thus make a comparison with an object other than music – a comparison that may seem somewhat odd but that nonetheless illustrates the problem in question.

Imagine a stone, or a piece of rock in any shape. One can readily understand the idea that the stone exists regardless of our use of it and one can equally understand the idea that music is something else – it cannot exist without us defining it *as* music. This emerges very clearly in composer John Cage's (1912–1992) three-movement composition 4'33" (1952) where even *silence* can be understood as music. As Cook writes:

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<sup>579</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse*, 70.

[T]hough 4'33" specifies no sounds as such, it creates a musical event out of whatever there is to be heard, and it does so through creating in the listener an openness to the qualities of sounds, heard for their own sake, such as is normally lacking in people's awareness of their acoustic surroundings.<sup>580</sup>

One central aspect of Cage's work is interactivity. It shows how the receiver interacts (though implicitly) with the work; by generating sounds into the work from the surroundings the very concept of music is turned upside down. Music as an object and the human being as a subject are thus inseparable; from an ontological perspective music is an example of what philosopher Ian Hacking defines as an *interactive category*.<sup>581</sup> The difference between a stone and music is that the former is ontologically objective; its existence is *not* dependent on our subjective experiences of it. Music, on the other hand, is ontologically subjective since it depends on ourselves as conscious, rational and speech-act performing agents. Though both belong to the same reality (both are *material entities* and both can *produce meaning*), they differ in kind. In short, the most basic structure of the universe is, according to Searle, so-called basic facts, meaning those facts that 'are given in the atomic theory of matter and the evolutionary theory of biology.'<sup>582</sup> The problem here is not so much to understand what these basic facts are but how they fit into the 'conception we have of ourselves' as conscious, rational and speech-act performing agents *within* a universe that is constructed of matter. In the words of Searle the problem is formulated as follows:

How can we square this self-conception of ourselves as mindful, meaning-creating, free, rational, etc., agents with a universe that consists entirely of mindless, meaningless, unfree, nonrational brute physical particles?<sup>583</sup>

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580. Cook, *Music, Imagination & Culture*, 11. For those interested, there is an application to download that makes it possible to compose (and perform) one's own version of Cage's 4'33". The application, called 4'33" – *John Cage*, was launched in February 2014 and is available at iTunes AppStore. See Larry Larson, 4'33" – *John Cage* [App] (2014), version 1.01.

581. Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 103.

582. John R. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology: Reflections on Free Will, Language, and Political Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 4.

583. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology*, 5.

Where does music fit into this universe? Similarly, where does the *study* of music fit into this somewhat strange comparison to the construction of the reality? In his book *Freedom and Neurobiology: Reflections on Free Will, Language, and Political Power* (2007), Searle brings together eight aspects in order to answer the question put forward above. These are: consciousness, intentionality, language, rationality, free will, society and institutions, politics and ethics. He also adds *aesthetics* to this list without further discussion except for concluding that: 'I think there is an aesthetic dimension to all conscious experiences.'<sup>584</sup> Furthermore these aspects are logically dependent on each other. For instance, intentionality (that which has a directedness, e.g. beliefs, hopes) requires consciousness (the subjective state of sentience); language (that which deals with representations of the world) presupposes intentionality; and institutions are dependent on language. To regard music as a symbolic form, and production of meaning as something dependent on our consciousness, language and institutions as a special kind of social fact should, in light of this reasoning, not be understood as something extraordinary. However all too often music is regarded as if it were a stone and as if it were an ontologically *objective* matter and therefore independent of our consciousness. Within this context Searle makes a distinction between epistemic objectivity and epistemic subjectivity: 'A claim is epistemically objective if its truth or falsity can be established independently of the feelings, attitudes and preferences, and so on, of the makers and interpreters of the claim.'<sup>585</sup> Often there seems to be a correlation between epistemic objectivity and ontological objectivity on the one hand, and epistemic subjectivity and ontological subjectivity on the other hand. However, as Searle points out, ontological subjectivity does not exclude epistemic objective facts. The listener's ontologically subjective experienced emotions can be traced to the epistemic objective facts of the music. I think it is a mistake to treat the analysis of music as if it were an epistemic subjective fact although it is ontologically subjective and depends on the consciousness, language and institutions.

