Queer Phenomenology and Furniture Music

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English Abstract

"I am sitting in a room": a statement famously pronounced by the American experimental composer, Alvin Lucier in his tape piece (1969) bearing this statement in its title. Perhaps we have not yet fully considered how the room, in some way, also sits with us. How did we come to take up the room in which we sit, how was the room already ready for our arrival, and what do we hear and/or listen to in this space? These are some of the questions regarding furniture music that are prompted by feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology, which is not a phenomenology of queer experience, but rather a queering of phenomenology. Queer phenomenology is a phenomenology of disorientation. Sonic objects are not 'off the table' for a queer phenomenology, even though Ahmed does not address these particular objects' unique affordances and differences from, say, the tables she and earlier phenomenologists address in their work. If phenomenologists are drawn toward tables, music theoretical phenomenological approaches may be productively applied to musical furniture, also known as Muzak or ambient music, among other monikers. For example, I consider *I am sitting in a room* to be a piece of furniture music because the piece instrumentalizes the room in which it sounds. In this thesis, I aim to expand and apply Ahmed's queer phenomenology to furniture music, and by doing so, I will help bridge the fields of queer, feminist, and gender studies with music theory. I apply Sara Ahmed's reading of phenomenologists and their furniture to music theory and sonic furniture. Ahmed claims that by working at the table, the table disappears for the writer. Extending this logic to sonic furniture, rather than "work" at the "table," we "listen" to the "sounding environment" (i.e., a musical piece). Through repetition musical furniture may disappear from our sonic awareness. The

sounding material seeps into the crevices of the room, forming a sonic wallpaper that one may no longer listen to, yet is still present. Grounded in Ahmed's queer phenomenological approach, my thesis analyzes how an experience of musical furniture is created using pieces by Erik Satie, Alvin Lucier, and Brian Eno as case studies. Foregrounding repetition, I present diagrams of relations of repetition happening at various structural levels as the music repeats indefinitely. I argue that repetition works to create musical furniture as a particular type of sonic object, one which is a uniquely queer phenomenological musical experience that impacts and draws attention to the relationship between bodies and objects.

French Abstract

“I am sitting in a room” (Je suis assis dans une pièce) : une déclaration notoirement prononcée par le compositeur expérimental américain Alvin Lucier dans son morceau de bande magnétique (1969) portant cette déclaration dans son titre. Peut-être n'avons-nous pas encore pleinement réfléchi à la façon dont la pièce, d'une manière ou d'une autre, se trouve également avec nous. Comment en sommes-nous arrivés à occuper la pièce dans laquelle nous sommes assis, comment la pièce était-elle déjà prête pour notre arrivée, et qu'entendons-nous et/ou écoutons-nous dans cet espace ? Telles sont quelques-unes des questions concernant la musique d'ameublement qui sont suscitées par l'universitaire féministe, la phénoménologie queer de Sara Ahmed, qui n'est pas une phénoménologie de l'expérience queer, mais plutôt une queering de la phénoménologie. La phénoménologie queer est une phénoménologie de la désorientation. Les objets sonores ne sont pas « hors de la table » pour une phénoménologie queer, même si Ahmed n'aborde pas les possibilités uniques et les différences de ces objets particuliers par rapport, par exemple, aux tables qu'elle et les phénoménologues précédents abordent dans leur travail. Si les phénoménologues sont attirés par les tables, les approches phénoménologiques théoriques de la musique peuvent être appliquées de manière productive au mobilier musical, connu sous le nom de Muzak ou musique ambiante, entre autres surnoms. Par exemple, je considère *je suis assis dans une pièce* comme un morceau de musique d'ameublement parce que la pièce instrumentalise la pièce dans laquelle elle sonne. Dans cette thèse, j'ai pour objectif d'étendre et d'appliquer la phénoménologie queer d'Ahmed à la musique d'ameublement, et ce faisant, je contribuerai à faire

le pont entre les domaines des études queer, féministes et de genre avec la théorie musicale. J'applique la lecture de Sara Ahmed sur les phénoménologues et leur mobilier à la théorie musicale et au mobilier sonore. Ahmed prétend qu'en travaillant à table, la table disparaît pour l'écrivain. En étendant cette logique aux meubles sonores, plutôt que de « travailler » à « la table », nous « écoutons » « l'environnement sonore » (c'est-à-dire une pièce musicale). Par la répétition, le mobilier musical peut disparaître de notre conscience sonore. La matière sonore s'infiltre dans les crevasses de la pièce, formant un fond d'écran sonore que l'on n'écoute peut-être plus, mais qui est toujours présent. Fondée sur l'approche phénoménologique queer d'Ahmed, ma thèse analyse comment une expérience de mobilier musical est créée en utilisant des pièces d'Erik Satie, Alvin Lucier et Brian Eno comme études de cas. En mettant la répétition au premier plan, je présente des diagrammes de relations de répétition se produisant à divers niveaux structurels alors que la musique se répète indéfiniment. Je soutiens que la répétition fonctionne pour créer des meubles musicaux en tant que type particulier d'objet sonore, qui est une expérience musicale phénoménologique queer unique qui a un impact et attire l'attention sur la relation entre les corps et les objets.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"I am sitting in a room."
Alvin Lucier

Part I: Introduction

I am sitting in a room: a statement famously pronounced by the American experimental composer, Alvin Lucier. Perhaps we have not yet fully considered how the room, in some way, also sits with us. How did we come to take up the room in which we sit, how was the room already ready for our arrival, and what do we hear and/or listen to in these spaces? These are some of the questions regarding furniture music (music that is heard but not listened to)[1] that are prompted by feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology. Hers is not a phenomenology (which is the philosophy of experience or consciousness) of queer experience, but rather a queering of phenomenology. Queer phenomenology is a phenomenology of disappearance, of disorientation. Sonic objects are not 'off the table' for a queer phenomenology, even though Ahmed does not address these particular objects' unique affordances and differences from, say, the tables she and earlier phenomenologists address in their work. What can a music theorist tell us about these sonic objects, bodies, spaces, and the relationship between them? In this thesis I will expand upon and apply Ahmed's queer phenomenology to furniture music, and by doing so, I will bring together the fields of queer, feminist, and gender studies with music theory.

Furniture music is music that is heard but not listened to. For example, in a department store there might be some music sounding out while people go about their shopping. The shopper's attention, though, is not on the music. Rather, the shopper turns away from that sound and focuses on some object in the store. It is as if the music is the same being as any other furniture

[1] See Volta's introduction to the following scholarly edition: Erik Satie, "Musiques d'ameublement: pour petit ensemble," introduction by Ornella Volta (Paris: Editions Salabert, 2010, 1999), IV.

in that space. What is the difference between music and any bit of decoration on a light fixture or a chair in the corner of the room, such as a bench that you sit on while you try on shoes? Generally, you do not give much conscious attention to the chair or the bench. The bench affords one to be more focussed on the shoes or anything else that is being done in a shopping situation, rather than being an object in and of itself to be looked at, considered, and given conscious attention. If the music in the space is likewise treated with a similar kind of attention as the furniture, such as a bench, the music in this instance is furniture music. Can any music be furniture music, as long is it is "treated with a similar kind of attention as the furniture?" Or, is furniture music defined by intrinsic qualities, not just a particular mode of listening? These two questions will be further discussed in a later section in this chapter on furniture music's status as both an object and orientation.

Let's begin with Erik Satie (1866-1925). Why? In the historical moment of early 20th-century France, Erik Satie coined the term *musique d'ameublement* or furniture music. He composed three sets of furniture music intended to be played but not given attention to. This music was to be treated like a painting on the wall or any other piece of furniture in a space. For its historical significance as the locus of this development of this musical ontological orientation, Satie's furniture music serves as the starting point of this thesis, which is the first study to present a queer phenomenological approach to furniture music. The notion of furniture music can be extended beyond Satie in the 20th century. In this thesis, I argue for an interpretation of music by Alvin Lucier (b. 1931) and Brian Eno (b. 1948) as extensions of Satie's experiments in furniture music.

In addition to my application of queer phenomenology to furniture music, I also expand and clarify the category of furniture music. In these pieces, I read furniture music as a potentially larger musical category than what it was at the historical moment of Erik Satie. I also theorize furniture music as a category that encompasses both a musical object that is experienced and a musical orientation towards any musical object regardless of its intention to represent furniture music.

In this thesis, I build upon the recent work by Gavin Lee bridging queer phenomenology and music theory by using Sarah Ahmed's queer phenomenology in a music-theoretical framework. Lee reads Ahmed's queer phenomenology as a phenomenology of disorientation.[2] I use this understanding of Ahmed's queer phenomenology as the starting point of my analytical framework and methodology which I apply to furniture music.

My application of queer phenomenology to the category of furniture music leads me to some analytical insights or directions. These insights center on repetition. I argue repetition is the mechanism that often turns musical objects into a kind of music that is experienced like furniture.[3] The pieces I analyze in this thesis use repetition to this end. What becomes of repetition in these cases? Rather than being a musical component that can be reduced out in an analysis, I argue that repetition is significant in these cases for being the generating factor that prolongs these musical experiences. It is through the mechanism of repetition that new musical material is presented to the listener even if that musical material is the same as what was there before. I argue

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[2] Gavin Lee, "Queer Music Theory," *Music Theory Spectrum* 42/1 (2020): 143. https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtz019.

[3] For a more cognitive-based approach to this phenomenon, see Elizabeth Margulis's book On Repeat. See Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013). She argues for a "musicalizing effect" of repetition whereby something that is repeated turns into music. In my thesis, I argue the reverse is also possible.

that this repeated material is never exactly the same. For this reason, my analysis delves into the mechanisms of repetition that generate the pieces of furniture music that I have chosen.

In this introductory chapter, I will (1) introduce the idea of furniture music from a multiplicity of angles, (2) introduce a queer phenomenological analytical approach to furniture music, and (3) provide a roadmap for the remainder of my thesis which presents analyses of works by Erik Satie, Alvin Lucier, and Brian Eno.

