

Studio audience: Glenn Gould's contrapuntal radio

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'I detest audiences' (Gould, 1966: 00' 01"-00' 03"). So begins a 1966 television interview with Glenn Gould, the virtuoso Canadian pianist who had retired from the concert stage just two years earlier at the age of 31. Gould's retirement was no publicity stunt: by all accounts the eccentric, hypochondriacal performer found large crowds genuinely distressing. In giving up the stage, however, by no means did Gould renounce publicity as such. On the contrary, he maintained and cultivated intimate connections with ever-increasing numbers of listeners by dedicating his remarkable talents and energies to radio and recording. As attested by his large discography (over seventy-five discs for Columbia Records) and two decades of innovative radio productions for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Gould's hatred for audiences was more than matched by his love for that audience replacement, the microphone. He puts it this way in his characteristically arch manner: 'the fact that in most forms of broadcasting a microphone six feet away stands as surrogate for an audience has always been, for me, prominent among the attractions of the medium' (Gould, 1985: 354).

This chapter argues that the microphone – or rather, the studio for which the microphone stands in as metonym – permitted Gould to convert audiences to audience, that is, to the state of listening itself, and to an especially capacious form of listening. Gould sought to cultivate in himself and his listeners the capacity to entertain in quiet awareness several distinct voices at once, a capacity that he gave significant ethical, aesthetic and political weight to and that, as we shall see, answered a set of psychic needs. Such contrapuntal listening, a crucial part of his piano technique, permitted Gould to develop those extraordinary interpretations of Johann Sebastian Bach's keyboard music that won him international renown and controversial genius status following the success of his debut album *The Goldberg Variations* (Columbia Records, 1955). Gould brought this contrapuntal sensibility to radio in the 1960s and 1970s where it would evolve into a kind of ethos in his major radio works, the documentaries collected and

released under the title *The Solitude Trilogy* whose layered polyphonies remain challenging listening experiences.

Gould called these works contrapuntal radio. To be clear, the layering of voices atop one another does not characterise all or even most of Gould's radio work. For example, in his portraits of a variety of musical figures (Petula Clark, Pablo Casals, Leopold Stokowski, Arnold Schoenberg, Richard Strauss) we listen to one speaking voice at a time, almost always in dialogue with voices that come before and after, presenting thoughts and ideas in conflict with one another, and brought together with music that may contribute yet another 'voice' to the conversation. The hour-long drama-documentaries (as he called them) that comprise *The Solitude Trilogy* also use recordings of interviews that Gould conducted, but are more complex. The primary subject of 'The Idea of North' (1967), 'The Latecomers' (1969) and 'The Quiet in the Land' (1977) is isolation in geographical regions of Canada: the near-Arctic north, Newfoundland and rural Manitoba. Gould would create a script or score from the transcribed interviews which he would then realise (with the help of CBC sound engineers) through extensive tape splicing, volume control and other studio techniques. In the first two radio documentaries Gould orchestrated voice tracks over what he called a basso continuo, the sound of the rumbling train going north in 'The Idea of North' and the sound of the surf in 'The Latecomers'. By the time he made 'The Quiet in the Land' Gould's use of sonic materials had become more elaborate, involving, for example, the juxtaposition of a song by Joan Baez with a Mennonite children's choir, ambient sounds, and as many as nine voices simultaneously. These works pursue disjunctions between voice and meaning at the same time that they express thoughts and ideas in language.

As Richard Kostelanetz has suggested, Gould composed for the medium of radio (1988: 567). The layering of speaking voices atop or close beside one another, the subtle, nuanced play with gain or volume, and the arrangement of materials both musically and in terms of verbal content all form part of his approach to contrapuntal radio. I take this to name Gould's compositional techniques and poetics: the editing together and mixing of multiple recorded voices, music and other sounds in complex, conflicted dialogue to achieve a kind of sonic density that plays at the limits of a listener's ability to follow, sort and separate the meanings of these tracks, multiple non-exclusive meanings that are presented simultaneously. Something approaching this sonic density characterises most of Gould's radio work, the documentaries and portraits as well as the late comic recording 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy'. I will attend closely to this seemingly minor recording which features Gould's ridiculous impersonations of fictitious music critics later in this essay, for it will allow me to unfold

the strange theatricality permitted by the studio and central to Gould's contrapuntal radio.