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<sup>584</sup>. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology*, 14.

<sup>585</sup>. Searle, *Freedom and Neurobiology*, 83.

Yet this might not be the right way to address the issue of making truthful analyses. The truthfulness directed towards the object is mirrored back onto and into the subject listener, which means that the concept of truthfulness should instead be directed to the life within which music, culture and the human subject is part of – the lived experience in Nattiez's words. I suggest that music (or any kind of qualified media) as an interactive category is one way to understand this relationship. For instance, if one does *not* accept Kramer's account that the risk of being too subjective in the musical description is the very condition for an efficient description of the object, it would remove the ability to understand it at all.

The second challenge, which is a direct derivation of the first, has been to not let myself, as a researcher, be led into a maze of theories that risk overshadowing the main purpose, namely to *understand*. Yet what does *to understand* mean in this context? How do I know that I have come to an understanding that is reasonable not only for me but also for anyone else? To phrase this question differently: Is there any kind of generality in the singularity of the analysis? The six-point conclusion put forward in the section "Whose Listening?" may be understood as an attempt to show such a generality. Once again one can turn to Kramer. Whereas the semiotic approach to music aims to show the existence of music as a symbolic form, the hermeneutic approach 'assume[s] that meaning in the larger sense is neither inherent in the object of interpretation, nor constructible on the basis of meaning encoded in the object.'<sup>586</sup> As we have seen, this also corresponds to Fornäs' view that meaning is not inherent in things, signs or texts but requires human interpretative activity.<sup>587</sup> The particular challenge has to do with the issue that meaning production is always *contingent*, which means that the hermeneutic activity can never create secure knowledge<sup>588</sup> – if this means the type of knowledge one deduces through an ontological objective experience. Meaning production is dependent on the ecological environment, the social-cultural experience, the habitus; it is

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<sup>586</sup> Lawrence Kramer, "Language," in *Interpreting Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>587</sup> See "Preface."

<sup>588</sup> Kramer, "Language," 22.

dependent on the communicative context within which music occurs. What I have tried to show and what has been one of the most difficult challenges is that understanding music as a symbolic form demands interpretation in a strong hermeneutic sense.<sup>589</sup> This challenge could of course be further explored through sociological, ethnographic and even neurobiological studies, but that is another story which is outside the parameters of the present study.

With these two challenges at hand, I hope that I have demonstrated the complexity of these kinds of studies. I thereby end *my* poietic process of interpretation of a particular material trace, leaving a bunch of material traces for the reader to interpret, thus fulfilling a never-ending semiosis of interpretants to construct meaning from.

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589. See Arvidson, "The Impact of Cultural Studies on Musicology Within the Context of Word and Music Studies," 22–24.





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## Appendix I (Information about the CD)

### Disc one

John Boy 3:15  
Don't Be Sad 8:41  
At The Tollbooth 1:07  
Highway Rider 7:45  
The Falcon Must Fly Again 8:21  
Now You Must Climb Alone 4:06  
Walking The Peak 8:00

### Musicians and orchestra disc one

*John Boy*: Brad Mehldau, piano; Jeff Ballard, percussion; Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Orchestra, i.e. horn and English horn [core anglais] only.  
*Don't Be Sad*: Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano, pump organ; Larry Grenadier, bass; Matt Chamberlain, drums; Jeff Ballard, snare brush; Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.  
*At The Tollbooth*: Brad Mehldau, piano.  
*Highway Rider*: Brad Mehldau, piano, Yamaha CS-80; Larry Grenadier, bass; Matt Chamberlain, drums.  
*The Falcon Will Fly Again*: Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano; Jeff Ballard, Matt Chamberlain, percussion; Brad, Josh, Dan, Matt, Jeff, and special guests The Fleurettes, la la la vocals.  
*Now You Must Climb Alone*: Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.  
*Walking The Peak*: Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano, orchestral bells; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums; Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.