Part II: Introducing furniture music

Furniture music, or sonic furniture, is music that is heard but not listened to. Furniture music is sound that instrumentalizes itself as a piece of furniture in the room. Furniture music is aural palimpsest. Furniture music is an aural experience that disappears through repetition. Given that furniture music is a fuzzy sonic phenomenon, the process of understanding this music is often opaque and thus, defining the concept may require multiple attempts, each of which has its own validity. In this section, I flesh out an understanding of furniture music for this thesis from five disparate perspectives of both musical and non-musical natures. First, through the writings of Satie scholar Ornella Volta, I historicize furniture music as a product and producer of capitalist machinery. Second, I address the necessity for furniture music to be both an object and orientation. Third, I illustrate how furniture music operates as a boundary object of musical ontology. Fourth, I follow the trace of the word *room* as it relates to queer phenomenological space and sound. Fifth, I further consider the understanding of furniture music through analogy, and specifically through home decor.

Historicizing the Furniture Music of Erik Satie vis-à-vis Ornella Volta

In this section, I will first present and contextualize a quote by Ornella Volta describing Satie's furniture music. Second, I use Volta as a starting place to discuss furniture music as a part of capitalist production. This discussion leads me to consider Satie's ambiguous categorization of his furniture music as Muzak versus art music. Lastly, I bring a phenomenologically resonant reading to the Volta-Satie historical understanding of the relationality between musical actors in furniture music.

In her Urtext edition to the complete collection of Satie's furniture music, Volta explains furniture music from the historical perspective of Satie. Volta writes that

> "...[A] consumer product should be made available to satisfy the demands for music which could be heard but to which no one would listen. This product would be called "Musique d'Ameublement" (Furniture music) since it was destined to fill in the silence as described, without any more demands made on the hearer than those made by the wallpaper, lighting and various objects which enhance the comfort of our homes. The contents would be a skillfully blended mixture of well-known themes, of little interest in itself, that could be repeated *ad libitum*…[Satie] did not have anything ornamental in mind so much as the notion of a sound environment which would unite the composer, performer and listener in an ideal symbiosis."[4]

Volta clearly prescribed the listening orientation towards Satie's furniture music when she writes that this would be "music which could be heard but to which no one would listen." Beyond this definition, she analogizes this music to objects of the home to emphasize the idea that this music is like furniture. Volta then explains Satie's musical content in these pieces ("blended mixture of well-known themes, of little interest in itself") and its repetitive structure (to "be repeated *ad libitum*"). Unlike in most other music, the interest of furniture music is not so much *what* is being sounded. Rather, the interest lies in the fact that furniture music is being repeated indefinitely and

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[4] See Volta's introduction to the following scholarly edition: Satie, "Musiques d'ameublement."

what happens when one experiences these repetitions. Regarding the latter, Volta suggests what Satie intended for those experiences: to "unite the composer, performer and listener in an ideal symbiosis." Of course, furniture music is not limited to this sort of relationality between actors, which is a topic that will be addressed later in my application of queer phenomenology to this repertoire.

Volta's explanation of Satie's creation of furniture music suggests this music's role as an explicitly capitalist commodity. Her market-centered historicization of Satie's furniture music can be productively read as capitalist critique. In her explanation of furniture music, Volta sets the stage for a fetishized commodity to circulate the market. She frames furniture music's production as a bourgeois artifact comparable to many of the other objects supporting bourgeois French life at Satie's time in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. How does Satie create this sort of commodity? Satie depersonalizes himself from some of his furniture music in several ways. For example, he utilizes extensive quotations of other composers who he disliked (Saint-Saëns and others), both on musical and personal grounds, in his second set of *Musique d'ameublement.* Satie also depersonalizes himself in his framing of his music as Muzak. This depersonalization can be interpreted as a composer as a laborer who estranges themselves from the products of their labor in the Marxian sense. Satie, framing himself as laborer in a satirical sense (or not, according to Volta) sheds light and foreshadows the lives of jingle writers, commercial composers in the later twentieth and twenty-first century media industry. Satie's furniture music is a foreboding of the overwhelming saturation of capitalistic, neoliberal consumerism. Everything that cannot be destroyed, must be consumed, and such was the case with sound environments.

Volta's work prompts the question, shall we interpret furniture music as Muzak or 'art' music? Satie's furniture music walks the line between Muzak and "art" music like the music of another composerI will address later in this thesis, Eno. Satie's furniture music is an object that helps to negotiate the boundary between these two extremes: Muzak and "art" music. We will see that this is not the only boundary that furniture music straddles. Satie satirically frames his otherwise 'art' music as Muzak. Considering that Satie's music circulates in more artistic circles rather than in shopping malls, gyms, doctor's offices, or any other contemporary equivalent, Satie's rendering of his experimental 'music' as Muzak -- as purely, deflectively, a commodity to be bought and sold -- is a unique, provocative choice.

What are we to do with Volta's final sentence? "[Satie] did not have anything ornamental in mind so much as the notion of a sound environment which would unite the composer, performer and listener in an ideal symbiosis." The notion that the sound environment in Satie's music is to unite the performer, composer, and listener in an 'ideal symbiosis' supports the idea that furniture music instrumentalizes the room if we can take the sound environment as the room. The sound environment becomes an instrument to unite the performer, composer, and listener. The sound environment, encapsulated by the sonic objects of the metaphorical room (the word room will be more fully discussed later in this chapter), or space in which the body exists, nicely flows with Ahmed's idea of objects extending bodies into space. Furniture music, as an instrument of symbioticism between musical actors, is a sonic object that extends the bodies of listeners, composers, and listeners into its spaces.

Furniture music as both object and orientation

Another point of explanation of furniture music's bifurcality concerns its status as both object and orientation. Furniture is an object in the sense that it is something that the body experiences. Furniture music is music 'out there' that comes into contact with bodies, is sensed, heard, listened to, etc. In addition to this idea of furniture music as object, furniture music is also defined by its orientation. That is, while there is music 'out there,' that is, musical objects (or, in Husserlian terms, a determinable-X) which have already been declared pieces of musical furniture preemptive of any listening experience, the status as furniture music is bestowed when it is heard/sounding but not listened to directly. Only when the listening body is in this queer listening orientation to the object of furniture music, is it truly 'properly functioning' 'good' furniture music. The furniture music in this case is doing what it is supposed to do: be furniture music. The key is that any sounding object can be swapped in body-object orientation of furniture music and by virtue of this furniture-music-orientation, the sounding object will be rendered furniture music regardless of whether it was preordained as furniture music before entering into its orientation with a body (the body which has rendered it furniture music). The listener surrenders to the furniture music because they forget it is there.

Furniture music as musical boundary object

Continuing with this analytical move of furniture music as straddling interpretative divides, I argue that furniture music is a boundary object[5] of music ontology.[6] In this section, I investigate

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[5] For the original theorization of boundary objects, see Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, "Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907-39." *Social Studies of Science* 19/3 (1989): 387–420.

[6] For some general background on ontologies of the musical work see Philip Bolhman, "Ontologies of Music" in *Rethinking Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17–34.

the boundary nature of furniture music by considering the possibility of non-musical experiences of 'music' offered by furniture music as both an object and orientation.

Furniture music shares the sonic domain between music 'proper' and non-music. In this sense, furniture music negotiates the boundary between music and non-music as well as musical and nonmusical experiences. This brings the listener of furniture music to the question: what is music? Living on borderlands of music, furniture music may refract some renewed insight into this debate on the ontology of music. When is furniture music 'music' and when is it 'non-music'? If orientation defines music, then furniture music is set already on the path away from musical status, since, for all intents and purposes, an experience of furniture music often may be considered a decidedly non-musical orientation towards music. By non-musical experience, I mean to not listen to sounds that are heard. The normative assumption is that listeners *listen* to music and that this orientation towards the aural object helps determine that object's status as a piece of music, as opposed to non-music. For this reason, it is peculiar how furniture music -- sonic objects *not* listened to -- is already thrown into the 'musical' category of things found in this world. This possibility of a musical experience of non-music and a non-musical experience of music reinserts the otherwise omnipresent relationality between object and body, sound and listener into this investigation. In the case of furniture music, what does the turn toward or away from the sonic object reveal?

Let's return to the discussion of the previous section on how furniture music is both an object and an orientation. A furniture music object and a furniture music-esque musical orientation, are intrinsically linked because they are derived from the same source, but are, of course, not the same thing. As a result, the object and the experience, in theory making only, can be

spliced. The musical experience provided by furniture music can be applied to non-furniture music (normative musical objects); likewise, a non-furniture music musical experience can be applied to furniture music. This demonstrates that furniture music is not the opposite of music. That is, furniture music is neither music-proper nor its opposite. Rather, furniture music shares the boundary of both the musical and non-musical through its flexibility in its relationality by being both a potential object and orientation. For this reason, furniture music is an instrument of negotiating musical ontology.

Moving forward, furniture music can productively be thought of as a boundary object in more ways than just presented in this section. Consider, for example, the use of sound as a boundary object that delimits spaces, such as rooms, or as I refer in this thesis, to 'rooms' as metaphorical spaces in general. The concept of room -- as a word -- will be further discussed in the next section.

Furniture music as home decor

In a departure from the previous sections of this chapter that introduce furniture music, I address the relation between common household furniture and furniture music as a productive analogy for understanding sonic furniture. I begin with a contextualization of why furniture music, as a somewhat new media, is understood through analogy. Second, I introduce and expand upon the consequences of thinking of furniture music as a kind of sonic or musical wallpaper. Third, I propose thinking of furniture music as sonic candles.

In many ways, furniture music is an object that is understood, or at least frequently understood, through comparison or juxtaposition with other objects. Often, these objects that furni-

ture music is compared to are non-sonic objects. To recall the earlier discussion, this has to do with the function of furniture music as a boundary object negotiating the musical and non-musical, sonic and non-sonic objects and experience. This kind of rhetorical and conceptual technique of comparing is often used for 'new' things. We understand new media through what is already at hand as a process of assimilating the new with the old, rather than to produce radical rupture through new media experiences. So, what has furniture music, as something that was and perhaps still does depend on the historical window, 'new,' been analogized as? The more historical analogy to furniture music has been wallpaper. There is room for more experimentation and speculation on how to understand furniture music through other analogies.