From the literary critical and affect theoretical perspective I take here, Gould looks and sounds like a writer, composer and producer who was committed to several intersecting media, including recorded music, written and printed language, vinyl, magnetic tape and radio. In his embrace of the microphone and the studio Gould resembles earlier modernist writers who used radio to communicate challenging work to large audiences. No doubt Gould would have agreed with George Orwell who, in an essay entitled 'Poetry and the Microphone' (1945), contrasts 'That grisly thing, a "poetry reading"', at which 'there will always be some among the audience who are bored or all but frankly hostile', with a radio broadcast in which 'The poet *feels* that he is addressing people to whom poetry means something' (1993: 167). Gertrude Stein describes her interview on NBC radio in the mid-1930s in similarly affective terms: 'you knew, you really knew, not by what you knew but by what you felt, that everybody was listening. It is a very wonderful thing to do' (Stein, 1935: 168).¹ Both Orwell and Stein were facing potentially hostile audiences: Orwell was engaged by the BBC to broadcast literary programmes to India during the war, and Stein was beginning a United States lecture tour to popularise her radically experimental writing and poetics. No wonder that both emphasise what Orwell calls the 'make-believe' elements of radio and the protective space of the studio in which 'the audience *has no power over you*' (1993: 167, emphasis in original). In the studio, to address one sympathetic, 'conjectural' (1993: 167) or imagined person is to address (in principle) anyone. I take this to be radio's basic phantasmatic structure of address, one that is especially appealing to writers insofar as it gratifies a fundamental wish: to enjoy communion with an audience while being alone and protected from them. Gould partook of this powerful phantasy and sought to realise it by way of the studio – etymologically, the artist's or scholar's workroom, a private space for reverie, a *study*.

This chapter is in two sections. The first section surveys a variety of critical writing on Gould, briefly locates his work in the contexts of European and North American avant-gardes (Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan), and summarises materialist criticism of Gould's radio work before offering a more phenomenological approach to the studio as a way to bridge aesthetic and political readings of counterpoint. The second section listens closely to 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy' to locate the studio as a space of fantasy in the sense that object-relations theory understands that concept.² The studio, I argue, offered a safe space of containment for Gould and his many conflicting voices and, at the same time, it is itself doubly, precariously contained: both by the institutions that supported Gould's

work (in particular, the CBC) and by the listener who may internalise the intimate space of the studio. This phantasy of internalisation is what I mean by studio audience.

Counterpoint, from music to radio

How to begin to understand the aesthetic and political meanings of Gould's contrapuntal radio? Edward Said wrote several essays on Gould that explored (among other things) the pianist's commitment to musical counterpoint in Bach in particular. Consider this description of Gould's precise articulation of simultaneous melodic voices at great speed:

as you listen to the music you feel as if you are watching a tightly packed, dense work being unfolded, resolved almost, into a set of intertwined lines held together not by two hands but by ten fingers, each responsive to all the others, as well as to the two hands and the one mind really back of everything. (Said, 2008: 4)

What Said finds unusual in Gould's performance is a highly literate intellectual engagement, the 'capacity to display an almost verbal intelligence through his fingers' (2008: 221) that transforms musical performance into an experience of reading or writing: 'For him every performance was a reading in the literal sense: the work he played seemed to be advancing an argument, making points' (2008: 226). Said is not alone in this observation. As the French film director Bruno Monsaingeon in his documentary *Glenn Gould: Hereafter* (2006) explains, Gould's performance style lets 'his listeners, whether musicians or music lovers, listen to his music as if they could read it' (Monsaingeon, 2006: 10' 15"-10' 34").

Gould's writerly musical performance is connected with his passion for and fascination with counterpoint, which Said defines this way: 'the essence of counterpoint is simultaneity of voices, preternatural control of resources, apparently endless inventiveness. In counterpoint a melody is always being repeated by one or another voice; the result is horizontal, rather than vertical, music' (2008: 5). This endlessly inventive, horizontal multiplicity orients a listener towards a paratactic, potentially democratising space of equal voices or lines, what Said implies in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) when he proposes reading archives contrapuntally with an awareness of official as well as counter-histories.³ But Said's discussions of counterpoint offer a more complicated treatment of this musical form: 'Counterpoint is the total ordering of sound, the complete management of time, the minute subdivision of musical space, and absolute absorption for the intellect' (2008: 5). In counterpoint the tendencies towards multiplicity or plurality,

on the one hand, and towards totality, on the other, are in tension, a tension Said explores in his late essay 'Glenn Gould, the Virtuoso as Intellectual', which juxtaposes Gould's interpretations of Bach with Theodor Adorno's writing on the composer. For Adorno, Bach's music, in bringing together anachronistic or 'antiquated contrapuntal devices with a modern rational subject' (Said, 2008: 273), offers musical images that reconcile rationalised, technical production with highly idiosyncratic subjectivity in an attempt (here I'm citing Adorno, as cited by Said) 'to help [music] reach its innermost truth, the emancipation of the subject to objectivity in a coherent whole of which subjectivity itself was the origin' (2008: 273).