## APPENDIX I

### Disc two

We'll Cross The River Together 12:28

Capriccio 5:20

Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith) 6:24

Into The City 7:37

Old West 8:29

Come With Me 6:20

Always Departing 6:21

Always Returning 9:53

### Musicians and orchestra disc two

*We'll Cross The River Together*: Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano, orchestral bells; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums, percussion; Matt Chamberlain, percussion; Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.

*Capriccio*: Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano; Jeff Ballard, Matt Chamberlain, percussion; Josh, Brad, Jeff, Matt and Larry, handclaps.

*Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith)*: Joshua Redman, tenor saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano, pump organ; Larry Grenadier, bass; Matt Chamberlain, drums.

*Into The City*: Brad Mehldau, piano; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums.

*Old West*: Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano.

*Come With Me*: Brad Mehldau, piano; Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, bass.

*Always Departing*: Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.

*Always Returning*: Joshua Redman, soprano saxophone; Brad Mehldau, piano, orchestral bells; Larry Grenadier, bass; Jeff Ballard, drums; Matt Chamberlain, drums; Orchestra, i.e. violin, viola, cello, bass, horn, bassoon, contrabassoon.

## Appendix II (The original storybook)



BRAD MEHLDAU  
HIGHWAY RIDER

*“Highway Rider” is about a journey  
– a journey away from home,  
and then the return home.  
Some of that journey is made in solitude,  
and some of it is made with others.*

Click on the red words in the story that follows  
to listen to samples of each track in sequence.

sound on



We meet the traveler at home. He feels peace and contentment, but is also aware that he must leave. There is sadness and consolation as he says goodbye, and then he departs. One last stop at the tollbooth to pay the fare and to look back at the local small roads of his hometown, and then, he is off, onto the open road, a highway rider.

At first he is alone and as the days pass he feels what that is, to be alone. He comes to embrace that feeling because there are great things that he can only experience in solitude. When he is back among others for a short time, though – when he is among children in particular, he feels stronger than ever how precious it is to be with people. Then, he leaves them again to continue his journey.

sound on



He must climb now for a long time alone, and this part of his journey is a test. He must resist his desire to give up and turn back, because he has come so far now that turning back would be almost as long as continuing forward. Finally, he reaches the peak of a mountain and looks around him. From the peak, everything looks different. There is no clear line in any direction; everything surrounds his view like one great circle. He realizes that his journey is also a circle, and he is halfway around the circle. He had never grasped this until now, and is intoxicated by what he sees and realizes. He stays there at the peak for a while, walking around, looking ahead to where he will go, looking behind from where he has come, looking all around him.

sound on





## APPENDIX II

And when he is done walking the peak, he descends again, and he no longer needs to be alone. For the next part of his journey, he finds others along the way who travel with him, who go where he goes – for a time at least. They travel further together, and see a wide river ahead. Helping each other, **they cross the river together**. They are bound to each other by what they surmount together.

With the other travelers, he sees more of his surroundings than he did when he was alone, because there is another set of eyes to look through. Those others come and go, though, and sometimes he is alone again. As his surroundings and his companionship constantly shifts, he experiences the way time passes: **Something is capricious and ephemeral**, you hold it in your hand and take pleasure in it; you feel its immediacy. Then it leaves you, and you feel



sound on



the weight of its absence; the **sky turns grey**. And time never stops. He travels further, always moving onward, **through the throng of cities**, and then **further west, where the land is dry**. There, there are fewer people, and they are hardened but wise, full of legend and old ways.

He is close to where he began – he is close to home again. For one last time, he asks his friends to **come with him**. They make their last journey together. He leaves his friends, saying goodbye to them at the entrance to his hometown, where the roads get smaller again. He is home again. He realizes that he is **always departing** from somewhere and someone and **always returning** to someplace and someone else.



sound on



### HIGHWAY RIDER

John Boy  
Don't Be Sad  
At The Tollbooth  
Highway Rider  
The Falcon Will Fly Again  
Now You Must Climb Alone  
Walking The Peak  
We'll Cross The River Together  
Capriccio  
Sky Turning Grey (For Elliot Smith)  
Into The City  
Old West  
Come With Me  
Always Departing  
Always Returning



sound on

Click on song titles to listen.



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