Furniture music is often given the moniker, musical wallpaper,[7] but how does this analogy 'play out' when considering the various particularities of furniture music? The wallpaper 'begins' when it is applied to the walls, but this is usually, but not always, done by a professional wallpaper applier. This is analogous to the beginning of an experience of sonic wallpaper, or furniture music. The 'piece' (as experience) does not end until the wallpaper is torn from the walls, painted over, or removed in any which way. For our analogy, this seems like a process involving energy and labor to begin and end sonic wallpaper. Sonic wallpaper seems like quite a departure from clicking the play button on Youtube, but perhaps more comparable to assembling the musicians, expertise and space for a live rendering of sonic wallpaper. Analogy then might have to do with mode of presentation, mode of delivery of the sound. Is it a Youtube recording, is it a vinyl,

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[7] There is often a pejorative sense to the phrase "sonic wallpaper." As a mass-produced object, wallpaper is often disdained as a purely decorative form of art, usually with a certain condescension towards middle-class tastes. There seems to be a particular contempt for Muzak with its corporate history and hints of engineered control of consumers and workers, as for example in some statements by R. Murray Schafer ("reducing sacred art to a slobber," "bovine sound slicks," and"Sound walls hide characteristic soundscapes under fictions"). See R. Murray Schafer. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994).

is it a CD, is it a live performance? The labor that goes into the onset of the sonic wallpaper is important here. Then, some analogies of musical furniture work better for different settings of the pieces. Consider then, the possibilities for destabilizing 'the piece' for *being* a different thing in each way it springs forth from silence. One is sonic wallpaper; one might be a sonic candle.

Having used wallpaper as a starting point, I consider analogizing furniture music as sonic candles. The scent of the candle diffuses the room. The scent, the aromatic experience of the candle, lighting the flame of the candle, and igniting the wick also has a resonance with sonic furniture that is missing from sonic wallpaper. In an usual moment of music theory generation, I was researching candles, and struck with this 'philosophy' of candle making:

> "So what about lighting the candle?
> Good candles can have a transformative power:
> turning a house into a home,
> a chair in a corner into a nook,
> and a bathroom into a spa.
> Candles not only contribute a scent to our, and our living space's identity, but can also have a powerful effect on even ourselves. Candles are used to bring calmness and excitement, bring back memories and create new reference points for exciting life moments."[8]

With little alteration, the passage from this candle manufacturer can be madlibbed for musical furniture:

> "So what about listening/hearing/playing the music?
> Good music(al furniture) can have a transformative power:
> turning a house into a home,
> a chair in a corner into a nook,
> and a bathroom into a spa.
> Music(al furniture) not only contributes a sound to our, and our living space's identity, but can also have a powerful effect on even ourselves. Music(al furniture) is used to bring calmness and excitement, bring back memories and create new reference points for exciting life moments."

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[8] "Our Philosophy," ISO Candles, accessed 30 July 2021. https://www.isocandles.com/.

This analogy with artisanal candles gets at the claim that furniture music instrumentalizes the room. Candles similarly instrumentalize, or at least, transform the room. Musical furniture, put in the room, sounding in the room, takes the room and turns the room into its own instrument. The house sounds home, the corner chair sounds nook, the bathroom sounds spa.

The diffuse particles, sound not-seen, are exemplified in the lighting of the candle and experience of the scent in the room, playing with the room's characteristics to attempt to transform the experience of the room into something more. This might be scent-unseen. Sound unseen is the musical vibrations of the musical furniture permeating the room. In terms of sonic wallpaper, in comparison to sonic candles, the sonic wallpaper visualizes the sound unseen into sound seen, often as a repetitive motif of the wallpaper. This is the interesting conceptualization of sonic wallpaper: we are able to conceptualize musical furniture visually, whereas with sonic candles, we conceptualize musical furniture olfactorally.

In closing this section which introduced furniture music, I hope the potential for experiences of furniture music has been made evident by these investigations into disparate elements which impinge upon furniture music. Concrete examples of furniture music will be provided in chapters two through four of this thesis. Before presenting these case studies, I will introduce queer phenomenology as a productive lens to theorize and analyze experieces of furniture music.

Part III: Introducing (Queer) Phenomenology to Furniture Music

I begin this section by providing a brief background to phenomenology and and more recent queer phenomenology, as applied in music theory scholarship. Then, I provide an introduction to Ahmed's queer phenomenology. Afterwards, I begin my application of queer phenomenology to

furniture music by introducing (1) the context of the work of my thesis, (2) Ahmed's 'turn' as an analytical gesture in furniture music, (3) the queer phenomenological approach to repetition in the pieces that will be analyzed in later chapters, (4) exploring how this understanding of repetition departs from the common understanding of repetition, and (5) examining how my positionality relates to analysis in furniture music.

Background of (Queer) Phenomenology in Music Theory

Phenomenology, the philosophy of experience, has been an active research area in the field of music theory for nearly forty years. Building upon the work of philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, music theorists have brought phenomenological questions to musical analysis in order to understand musical experience.[9] David Lewin, for example, has used phenomenology to account for the multiplicity of perceptions of musical phenomena.[10] Expanding directly from earlier phenomenology, feminist scholar Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology has recently caught the attention of music theorists.[11] Gavin Lee, for example, bases his queer formalism in music theory in Ahmedian terms.[12] The second of Lee's four categories of Queer formalism is particularly relevant to this thesis. Lee describes this subsection of queer formalism as "[t]heories of musical non-normativity broadly construed, such as musical ambiguity (e.g., Schubert's *Mor-*

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[9] See David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327–92, Judy Lochhead, "The Temporal Structures of Recent Music: A Phenomenological Investigation," Ph.D. dissertation, SUNY at Stony Brook, 1982., and Thomas Clifton, *Music As Heard*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

[10] Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception."

[11] Lee, "Queer Music Theory." Mariusz Kozak, "Kinesthesis, Affectivity, and Music's Temporal (Re-/Dis-) Orientations," paper presented at *The Society for Music Theory 43rd Annual Meeting*, virtual conference, 14 Nov. 2020.

[12] Lee, "Queer Music Theory."

gengruß), and theories of non-normative musical form (including Raykoff on formal deviation in piano transcriptions that paraphrase the original Lieder, and Rycenga on experimental form in songs of the English rock band Yes)."[13] Furniture music provides ripe fruit for queer formalist investigations into such theorizing of musical non-normativity. In my later analyses, I will riff off of Lee's idea of form in my consideration of furniture music's resistance to formal renderings due to its relentless structure of repetition.

Introducing Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology

Queer phenomenology specifically refers to the work of Ahmed in her eponymous 2006 monograph which she frames not as philosophy but as queer and feminist theory. To repeat myself from earlier in this chapter, Ahmed's work is not a phenomenology of queer experience, but rather, a queering of phenomenology. I foreground queer phenomenology as a phenomenology of what has disappeared. Like earlier phenomenologists, Ahmed theorizes that bodies, spaces, and orientations towards things are experienced and formed through repetition.[14] Ahmed closely reads passages by early phenomenologists Husserl and Heidegger in which the writing table is used as an example to illustrate key phenomenological concepts. In her reading, Ahmed *queers* phenomenology by drawing attention to what exists beyond the table, and extending phenomenology to consider the paths that lead writers to their desks. Ahmed explains that

> "[w]e are reminded that what we can see in the first place depends on which way we are facing. What gets our attention depends too on which direction we are facing. The things

[13] Ibid., 149.

[14] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

> that are behind Husserl are also behind the table that he faces: it is 'self-evident' that he has his back to what is behind him. We might even say that it is the behind that converts 'the back' into the background. A queer phenomenology, I wonder, might be one that faces the back, which looks 'behind' phenomenology, which hesitates at the sight of the philosopher's back. Having begun here, with what is in front of his front and behind his back, Husserl then turns to other spaces, which he describes as rooms, and which he 'knows' are there insofar as they are already given to him as places by memory. These other rooms are co-perceived: that is, they are not singled out and they do not have his attention, even when he evokes them for the reader. They are made available to us only as background features of this domestic landscape."[15]

Queer phenomenology is a broad, expansive theoretical landscape aimed at undoing that very landscape. The stakes in queer phenomenology are no more, no less than the significance of objects that appear, or not, to bodies. Central tenants of queer phenomenology include the following: a queer phenomenology draws attention to the relation between bodies and objects; bodies come to objects with histories formed through repetition; objects extend bodies into space, some better than others; bodies and objects have fit; bodies can be in a failed orientation to an object and may desire reorientation. Next, I will bring queer phenomenology in dialogue with furniture music.

Reading furniture music through queer phenomenology

While many music theorists have embraced phenomenological approaches, none to my knowledge have used such an approach to analyze furniture music. Given phenomenology's long and continuing tradition of examining furniture, I argue that music theorists' application of phenomenological ideas should also consider musical furniture. Given that there is scant music-theoretical work on furniture music, this analytical work is only the more called for. Building upon recent

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[15] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 29.

work that applies Ahmed's queer phenomenology to music theory, my thesis bridges a gap between two subdisciplines in music theory whose connections remain underexplored, that is, (1) phenomenological approaches to music theory and (2) feminist theoretical approaches to music theory.