In listening to Gould we are tuning in to the dialectical, Hegelian thinking of a neo-avant-garde. I suspect that the concept of the avant-garde, rooted in a European Marxist critical tradition and conditioned (in part) by the state's control of media, is not always well-suited to the twentieth-century North American landscape. Nevertheless, Gould's writing sounds like an unexpected Canadian cousin to the Frankfurt School, as if he were translating German aesthetic philosophy for North American audiences more familiar with the work of Marshall McLuhan than that of Adorno. Indeed, according to Richard Cavell, who analyses Gould's radio poetics by way of McLuhan's ideas about acoustic space and environmental prosthetics, Gould read Adorno's writing on Bach (Cavell, 2002: 163). Gould was clearly committed to an eclectic musical avant-garde, drawn both to the modernist serialism of Arnold Schoenberg and to the very late romanticism of Richard Strauss, while also engaging with John Cage's aleatory compositional procedures, even if he disagreed with them in print and on air. Gould's idiosyncratic performance habits, his disdain for major figures in the concert repertoire and his retreat from the stage to the studio all chime with Adorno's critique of the 'atomistic listening' produced by the conditions of concert-going (Said, 2008: 270). As Said points out, Gould's writerly commitment to musical counterpoint cultivates structural or systematic listening, which, when combined with an insistence on highly idiosyncratic interpretation, offers 'a critical model for a type of art that is rational and pleasurable at the same time, an art that tries to show us its composition as an activity still being undertaken in performance' (2008: 277).

Gould brings together this avant-garde emphasis on process and performance with a powerful commitment to recording. In this way, his political and aesthetic concerns resemble those of Walter Benjamin more than they do Adorno's. This becomes clear to a reader of 'The Prospects of Recording' (1966), an essay that serves as a manifesto for Gould's poetics (based on a radio programme he produced, 'Dialogue on the Prospects of Recording', which included an interview with McLuhan), and which unfolds the sonic advantages of the studio as well as its editorial possibilities, its

'take-twoness'. Gould's commitment to the studio emphasises a 'zero-to-one relationship' with listeners (Gould, 1985: 318) by way of the 'analytic clarity, immediacy, and indeed almost tactile proximity' of recording (1985: 333). Studio recording and editing was, for Gould as well as for other producers of the 1960s and 1970s, a process of discovering new ways to interpret and present music by recording multiple performances and splicing together distinct interpretations (Gould was unusual in bringing these methods to recordings of European art music). In a manner entirely consistent with Benjamin's conceptualisation of the work of art (exemplarily, film) in the era of its technological reproducibility, Gould argues against the ideal of authenticity associated with live performance and proposes to revalue the work of forgery: 'the role of the forger, of the unknown maker of unauthenticated goods, is emblematic of electronic culture' (1985: 343).

We should think of Gould's career in terms of a full commitment to the aesthetic and political possibilities of the studio and the forms of publicity that accompany broadcasting and recording. To return to Said's initial description, Gould's ten fingers, two hands and one mind all need to be located in the space of the studio, where we can also find the hands, fingers and minds of studio engineers (Andrew Kazdin, Lorne Tulk, Ray Roberts, among others) as well as the microphones, multi-track recorders, sound boards, cables, amplifiers and other equipment necessary to create Gould's recordings (for a similar point about the labour of recording, see Hecker, 2008: 81). Said may not have meant his arithmetic series to be reductive, down to 'the one mind behind everything', but it is worth keeping in our own minds that Gould's legendary solitariness may not be as singular as he and his commentators would sometimes have it. A reader of Peter Ostwald's insightful, sympathetic biography of Gould may be struck by the many, hours-long, late-night telephone conversations Gould insisted on having with friends, and his dependence on specific individuals for practical support even while he sought a stringent emotional autonomy. And so, while I agree with much of Ross Posnock's recent reading of Gould's idiosyncrasies as ensuring a form of privacy in which 'absorption and introspection could flourish' (2016: 246), part of a larger argument that Gould's retirement from stage to studio expressed a political and spiritual rejection of 'the public realm's impoverishment' (2016: 255), I am not persuaded that Gould's aesthetics 'erases the public domain' and 'enters the closed circuit of "system" in the shape of the recording studio' (2016: 252). Neither Posnock nor Said examines Gould's work for radio in any detail, nor the forms of sociality that radio encourages.

With the emergence of sound studies and radio studies, Gould's reputation as a radio composer has risen. Jeff Porter in his book *Lost Sound* offers persuasive readings of (or close listenings to) *The Solitude Trilogy*, which he describes as Gould's 'cubist experiment with radio' (2016: 180).

Those who address this work in radio tend to offer more materialist readings that focus on technological aspects of the studio, Foucaultian themes of self-care, and national as well as imperial contexts. Tim Hecker treats the studio as ‘a physical space, a field of social relations and a frame of musical consciousness’ (2008: 78), Edward Jones-Imhotep (2016) uses the resources of science studies to locate Gould as an important thinker of the technologised self, and Lytle Shaw locates at least some of Gould’s radio works as ‘tours ... of the reticulated network of Cold War radar defense systems set up by the United States’ (2018: 164). Meanwhile, Canadian studies scholars have been writing about this major figure in the Canadian cultural landscape for decades, with several commentators unfolding the politics of Gould’s contrapuntal techniques. For example, Anna Sajecki (2015) reads Gould’s radio essay on Petula Clark in the context of Canadian attitudes towards the Cold War and highlights his anti-totalitarianism, although she does not offer a critique of the well-meaning pluralist politics of voice and inclusion that defines the Canadian nationalist discourse of multiculturalism. Note the absence, in ‘The Idea of North’, of any voices indigenous to the Arctic North, even while Inuit peoples (‘Eskimo’ in the documentary’s terminology) become its major subject. If, for CBC Radio in the centenary year of 1967, the North is an idea that belongs to white, urban, settler Canadians, any contemporary treatment of this idea must now include other voices.⁴