A key argument of queer phenomenology is Ahmed's emphasis on how bodies' orientations toward some directions turn those bodies away from other directions. Ahmed writes the following:

> "In away, a queer phenomenology is involved in the project of ''turning the tables'' on phenomenology by turning toward other kinds of tables. Turning the tables would also allow us to return, a loving return we might even say, to the objects that already appear within phenomenology, such as Husserl's table, now so worn. Such tables, when turned, would come to life as something to think ''with'' as well as ''on.''[16] 63

Likewise, a queer phenomenology towards music analysis turns the tables on music analysis, allowing me to turn towards furniture music: an object always already close by. Ahmed shows how bodies turn towards objects and thus must turn away from others. Furniture music allows us to turn elsewhere. In this sense, Husserl's summer house veranda is an allegory for furniture music. Like the children out in the veranda, we know that the sounding environment is there even if we do not turn towards it. Furniture music is there so that many of us can sit and turn towards our writing desks. For example, think of the numb caffeinated thrill of writing at a coffee shop or the classical music some play to help focus *on* studying. But what happens when the analyst resists this urge and turns towards the object of furniture music? What is there to be said?

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[16] Ibid., 63.

In this thesis, I will be utilizing this queer phenomenological approach to analyze the repetitious furniture music by Erik Satie, Alvin Lucier, and Brian Eno. Both Lucier's 1969 *I am sitting in a room*, a recording of multiple generations of re-recorded spoken text repeated into a room, and Eno's 1978 *Ambient I: Music for Airports*, a piece using looped tape that can be played *ad infinitum*, utilize long-term repetition of relatively short material to create the potential for sonic furniture. In these pieces, I will analyze how I think an experience of musical furniture is created or likewise, how musical furniture is created through experience. Given that Satie's and others' pieces of furniture music are saturated with repetition -- and drawing upon the work of phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Ahmed -- I argue in the chapters that follow that musical *repetition* helps to create musical furniture as a particular type of musical object. Thus, my analytical investigation focuses on musical repetition. Since objects can 'disappear' (i.e., the tables in Husserl's and Heidegger's texts) through the repeated experience of the object, I propose centering processes of repetition to begin my analyses. For example, how is this repetition experienced? Is it through literal repetition of musical units? Or, is it a more abstract sense of something being repetitive? Key questions that guide my analysis also include the following: What (musical) bodies are being oriented by repetition in (musical) space? What is the furniture in furniture music? What does it mean to listen to, rather than hear, furniture? What lies in the background of and off the path towards musical furniture? What is the intended 'use' of the musical furniture? What does this sonic object afford us? How do we know? What are the properties of this sonic object? In short, how does the music become furniture?

Through a queer phenomenological understanding, interpretation of repetition departs in some way from the mainstream, typical assumption and reading of repetition by music theorists.

In the mainstream reading of repetition, repetition is a repeat of the same thing, a second time around, that is often reduced out of the analysis and even the score. Who writes out repeats when there is a shorthand repeat sign to do the job? As a result, music theorists tend not to give much attention to music that is being repeated -- and why should they? However, a queer phenomenological understanding of repetition brings direct attention to the repeat. One of the most radical features of highly repetitive music is its break with norms of discourse: by stretching out a single idea for a long span of time, standard expectations of musical expression and development are subverted. In a queer phenomenological approach, hearing the 'same' thing again is actually not the 'same' thing. The repeated music actually is not reducible to the first iteration, but a distinct experience. The repetition is something different. Hearing the same thing again is actually not the same, but a new experience occurring in a new time-space. The repetition expands the experience through time. Thus, the repetition extends the music into space. Repetition provides new, unique experiences through a degree of sameness, re-experienced and re-presented to the experiencing subject.

In these analyses, how do I turn the object back into a dialogue with the body that experiences the object? I argue that, in fact, the experiencing body and the object are already, and have always been, engaged in dialogue with each other. The descriptions of these musical objects are always coming from my, as the analyst's, relationality, positionality, orientation towards the musical object. This is the key reading of a musical object from a phenomenological perspective. Whereas most other analysts' positions towards their musical objects of study disappear in their writing, this will not be the case in this text as I explicitly endeavor to remain engaged with my position toward and relationship with musical objects. To accomplish this, I will have to work

harder to mention the body behind these readings, in keeping with my queer phenomenological approach. This is because my repeated omnipresence in this text, like the musical pieces I am looking to analyze, will otherwise disappear alike for my reader.

Part IV: Organization of thesis

Chapters two through four will instrumentalize my structuralist yet experimental poiesis of queer phenomenological approaches to sonic furniture. In chapter two, I introduce the French composer Erik Satie (1866-1925) as an originator of furniture music and provide a case study of his furniture music compositions with an analysis of his *Musique d'ameublement* (1917). The analysis focuses on the structure of repetition in each of the two movements of the piece as the piece repeats indefinitely. Chapter three is dedicated to American experimental composer Alvin Lucier (1931-) and his work *I am sitting in a room* from 1969. I argue for understanding Lucier's piece as meta-furniture music and present a collection of images to reflect the poetic transformation that occurs in the composition. In chapter four, I present Brian Eno's (1948-) ambient music as another interlocutor for the concept of furniture music. Looking at track 1/1 from Eno's album *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978), I make structure of repetition visible through bracket diagrams based off of Eno's graphic score for the track. The concluding chapter five draws together my findings and addresses future directions for this research.

Chapter 2: Erik Satie's *Musique d'ameublement*

"Time passes and will not pass again."[17]
Erik Satie to René Clair

Part I: Introduction

Introducing Satie

Erik Satie was born in Honfleur in 1866 and died in Arcueil, a suburb of Paris, in 1925. Closer towards the end of his life, Satie composed what he called *Musiques d'ameublement* (furniture music).[18] These were pieces that were meant to be played and heard, but not listened to.[19] Satie composed three sets of furniture music. His first of such pieces, *Musiques d'ameublement* of 1917 for small ensemble comprises two movements: (1) *Carrelage phonique* and (2) *Tapisserie en fer forgé*, which together span one page of music to be repeated indefinitely. Satie wrote a second set of furniture music, *Musique d'ameublement (Sons industriels)* in 1920 consisting of two "entr'actes" for small ensemble titled *1er Entr'acte (Chez un 'bistrot')* and *2d Entr'acte (Un salon)* for Max Jacob's play *Ruffian toujours, truand jamais*. Satie's final composition of furniture music, written in 1923 for small orchestra, *Tenture de Cabinet préfectoral,* is to be repeated at will, but no more. In this chapter, I focus exclusively on Satie's first set of furniture music from 1917. I hope to address his other work in future research.

My Approach

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[17] Robert Orledge, *Satie the Composer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143.

[18] A lot of attention has gone to Satie's piece"Vexations" (largely through the championing of the work by John Cage). Meanwhile, his furniture music seems to have flown largely under the radar of theorists and musicologists. For a discussion of "Vexations," see Jonathan Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities*, New Listening Strategies (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988).

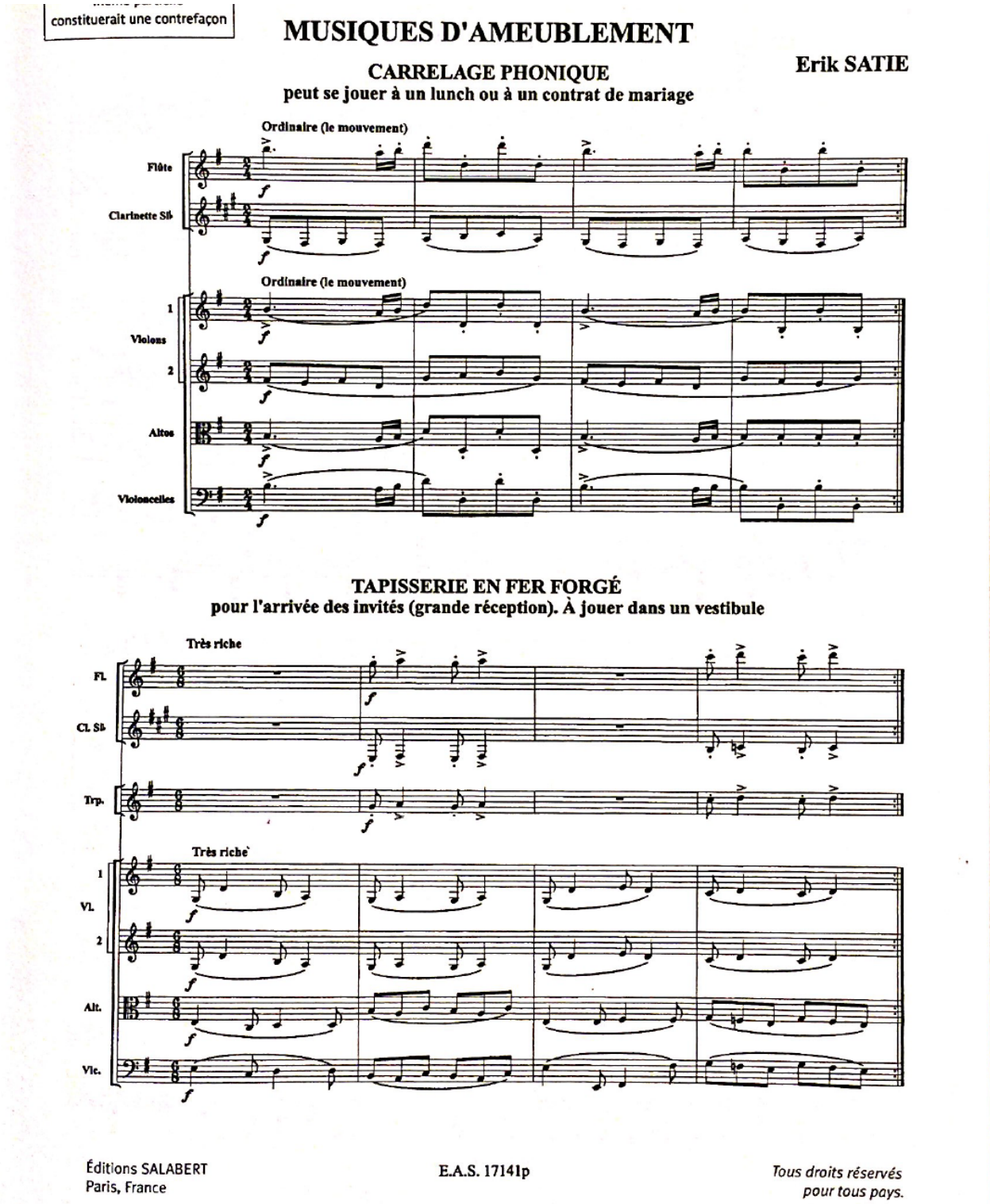
[19] Orledge, *Satie the Composer*, 143.

In this chapter, I attempt an analytical turn towards Satie's furniture music. I provide a closer look at how music occurring in vast swaths of time and space 'disappears' by means of repetition. This is a process, for many readers, of reorientation. While this trend of furniture music's 'disappearance' may be acknowledged as happening abstractly, how does this concept become embodied in a given composition? What traces of this 'disappearance' are there? How may there be fit, or not, between a listener and the music (between bodies and objects)? What causes such (mis)fits? What is the nature of this interaction, orientation, and directionality between things?

In what follows, I draw a variety of analytical lines. I will first introduce my case study of the two movements from *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917). I then consider the repeat sign as a symbol in the context of the score of the piece. My analysis properly begins with the introduction of a typology that I use to categorize the musical material of both movements. I wrap up this discussion with a consideration of implications for thinking about the structure of repetition for furniture music and its resonances with a queer phenomenological approach.

Part II: Case Study of *Musiques d'ameublement (1917)*

Example 2.1: Complete score of Erik Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917)



Musiques d'ameublement from 1917 (see Example 2.1) consists of two movements. The first, "Carrelage Phonique" (from now on, simply referred to as *Carrelage*) carries the instruction

“peut se jouer à un lunch ou à un contrat de mariage” and for the music to be “ordinaire (le mouvement).” The second movement “Tapisserie en fer forgé” (from now on referred to as *Tapisserie*) is “pour l'arrivée des invités (grande réception). À jouer dans un vestibule” and is to be “très riche.” Each movement consists of four measures.

Repeat sign

Example 2.2: Repeat signs for the flute and clarinet parts in Satie’s *Musiques d’ameublement* (1917)

The petit size of the score deceives this music’s potential for radical elongation into time and space. The standard repeat sign (see Example 2.2) at the end of both movements would usually indicate a single repeat of the material beforehand, unless indicated otherwise. This is not the case for the repeat signs in *Musiques d’ameublement* since the performers are instructed to play indefinitely. The repeat signs are a short-hand for a long process through time and space: time because the music that is prescribed occurs, of course, as an experience of sound through time,

and space because the writing out of the score without the repeat sign would require an increased space on the page for the musical notation to occupy.

Introducing a Typology: Categorization of A and B type materials

Let us take *Carrelage* first. Note the internal coherence in the form of repetition within four measures that repeat indefinitely. How might one explain this? Consider measures 1 and 3. The material of both measures are identical. Let's account for this similarity relationship between measures 1 and 3 by designating them both as category A. More specifically, I designate measure 1 as A and measure 3 as A'. I label measure 3 as A', despite it being identical to measure 1, because it sounds (and thus, feels) different from measure 1. This is because measure 1, technically speaking, is not the same musical object as measure 3 when it comes to space-time in the piece, even though the musical 'content' of both measures is the same. This differentiation between measures 1 and 3 is important in the consideration that repetition is not necessarily a reducible parameter, especially in furniture music. Rather, the continuation of music that is the same functions as an extension through time in the existence of new musical experiences that only happen through repetition.

Let's turn to the remaining measures 2 and 4. While these measures are not exact repetitions of each other like measures 1 and 3, there still appears to be a degree of internal coherence. While the pitch-class material of measure 2 differs from that of measure 4, the melodic contours remain remarkably consistent across both measures. Accounting for the fact that there are only four measures in this movement, two of which are exact repetitions of each other which sandwich two other measures (which, are more alike to each other than to the measures which are ex-

act repetitions), it seems reasonable to group measures 2 and 4 into a separate category B. Measure 2, in this sense, can be considered B, and measure 4, B'.

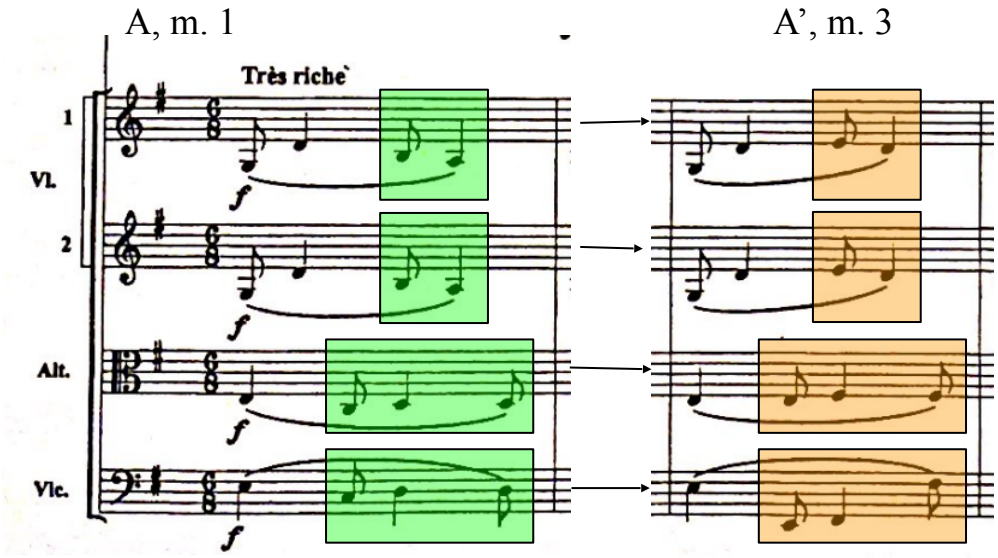
In the case of the second movement of the piece, *Tapisserie*, the categorical distinctions between A and B types are in fact the same as those for *Carrelage*. The only notable difference to be observed regarding these categories is that while the A and A' material of *Carrelage* is identical, the A and A' material of *Tapisserie* differs in melodic contour and thus, slightly also in pitch-class material (see Figure 2.1 below). For example, the second half of the measure for violins 1 and 2 differs from A to A' material. Whereas the violin parts have a B3 to A3 motion in the second half of measure 1, the corresponding part in measure 3 is transposed up a perfect fourth. As a result, while the melodic contour of measure 1 includes a descent from the second note, the melody of measure 3 ascends from the second to the third note and thus, only descends for the last note of the measure: the D quarter-note on the fifth eighth-note beat. Like the violin parts, the viola part also differs from A to A' material in pitch-class content and thus, also differs in melodic contour.

The viola part, however, does not differ in exactly the same manner as the violin parts. The change in pitch-class material between A and A' material begins on the third eighth-note beat of each measure. That is, in measure 1, the viola part has a C on the third eighth-note beat followed by a D quarter-note on the fourth eighth-note beat and a reiterated D on the final eighth-note of the measure. In the corresponding place in measure 3, the viola part is transposed up a major third. Rather than a descent to a C on the third eighth-note beat of the measure, the voila reiterates an E, which is followed by an F-sharp quarter note on beat four and F-sharp eighth-note at the end of the measure. This transposition up a major third of pitch material from mea-

sure 1 to measure 3 causes a difference in melodic contour between the two measures. Whereas the viola descends on the third eighth-note of measure 1, the corresponding part in measure 3 is a retention of the same pitch material and thus, there is static melodic motion from the E quarter-note on beat 1 to the E eighth-note on beat 3.

The cello part doubles the notes of the viola, except in places where the cello moves to a lower octave. As a result, the cello part, in its transposition, retains a descending melodic interval followed by an ascending melodic interval for the first three notes of both measures 1 and 3. The melodic contour differs when it comes to the last eighth-note of the measure when rather than remaining in the same octave (as in measure 1), the last eighth-note ascends by an octave in measure 3.

Figure 2.1: Differences in melodic contour and pitch-class material between A and A' material in Satie's *Tapisserie* illustrated



A fuller discussion of pitch in *Carrelage* and *Tapisserie* would also include a discussion of mode and texture. The multiplicity of different modal listenings of these two movements ties Satie's experimental practice to later twentieth-century minimalist modal practice. For example, in *Carrelage* it is possible to hear G major, E minor, or even B Phrygian or minor. Likewise, texture is also worth considering in these two movements. In *Carrelage*, the lowest voice of this orchestrated two-voice counterpoint is sometimes the cello, sometimes the clarinet. A more in depth discussion of pitch in these two movements would further investigate these musical dimensions.

Having categorized each measure as A, B, A', and B', now I consider the possible relationships that exist across these measures based upon how I hear the two movements. I propose highlighting the similarity between the relation of A to B and of A' to B' in a relationship I call the AB / A'B' relation (see Figure 2.2 for the AB / A'B' relation in *Carrelage* and Figure 2.4 for that in *Tapisserie*). Likewise, to highlight the relationship between A to A' and that of B to B', I create the AA' / BB' relation (see Figure 2.3 for the AA' / BB' relation in *Carrelage* and Figure 2.5 for that in *Tapisserie*). Keeping in mind that my experience is the starting point of this analysis, the AB / A'B' relation privileges hearing the larger two bar units as variations of one another, while the AA' / BB' relation draws attention to the similarity of measures 1–3 and 2–4.