While I am drawn to these critical, materialist readings of Gould’s work in radio, this essay seeks to unfold the phenomenology of studio audience and the ethical relations to art that the studio made possible for Gould (Jones-Imhotep’s essay has been especially helpful in this regard). The approach that I take here builds on Kevin McNeilly’s reading of ‘The Idea of North’ which suggests that the North becomes a utopian concept, ‘a name for a certain multiplicitous music’ (1996: 87), such that what emerges from Gould’s documentary is ‘a zone of antagonisms’ (1996: 88) that remains unresolved and, therefore, invites a particularly attentive listening practice. Gould’s arrangement of the voices of others through his contrapuntal techniques represents what McNeilly calls ‘a proactive form of listening, of attending to those voices, of letting them speak through him’ (1996: 101); the North becomes an occasion for this active form of listening to multiple voices, an opportunity to arrange complex materials in comparative solitude through the filter of individual subjectivity. I would take this further and argue that the North is no more or less utopian than the space of the studio itself. The ‘northern listening’ that Gould seeks to make available is, more precisely, studio audience.

Gould understood very well what the phenomenology of studio audience offered to listeners as well as to writers/producers. Consider his

description of attending a performance of Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic playing Sibelius's Fifth Symphony: 'I took refuge in a glassed-in broadcast booth over the stage, and although I was in a position to see Karajan's face and to relate every ecstatic grimace to the emerging musical experience, the audience ... was not' (Gould, 1985: 320). The booth (or the studio, more generally) not only protects Gould as listener, it also offers him a privileged vantage point, a fuller, more nuanced experience of performance, as well as an opportunity to use it. Gould would integrate a recording of this performance into 'The Idea of North' but 'revised the dynamics of the recording to suit the mood of the text' (1985: 320). The studio protects Gould (from both audiences and performers) and permits him to use recorded materials for his own compositional purposes, to refunctionalise music and recording, what Brian Eno called in a 1979 lecture 'The Recording Studio as Compositional Tool' (Albiez and Dockwray, 2016). These compositions are, in turn, meant to be listened to in our own seemingly private, phantasmatic spaces analogous to studios, such as bedrooms, living rooms, cars and those protective spaces of audience we create every day with earbuds or headphones. These recreate studio listening in us.

A Glenn Gould phantasy

I turn now to 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy', an audio recording that Gould created in his home studio that foregrounds both the privacy and the kind of sociality that belong to studio audience (Mowitz, 1987: 177). This hour-long piece, released as part of his last analogue recording *The Glenn Gould Silver Jubilee Album* (1980), has not been broadcast on radio (as far as I know). The album cover features a photograph of Gould at fifty with a mischievous smile, sitting in a studio control room with a microphone in the foreground, while in the background the image of Gould's 1955 self, the glamorous young man of the first Goldberg recording, is repeated on a dozen blue-screened studio monitors. In this image Gould mediates and mediatises himself in reference both to a famous image of McLuhan (also seated in front of an array of monitors) as well as to Warhol's screen prints, an ironic depiction that is at once self-deprecating and self-aggrandising, and that serves to frame a 25-year retrospective of his career. The double-album consists of a miscellany of unreleased and previously released tracks (interpretations of works by Bach, Scarlatti, Strauss) and includes his own composition 'So You Want to Write a Fugue?' (1963) as well as two comic recordings featuring impersonations of music critics, 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy' and 'Critics' Call-Out Corner'.

The 'Fantasy' centres on a mock studio interview hosted by Margaret Pacsu, in which Gould is grilled about his career and aesthetic choices by a series of guests, alter-ego music critics voiced by Gould himself (with one by Pacsu): the pompous Brit, Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornthwaite; the philosophically astute German critic, Dr Karlheinz Klopweisser; and the American critic, a psychedelic 1960s hangover named Theodore Slutz. In addition to her role as the game, hapless host, Pacsu is the voice of Hungarian Marxist musicologist Marta Hortavanyi. Gould had developed these characters in the context of a small group of Toronto friends who occasionally met as the Lower Rosedale Shakespeare Reading Society (Gould, 1992: ix). Gould took great pleasure in hammy, informal performance, and while he has frequently been accused by friends, acquaintances and biographers of not being quite as funny as he thinks he is, a listener must acknowledge that he delivers his convoluted, at times cringe-worthy lines with great commitment. In fact, the interview dialogue (written entirely by Gould) addresses a characteristically serious set of musical, aesthetic and political concerns, albeit in the mode of the utterly ridiculous. I approach this recording to understand the peculiar theatricality that accompanies Gould's version of studio audience, an interoceptive theatricality at once physiognomic and fantastical, self-disclosing and self-absorbing, what one might call a theatre of the mind's ear that is intimately related to the performance of reading (Kivy, 2006: 63).

Consider the opening dialogue, which begins with Margaret Pacsu complaining about the heating system. 'Oh I know, it's always incredibly cold in the studio,' Gould says, to which Pacsu replies, 'Cold? I always find it incredibly warm and terribly stuffy' (Gould, 1980: 00' 04"-00' 11"). The joke, in part, is about Gould's habit of wearing scarves, overcoat and gloves in all weather, but the intimate close-mic and the question of temperature immediately make the listener aware of the bodily, spatial dynamics of the studio itself, dynamics that the scene continues to unfold. Insipid, unexplained humming from two distinct sources begins as Pacsu and Gould discuss the best seating arrangement, their movement conveyed via stereo panning and the speakers' variable distances from the microphone. By the time the studio engineer Duncan Haig-Guinness (voiced by Gould in a thick brogue) suddenly breaks in with the distinctive squawk of feedback from the control room mic, listeners have been made acutely aware of an uncomfortable three-dimensional space inhabited by an indeterminate number of conflicting voices and estranged sounds.

The theatricality of Gould's studio audience is somewhat Brechtian insofar as interruption and juxtaposition break with naturalist conventions of continuity or closure (in Gould's recording everything is commentary and meta-commentary). At the same time this theatricality is related to

fantasy as such, or rather, to phantasy-with-a-*ph* in the sense that Melanie Klein and her followers in the school of object-relations theory have defined it: 'mental representation of those somatic events in the body which comprise the instincts' (Hinshelwood, 1991: 32). From the perspective of affect and object-relations theory the studio becomes a primary site for phantasy both insofar as it permits seemingly impossible situations to be realised (the Arctic oil rig performance that ends the piece, on which more later) and, more significantly, as it focuses attention inward on scenarios or transactions between or among voices and other sonic elements that register, evoke, or conjure with bodily impingements. Think of the infamous humming on Gould's piano recordings, a highly theatricalised display of absorption that registers both the corporeal aspects of his playing (Sanden, 2009: 20–3) and his attempt to convey the music's ideal form, an intended acoustic image that Gould communicates to himself and his listeners. The humming in the opening scene of 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy' refers to and evokes this interoceptive theatricality in the space of the studio, at once stuffy and cold, and like the old-fashioned study of humanism, a place for fantasy and reverie.

This studio is not quite the closed space of 'system' that Posnock suggests. In fact, the studio is represented as distinctly open in a number of ways. When the panel discussion begins, two of the critics have not yet arrived, and when they eventually do join the panel they bring with them news from outside. Theodor Slutz enters audibly through a studio room door and mutters something incomprehensible about a traffic jam (Gould, 1980: 13' 08"–13' 20"), and Marta Hortavanyi apologises for being late after delivering 'a wonderfully successful lecture to a Kodaly kindergarten on the subject of "Decadence in Dodecaphony"' (33' 14"–33' 22"). Duncan, the weary, put-upon studio engineer, consistently breaks in from the control room as he wrangles various audio clips of Gould's recordings. And the piece wastes no time in conjuring the outside space of greatest importance to Gould, the Arctic North. In the pre-interview chat we discover that two of the panel guests, Sir Nigel and Dr Klopweisser, each spent time as young men engaged in ethno-musicological studies in Greenland and the Northwest Territories, and they describe their 1960s experiences in politically (and sexually) idealised terms. Once again northern listening, located in and filtered through fantasies about Indigenous spaces and peoples, becomes utopian practice.

The interview itself is structured by excerpts from and discussions about several recordings of Gould's piano performances and radio compositions. Phenomenologically, it is disruptive for a listener to move from Gould's extraordinarily sensitive piano playing to his broadly caricatured voices of the music critics, even while his own voice, that of Glenn Gould the

subject of the panel discussion, is thoughtful, expressive and finely textured. This contrastive technique permits Gould to deliver analysis, commentary and explication of his own performances, methods and thinking, that is to say, it both describes and enacts his multi-voiced contrapuntal poetics. For example, when Sir Nigel responds to the aria from the 1955 *Goldberg Variations* by registering a musically conservative complaint about Gould's choice to perform Bach on piano rather than harpsichord or clavichord – 'there is such a thing as authenticity, and one can never accord it too much respect' (11' 12"–11' 14") – Dr Klopweisser passionately disagrees and emphasises Bach's theoretical orientation towards musical structure rather than instrumental timbre. Here Gould replays a tired debate about historical authenticity and, of course, agrees with Klopweisser. 'Birds of a feather,' says Sir Nigel, making clear Gould's affiliation with avant-garde German aesthetic philosophy by overt contrast to the conservatism of the 'editor-in-chief of *Field & Theme: The Country Gentleman's Guide to Music in the Garden*' (11' 41"–11' 46").