Figure 2.2: First movement of Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917), *Carrelage Phonique*, with the AB / A'B' relationship illustrated

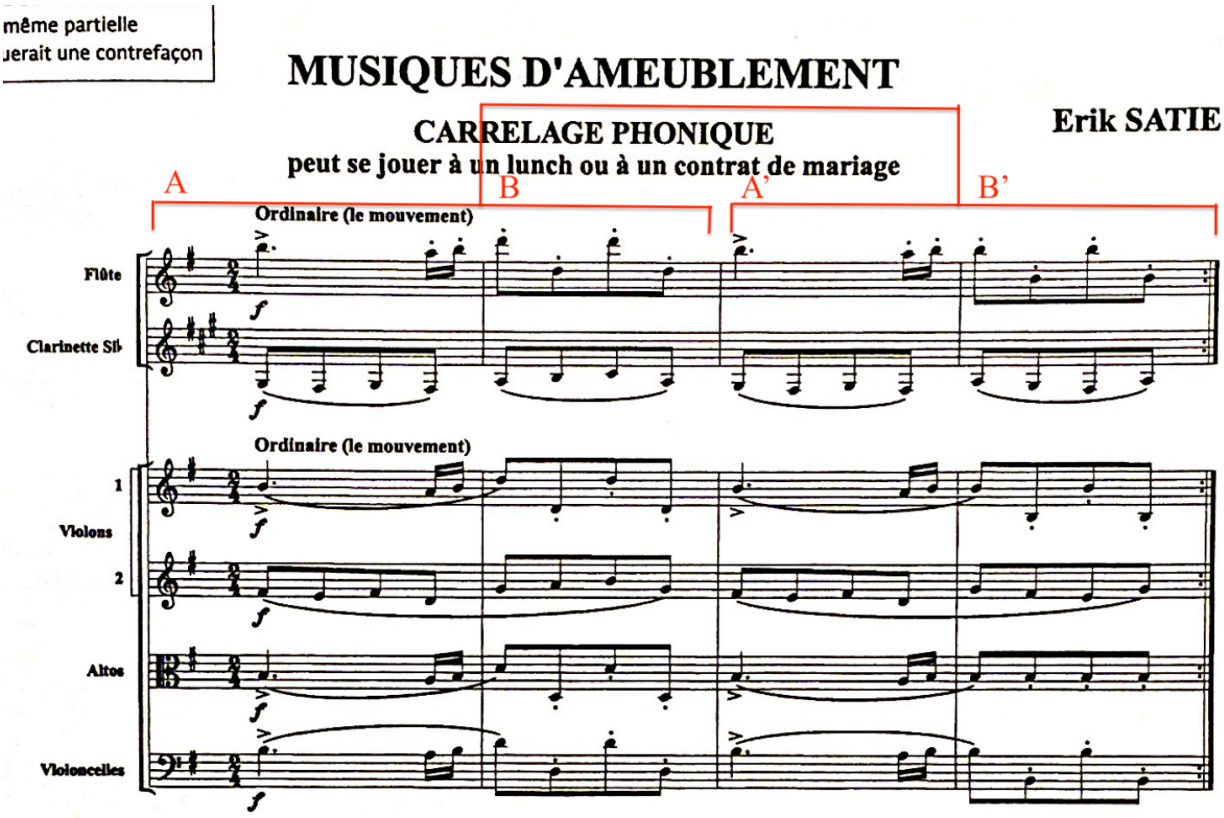


Figure 2.3: First movement of Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917), *Carrelage Phonique*, with the AA' / BB' relationship illustrated

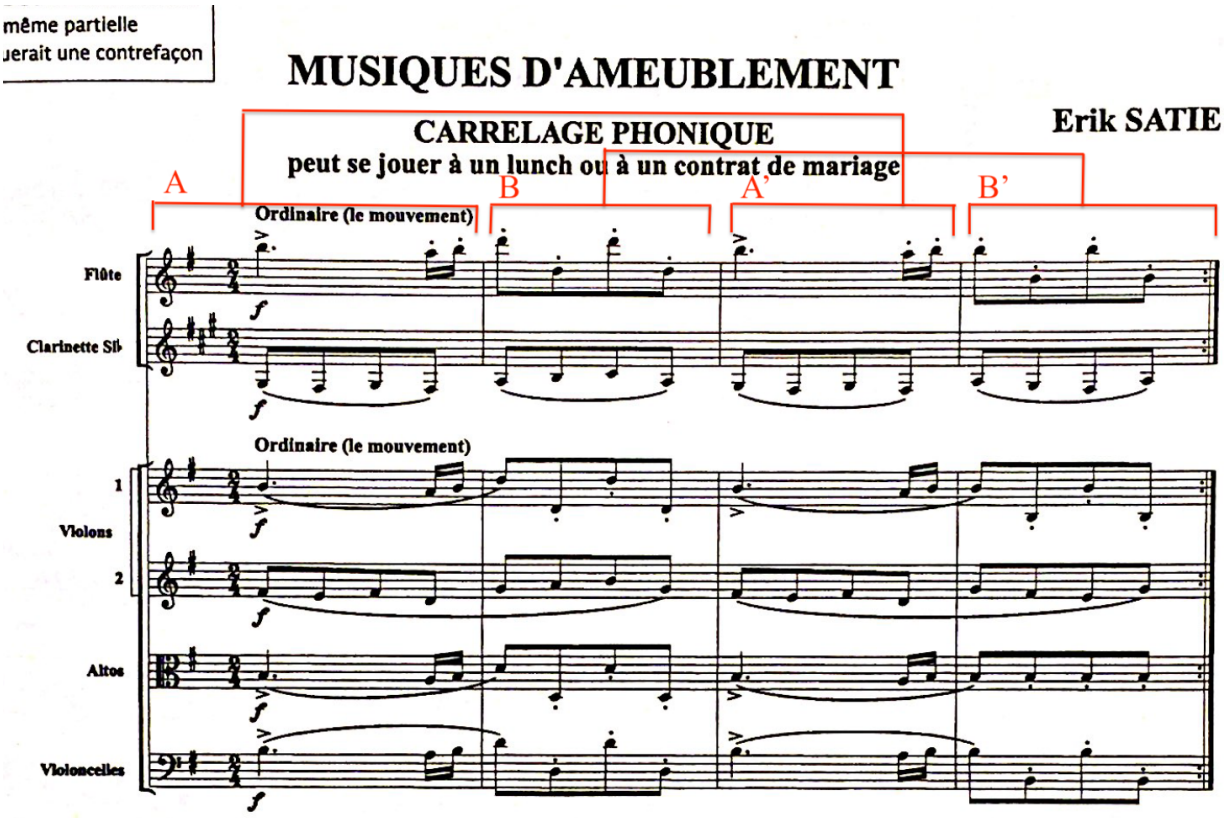


Figure 2.4: Second movement of Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917), *Tapisserie en fer forgé*, with the AB / A'B' relationship illustrated

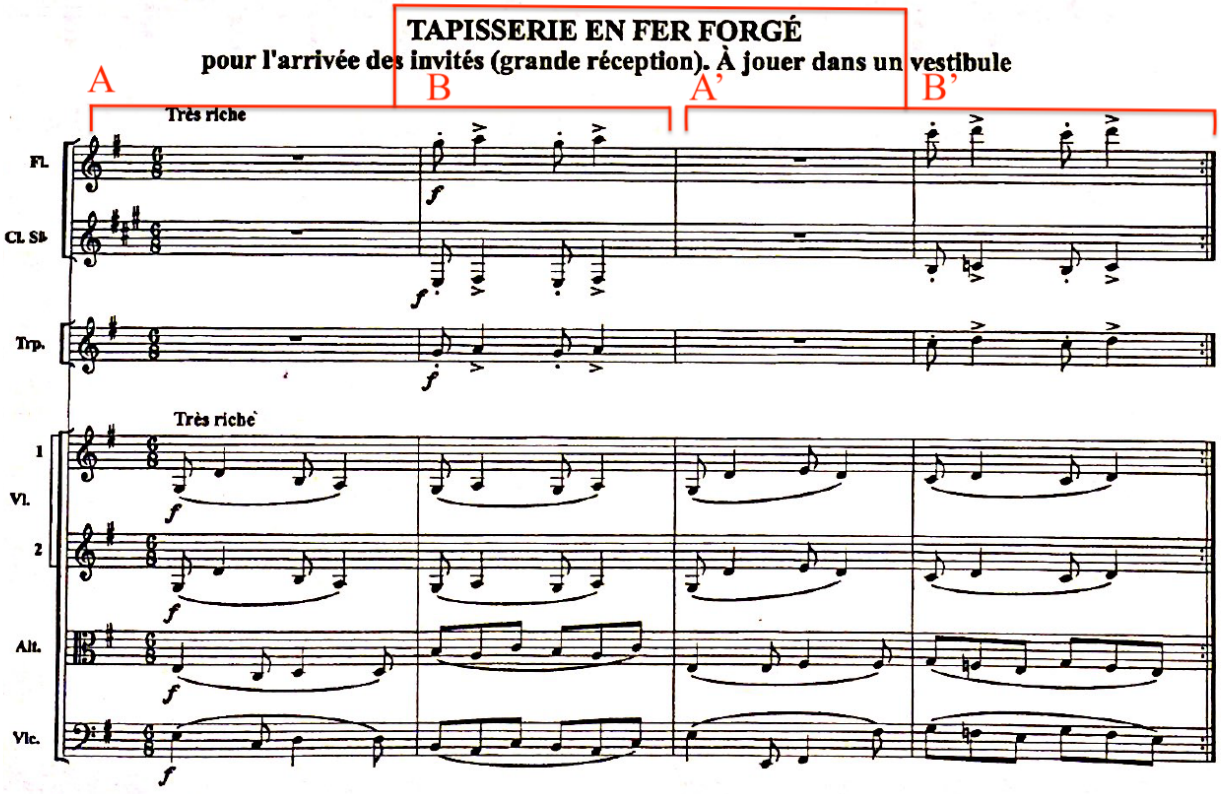
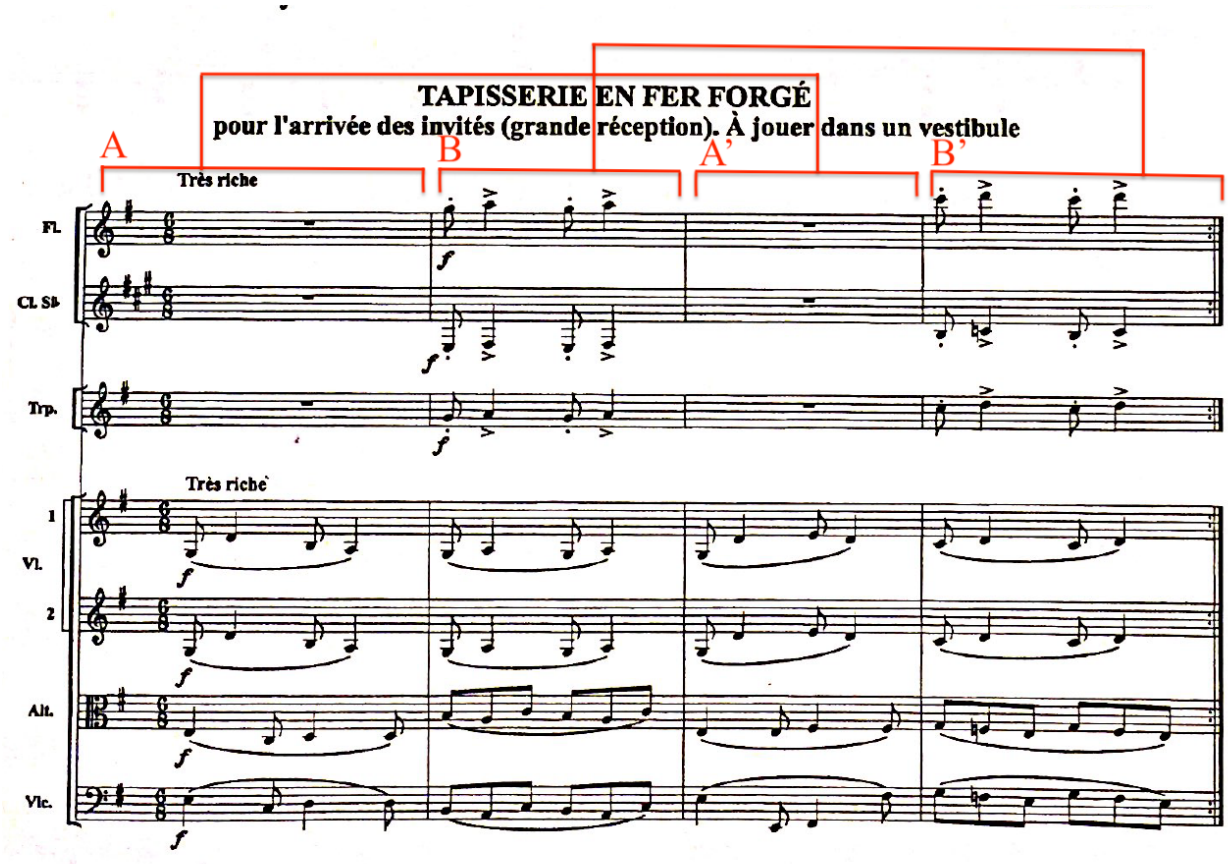