Throughout the interview Klopweisser makes Gould's points for him, as in the next example of a Mozart recording that Sir Nigel disdains for Gould's idiosyncratic choice of tempo and, more generally, his refusal of the 'interpretive mainstream' (19' 30"), to which Klopweisser responds: 'It is surely the duty of the artist to create, and not to re-create' (20' 20"). Yet the contrast is not only with reductive historical conservatism coded British, but also with a seemingly pointless avant-gardism unconcerned with structure coded American and voiced by Theodore Slutz. Slutz's contributions range from sharp, surprising insights to rambling descriptions of banal or incomprehensible aesthetic experimentation, and it is during one of these rambles that the audio recording indulges explicitly in overlapping voices. Gould has just explained his use of editing and montage, a discussion entirely in line with Walter Benjamin's thinking on technological reproducibility – 'For me, the language of film offers the best possible lingo with which to describe the ideal conditions for the recorded performance' (22' 08"–22' 14") – and what follows is precisely an example of montage or collage that serves as a reflexive segue to a discussion of *The Solitude Trilogy*.

Slutz appreciates Gould's verbal polyphony: 'Well, speaking personally, man, I really dig the parts where three or four cats speak together you know ... some of the solo acts I can sort of do without because I figure they're more message than mood' (26' 14"–26' 27"). But the question of message remains, and Klopweisser, once again, offers meta-commentary on Gould's poetics by highlighting the theme of isolation, distance from the *Zeitgeist*, the commitment to being 'in the world, not of the world' (27' 57"–28' 00"). Gould offers a concise expression of his central ethical theme: 'I don't think one can benefit from isolation in whatever

form ... without first coming to terms with the *Zeitgeist*, as you say, without deciding that its tremendously tyrannical force has to be overthrown in one's own life before one can really learn from such an experience' (28' 37"–22' 02"). Gould's revolutionary sentiments are both ironised and contextualised when Marta Hortavanyi, who has arrived in the studio, describes 'The Idea of North' as 'escapist entertainment' (40' 35"–40' 37"). She much prefers Gould's second drama-documentary 'The Latecomers' and offers a hilarious vulgar-Marxist allegorical reading that nevertheless offers genuine support for Gould's ruthless editing methods. 'One simply splices until one gets as close to the ideal statement as one can' (36' 08"–36' 13"), Gould explains, a method that is less concerned with interview subjects' individual characters than with the larger project of creating 'A collective recognition of the argument that binds them together' (37' 15"–37' 18"), as Klopweisser elucidates the Marxist point.

It can be difficult for a listener to register the sophistication of at least some of the back-and-forth debates about poetics in this audio piece precisely because they take place in the mode of the ridiculous. This is characteristic of Gould who, in his polemical writing and radio interviews on music and technology, consistently offers conflicting opinions, attitudinising rants, displays of excessive erudition and pointed irony, self-deprecating humour, prophecy, anecdote, a reflexive grab-bag of writerly gestures and voices. These stylistic gestures (the ridiculous among them) index the sociality of the recording-studio-cum-writer's study and are fundamentally related to his political and aesthetic commitments to counterpoint. The studio's capacity to accommodate multiple voices and other sonic elements is central to a theatricality that Gould refuses to oppose to documentary reality. Consider his description of listening to radio plays as a teenager in the mid-1940s: 'A lot of that ostensibly theatrical radio was also, in a very real sense, documentary making of a rather high order. At any rate, the distinctions between drama and documentary were quite often, it seemed to me, happily and successfully set aside' (Gould, 1985: 374).

Gould pursued serious documentary radio as a form of theatre and almost always considered his radio works in dramatic terms. For example, he introduces the radio broadcast of his portrait of composer Richard Strauss, *The Bourgeois Hero* (1979), subtitled 'a conversation piece in two acts' this way:

What I tried to convey here in this piece was the impression that these characters – well, seven of the eight of them anyway – have perhaps run into each other at, oh I don't know, a country lodge or something, you know, and it was evening and they sat down and just began to reminisce about Strauss. (Gould, 1979: 01' 12"–01' 29")

What permits Gould to happily set aside the distinction between drama and documentary in creating an imaginary scene or situation is what Rudolf Arnheim, the great early theorist of radio, called *the acoustic bridge*. For Arnheim, the absence of the visual in radio creates sonic contiguity between music, speech and sound effects:

By the disappearance of the visual, an acoustic bridge arises between all sounds: voices, whether connected with a stage scene or not, are now of the same flesh as recitations, discussions, song and music. What hitherto could exist only separately now fits organically together: the human being in the corporeal world talks with disembodied spirits, music meets speech on equal terms. (Arnheim, 1972: 195)