TAPISSERIE EN FER FORGÉ
pour l'arrivée des invités (grande réception). À jouer dans un vestibule
A
B
A'
B'
Très riche
Fl.
Cl. Sb
Trp.
Très riche
1
Vl.
2
Alt.
Vlc.

Figure 2.5: Second movement of Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* (1917), *Tapisserie en fer forgé*, with the AA' / BB' relationship illustrated



Next, I look exclusively at the structures of repetition according to these two different relations and present three diagrams that visualize the continuation of these relations of repetition on more abstract and durationally longer levels as the particular movement continues indefinitely. The first diagram (Figure 2.6) visualizes the AB / A'B' relation on higher levels. The relational pattern shares the same structure at different levels, yet the musical content at these different levels are not the same. The second diagram (Figure 2.7) takes the first diagram and illustrates AA' / BB' relations on higher levels. The red lines point to AA' / BB' pairs. Black lines group AB /

A‘B‘ pairs. The third diagram (Figure 2.8) presents an alternative to the second diagram by generating the AA’ / BB’ relations on high levels without the scaffolding of the AB / A’B’ relation.

Repetition, nesting diagrams and the AB / A’B’ and AA’ / BB’ relationships

With the AB / A’B’ and AA’ / BB’ relations illustrated in the figures above, one might be curious as to what happens when the piece repeats on and on. What do these relations look like on larger scales of repetition?

Figure 2.6: AB / A'B' relation on larger scales illustrated

Higher level AB / A'B' relations are shown with brackets that represent abstract AB / A'B' units. Iteration 1 represents the four measures of the score and iterations 2 through 8, the repeats that follow, which continue indefinitely.

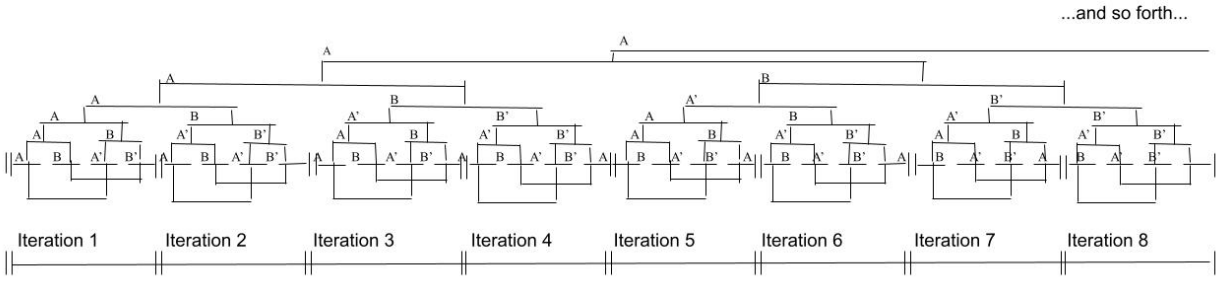
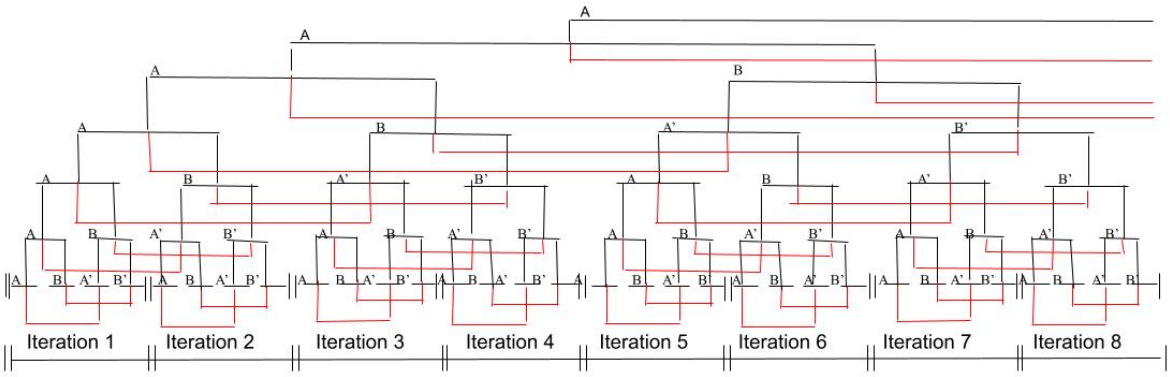


Figure 2.7: AA' / BB' relation on larger scales built upon AB / A'B' relations illustrated

In this diagram, the AA' / BB' relation (in red) is overlaid onto the AB / A'B' relation (in black, as in Figure 2.6).


Iteration 1
Iteration 2
Iteration 3
Iteration 4
Iteration 5
Iteration 6
Iteration 7
Iteration 8

...and so forth...

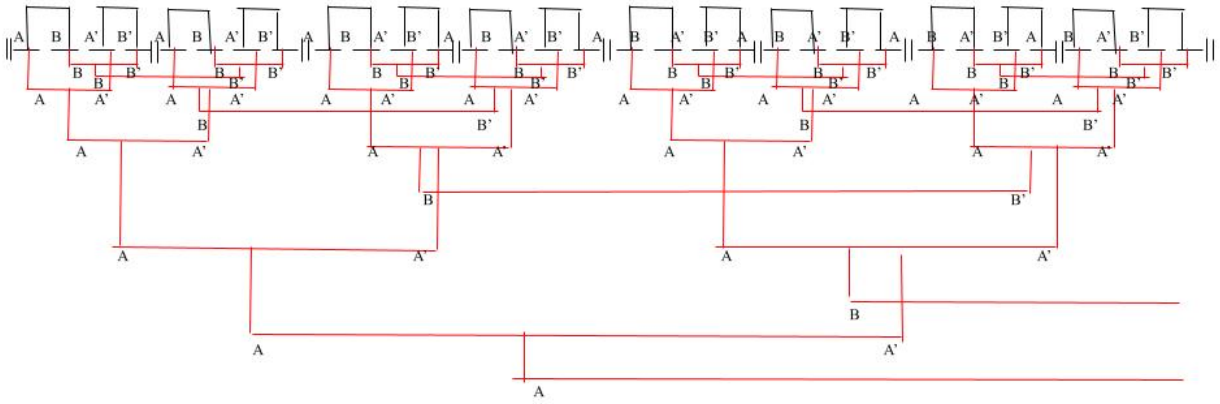
In creating my diagrams, I first reduced each measure of music to a horizontal line. Four horizontal lines then represent one iteration of the four measures of the piece. To aid in deciphering where each iteration ends and another begins, there are two vertical lines -- like railroad tracks -- that are inserted between the end of one repetition and the beginning of the next. From here, it is possible to name each of these vertical lines in exact accordance with the annotated scores of the two relations AB / A'B' and AA' / BB'. That is, within each iteration there are four horizontal lines and the first is A, the second B, the third, A', and the fourth B'. This naming process is a direct translation of the annotated score to the more abstracted diagram.

In order to show the relations, as in the earlier annotated scores, I add the bracket that encompasses A and B and that which encompasses A' and B', and then bracket those two brackets together to illustrate the AB / A'B' relation (see Figure 2.6). The brackets that distinguish the most surface AB / A'B' units are then reinterpreted as their own metaphorical A and B. Iteration two provides the corresponding metaphorical A' and B' that complete that AB / A'B' relation level. This second level AB / A'B' relation can then be subjected again to the same process. That is, the second level A and B units can be bracketed together, forming a third level metaphorical A unit. This third level A unit takes the space of the entire first iteration. The second iteration provides the third level B unit, which again, can be bracketed together with the third level A unit to form the A unit of the fourth level AB / A'B' relation. This process can be continued, like the music, indefinitely.