Arnheim's manner of marrying materialist explanation to idealising rhetoric is strangely appropriate to Gould's radio poetics, and the notion of the acoustic bridge is a key aspect of the phenomenology of studio audience that I am seeking to describe. Gould's contrapuntal techniques rely on the contiguity of acoustic elements in a manner that does not sum up or unify listeners' experiences. Listening to Gould's radio works involves sustaining an encounter with multiple vocal lines and their distinct temporalities, tracking the separation of voices and other acoustic elements even while the interaction among them creates the works' most effective, heterogeneous meanings. To return to the 'Fantasy', Sir Nigel believes this cannot be done: 'It's absolutely impossible to concentrate on more than one spoken line at a time' (Gould, 1980: 42' 50"-42' 55"). Yet this line, entirely audible, is delivered atop and across others at a moment when two conversations are taking place simultaneously, one between Klopweisser and Gould, the other between Sir Nigel and Marta, both on the topic of 'The Quiet in the Land'. Instead of playing an excerpt from Gould's most complex work, the 'Fantasy' offers a version of precisely the kind of challenge that Sir Nigel believes it is impossible to meet. In contradicting this belief, the piece enacts Gould's contrapuntal poetics while commenting on their reception.

Before turning to the final segment of the 'Fantasy', and to offer some context for it, I want briefly to think about Gould's commitment to an aesthetics of counterpoint as highly personal as well as political and ethical. In yet another mock-interview, a print interview published a few years before (in *High Fidelity*, February 1974) entitled 'Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould about Glenn Gould', we encounter what appears to be one of Gould's basic ethical stances towards art. The piece begins by touching on possible topics for discussion: 'what about the political situation in Labrador?' '[P]erhaps aboriginal rights in western Alaska would make good copy' (Gould, 1985: 316). Gould's insistence on foregrounding Indigenous

North American political conflict in a piece ostensibly about music eventually leads to the topic of destructiveness in art:

Well, I feel that art should be given the chance to phase itself out. I think that we must accept the fact that art is not inevitably benign, that it is potentially destructive. We should analyze the areas where it tends to do least harm, use them as guidelines, and build into art a component that will enable it to preside over its own obsolescence. (1985: 324–5)

Gould's remarkable thesis seems to be an unusual mix of ideals: a broadly Buddhist orientation (do no harm), perhaps, or traditional forms of care combined with modernist better-living-through-design.

But whatever the various philosophical, spiritual or ideological sources of this ethical stance, there are personal, affective ones as well. Peter Ostwald's biography cites Andrew Kazdin, a Columbia Records studio engineer who Gould worked closely with for many years and who tells a story of a childhood memory Gould recounted in which a quarrel with his mother activated feelings of intense murderous rage. As Kazdin puts it, 'The experience caused [Gould] to retreat into serious introspection, and when he emerged, he swore to himself that he would never let that inner rage reveal itself again' (Ostwald, 1997: 55–6). The fantasy of killing one's mother – as Ostwald makes clear, 'the very person on whom he depended most for his nurturance of his musical talent' (1997: 56) – may well have contributed to organising key aspects of Gould's affective life, no doubt in the elaboration of powerful defences against such violent thoughts. To be clear, my own concern here is much less etiological than Ostwald's who, as a psychiatrist as well as a former friend, seeks to explain aspects of Gould's behaviour. I am simply sketching one affective context for Gould's hyper-vigilant attention to aggression and competition, a significant motive that led him to leave the stage and seek the protection of the studio: 'until physical and verbal aggression are seen as simply a flip of the competitive coin, until every aesthetic decision can be equated with a moral correlative, I'll continue to listen to the Berlin Philharmonic from behind a glass partition' (Gould, 1985: 325).

Again, I bring this personal context into the argument not for diagnostic purposes but for structural ones: to identify a fundamental affective motive that Gould might share with some of his listeners. As we have seen, the studio serves to protect Gould from performance (from the aggression of the Berlin Philharmonic under Karajan) as well as from the audience (the hostility of concertgoers). At the same time, it serves as a compositional tool that permits him to use aggression and hostility in his work, to display and regulate destructiveness. *Contrapuntal radio*, then, offers Gould a set of techniques for the theatrical display of the regulation of art's

destructiveness. It permits this destructiveness to be deflected endlessly in inward involutions with the ideal goal of phasing out such destructive energies or, at the very least, of avoiding the harm that less regulated art might inflict on others. If Gould's contrapuntal radio is a means to realise antagonisms in speech and other acoustic forms, the studio becomes an interoceptive space in which one can listen to and harness one's own most destructive tendencies, and air them safely. Relatedly, the studio offers a welcome solution to the problem of modernist (and avant-garde) audience. Recall George Orwell and his appreciation of radio, as it helps him to defend himself against the anticipated hostility of an audience for poetry, and at the same time, the hostility that Orwell himself feels towards the audience that he fears will reject him. The solution radio offers is the conjectural, ideal audience of one, similar to the 'zero-to-one relationship' that Gould seeks in recording.

Such an exclusive relationship with audience is the opposite of the politics of inclusiveness required by national broadcasting, which refuses to accommodate the destructiveness or contemptuous relations between artist and audience. The final sequence of Gould's 'Fantasy' offers a hyper-amplified contrast between the CBC's national broadcasting ethos of inclusiveness and the inevitable destructiveness that Gould sees accompanying performance. In response to Marta Hortavanyi's question about whether he intends to return to the concert stage like other artists who 'make a hysteric return', Gould answers that he has already done so (44' 00"–44' 04"). The reference is to Vladimir Horowitz's historic return to Carnegie Hall in 1965 after a long hiatus from the stage, an event that Gould deplored (with, it seems, very little sympathy for Horowitz's struggles against depression and homophobia) and that he parodies in a lunatic ten-minute set piece that ends the album. 'The Hysteric Return' is a fictional CBC radio broadcast of Gould's return to the stage on an Arctic oil rig belonging to Geyser Petroleum, accompanied by the 'incomparable Aklavic Philharmonic' (45' 58") in performances of 'Tchaikovsky's First, Rachmaninoff's Second and Chopin's Third Piano Concertos' (46' 48"–46' 53"). Throughout the piece we hear a howling Arctic wind, a wildly cheering audience, Gould's caricatured playing of the Romantic repertoire, and the announcer's CBC-style commentary and narration (relentlessly sober and upbeat), along with occasional contributions from the control room (Duncan, once again) and two roving correspondents (at one point, Theodore Slutz reports from a nearby dinghy). The announcer informs us that, since the 'exploratory rig XP67' is only large enough to hold Gould, a dozen tuned pianos and the audience of 'Mr. Gould's fellow stockholders in Geyser Petroleum' (47' 29"–47' 33"), the CBC production team as well as the orchestra are all located two miles downwind on the deck of the nuclear submarine *Inextinguishable*.

The over-the-top 'Hysteric Return' is not simply lampooning Horowitz but, rather, the concert-going culture that solicits the return-to-the-stage as part of a pianist's career, and the entire self-congratulatory institutionalised media environment which, as the announcer puts it, depends on the 'triumph of closed-circuit television and audio technology' for the broadcast to take place (47' 44"–47' 46"). Even more, the audience of oil executives serves precisely as an overt figure for the exploitation of natural resources, including the pianist's talent, for prestige and economic gain (I should note that Gould himself invested successfully in mining and other forms of Canadian resource extraction). The recording reaches Swiftian levels of satire, burlesque and irony when, in the middle of Gould's encore, the audience suddenly abandons the rig because of news of an oil discovery of such proportions that, as the chairman of the board of Geyser Petroleum puts it, 'it would relieve all North Americans from [incomprehensible] the Persian Gulf in the future' (52' 15"–52' 17"). The announcer quickly wraps up the broadcast, explaining that the CBC must stop transmission since the disappearance of the audience alters the status of the concert, which 'can no longer be classified as a public event under the provision of the Public Event Statutes of the Broadcasting Act' (53' 10"–53' 20"). The nuclear submarine submerges, the broadcast ends, and Gould is left alone in the howling wind, repeatedly thanking an audience that consists of a single barking seal.

The destructive fantasy element of Gould's investment in studio audience is never clearer than in this piece. The conversion of the audience of concert-goers (exploitative oil executives) to audience itself (the state of listening) is precisely what takes place at its conclusion: the fictional broadcast ends but the audio we are listening to continues (impossibly) for a short while longer, the barking seal figuring Gould's ideal receiver while the wind howls on for a long fifteen seconds before the sound slowly fades out. Finally, the utopian space of the Arctic North has become the site of audience – no broadcast, only northern listening. 'The Hysteric Return' ends 'A Glenn Gould Fantasy' for there is no need to return to the panel discussion when the studio itself, with its multiple antagonistic voices, transforms into the sound of the wind. Gould's 'Fantasy' expresses a fundamental wish for communion with an audience without its presence, and for the exploitative and destructive capacities of both audience and performer to vanish. His contrapuntal radio seeks to realise this wish through the phenomenon of studio audience.

Notes

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- 1 One context for this essay is my *Radio Free Stein* project which renders a number of Gertrude Stein’s plays as radio music theatre (www.radiofreestein.com). There is an interesting homology between the space of the studio in Glenn Gould’s production practices and the space of the stage in Stein’s theatre. Gould’s radio poetics, not directly indebted to Stein’s radical theatre, nevertheless comes in its wake.
- 2 Here I am informed by Wilfred Bion’s theory of reciprocal psychic containment, which I have summarised and used elsewhere (Frank, 2015; 2018).
- 3 Linda Hutcheon (2014) has pointed out the intimate connection between counterpoint and comparativity for Said.
- 4 For a recent Indigenous response to Gould and his role in the Canadian cultural imaginary, see Geronimo Inutiq’s ARCTICNOISE (2015). See also Cam Scott’s essay (2018) on listening to Gould’s radio works fifty years later.

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