The above accounts only for the AB / A'B' relation, but not yet the AA' / BB' relation. Generating the AA' / BB' relations on higher levels is a similar process to that underlying the AB / A'B' relations. The difference is that the generation of the AA' / BB' relations on higher lev-

els can both be built off of a scaffolding of the AB / A'B' relation (as in Figure 2.7) as well as generate its own higher level metaphorical levels based upon reinterpretation of AA' / BB' relations as higher level units (as in Figure 2.8). The benefit is that the AB / A'B' relations on higher levels act as a scaffolding to connect higher level As to A's and Bs to B's. This can put the AA' / BB' relation directly in contraposition to the AB / A'B' higher level relations. Interpreting the two relations as codependent on higher levels helps to see the ways in which the two relations are interlocked. Still, it is possible to build the AA' / BB' relation on higher levels without using the higher level generated AB / A'B' relation as a scaffold. In my opinion the higher level units that could be generated by the AA' / BB unit itself designate less of a metaphorical higher level unit, and more of a cutting across in space.

Figure 2.8: AA’ / BB’ relations generated on higher levels without using the AB / A’B’ relation as a scaffolding



I found it interesting to think of the AA' / BB' relation as a continuation built upon the already existing AB / A'B' relation on higher levels because it was possible to take the distinct higher level units A, B, A', and B' and relate them according to the AA' / BB' relation. Of course, this does not account for the higher level metaphorical A, B, A', and B' units that are generated by the continuation of the AA' / BB' on higher levels.

This is how I generated AA' / BB' high lever units using the already generated AB / A'B' relations on high levels (Figure 2.7). First, take the most surface level (level 1) of the AA' / BB' relation. This is a direct translation of the annotated score surface into the more abstract diagram. That is, each measure 1 is bracketed to measure 3, and measure 2 to measure 4. These brackets are shown in red below the horizontal lines that represent each measure of the musical surface. Shown above the lines is the most surface level AB / A'B' relation, as mentioned earlier. With the generation of the first metaphorical higher level units, it is possible to bracket these level-2 A, B, A', and B' units generated from most surface level AB / A'B' units according to the AA' / BB' relation. That is, to take the second level metaphorical higher level A unit and bracket it to the same level A', and likewise, that B to B' unit. This is shown in red brackets below the brackets that were generated for the first level AB / A'B' relation. This process to create higher level AA' / BB' units based off of the scaffolding of the higher level AB / A'B' units is then continued. For clarity, I can explain the generation of one more level of higher level AA' / BB' units in the diagram. See the generation of the third level AB / A'B' relation. To reiterate, the third level metaphorical A, for example, is generated from the bracket that connects the second level A and B units. Under this third level metaphorical A unit, there is a red bracket that connects the third level A to the third level A' (which, indeed, encompasses the entirety to iteration 3). Likewise, the

third level B unit is connected with a red bracket underneath to the third level B' unit. This process is likewise, continued indefinitely alongside the indefinite continuation of the AB / A'B' relations.

Note on Structure

What I notice about these two pieces of Satie's is that it seems not to matter what the musical material is that is being repeated. What matters more is the formal structure created through repetition. Although it is the musical content that is being repeated through time, 'new' musical content is not being generated. What is being generated with each repetition of the four measures is a *new* elaboration of the structure of repetition -- of music extending through time, occurring through time, extended through time. Perhaps what these diagrams show is how the time-*space* of the pieces is created for this music and what it looks like in some abstract sense. Perhaps these diagrams are just another representation, an interpretation of time, which the music also provides. Whether the result is particularly interesting is beside the point, in my opinion. What is interesting is that it happens at all. I include this specific representation because my interpretation shows how the movements relate and hence, demonstrate how the experience of the two movements relate. That is, the graphic interpretation reflects what is common between my experience in those two pieces. My hearing, of course, is not more appropriate than another's hearing. In this sense, my hearing (which is always embodied) draws particular lines, or forecloses a particular orientation. In the case of Satie, that embodied listening orientation has a tendency to disorient away from the musical body, and thus, resonates with a queer phenomenology.

The next question may be, then, what is the relation between structure and time and space. First, what am I claiming to be structure? I observe that my tendency is to conceive of structure as a sum total of different relations that I, the listener and analyst (my body), am oriented towards in the piece (object). The diagram then, is a representation of this relation of me to the piece, a representation of a fusion between listener and sound. What structure may do then, is help to extend the subject-object complex through time. Structure may explain how it is that this complex continues through time. I am not yet sure about space, other than the fact that the representation of the structure takes up space and is thus a translation of time experience into space on the page.

Part III: Conclusion

In this chapter, I completed the thesis's first musical analysis of a piece of furniture music: Erik Satie's *Musiques d'ameublement* from 1917. In this analysis, I drew a variety of analytical lines. I kept *room* for failed orientation between analysis and piece and for failed orientation between reader and analysis. In this sense, it is possible for my analysis to be disruptive and to provide the space for reorientation in music theory. Key ideas from the chapter include investigation of dimensions of sameness, difference, and repetition in Satie's furniture music. In the next chapter, I will continue to build upon the work of this chapter through a second case study of furniture music analyzed through my queer phenomenological lens.

Part I: Introduction

Introducing Lucier

Alvin Lucier was born in the state of New Hampshire, United States in 1931. He spent his career as a university professor, first at Brandeis and then Wesleyan University. Lucier's earlier work in the 1960s and 70s is ripe with avant-garde furniture music.[20] His utilization of spaces through time in his compositions instrumentalizes a sense of 'the room' in which any given instantiation of the piece exists. What are these rooms? How are they given meaning? How might the composition be a tool for extending bodies (in the form of 'listeners') into these spaces? What compositional techniques are used to accomplish such processes and how might they be experienced?

Approach

This chapter addresses these questions through a case study of one piece by Lucier: *I am sitting in a room* (1969). I investigate and argue for a queer phenomenological interpretation of this composition as a piece of furniture music. I then investigate the workings of repetition, of sameness and difference, to offer an analytical interpretation of the piece.

First, I will introduce my case study of Lucier's piece *I am sitting in a room*, where I explain the piece's compositional mechanism and provide some initial analytical interpretations of the work as furniture music. Then, I explicitly argue that Alvin Lucier is a furniture musiker (that is, that he *does* furniture music) since he traditionally is not considered to be a composer of

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[20] Linda Sanders and Keith Moore, "Lucier, Alvin," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, accessed 4 May. 2021, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000047065.

furniture music. Afterwards, I present two visualizations of the transformational process of *I am sitting in a room.* The first is a bar graph and the second is a collection of images. After explaining characteristics of these two visualizations, I wrap up this chapter with some general concluding thoughts.

Part II: Case study of Lucier's *I am sitting in a room*

In what follows, I will first explain the compositional mechanism of the Lucier's *I am sitting in a room*. Second, I provide an analytical insight into how the piece instrumentalizes sameness and difference. Third, I use a quote from Lucier as a point of departure to understand Lucier as a furniture musiker.

Compositional Mechanism of I am sitting in a room

I am sitting in a room is a piece of experimental music. The piece begins with spoken material, though, it is possible to use any text:[21]

> "I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the consonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but, more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have."

Lucier's text is both the locus of the sonic content and the semantic content to explain the compositional process of the piece. I will now describe the mechanics of this process, the basic con-

[21] In this sense, the text that is used is not 'piece-defining' for *I am sitting in a room.* That is, a performer can swap out the text and still be doing the same piece.

cept of which is that some spoken material is put through a process and the result from this process is then subjected to that same process, and so on.

In a chosen room, some text is spoken and recorded. This is the first iteration. Then, this first iteration is played back into the room and this sounding out of the recording is recorded. That recording is the second iteration. This process is continued for as long as the performer wants to evoke the resonant frequencies of the room. Thus, the third iteration is a recording of the second iteration being played into the room, the fourth iteration is a recording of the third iteration being played into the room, the fifth iteration is a recording of the fourth iteration being played into the room, and so on. This is, of course, an abbreviated way of saying the third iteration is a recording of a recording of the text spoken into the room, the fourth iteration is a recording of a recording of a recording of the text spoken into the room, the fifth iteration is a recording of a recording of a recording of recording of the text spoken into the room, and so on. With the mechanics of the compositional process that generates the piece explained, I now move on to introducing my first analytical insight into this process: that of instrumentalizing sameness and difference.

Analytical Insight: Instrumentalizing Sameness and Difference

The musical process of *I am sitting in a room* that I just explained operates at the nexus of sameness and difference. While the process stays the same to generate each iteration, this process is also the mechanism that produces what is different for each generation. In other words, difference is generated through repetition. In this section, I (1) elaborate how and what stays the same

or changes in the piece and (2) suggest some possibilities to destabilize, or queer, what might be thought of as the same, but may in fact be different.

The crux of the compositional process of this piece is that with each repetition, the material of Lucier's piece changes. It is not that the text itself changes, or that the room changes. The change is with another subjection through Lucier's functional process. In this sense, Lucier is playing with sameness and difference. Sameness in the sense that there is a morsel that stays the same through Lucier's composition: (1) a compositional unit comprised of the text, a voice, and a room that remains constant and (2) a process that stays the same in its generation of each new iteration of the text. The element of difference for Lucier is that the process (2) transforms the unit that comprises each iteration (1). Each iteration is different from the one before and from the one after even though it was produced from the same original iteration and through the same process as all other iterations. No iteration is the same sonic material. Not only is each iteration different, but difference is extending us through time with the new (and therein, different) experience of each iteration. Lucier is composing out how a repetition of even the 'same' material, really is not exactly the 'same.' It is a meta-expansion of a kind of sonic space through time.

Still, several elements of sameness define *I am sitting in a room*: the original unit defined as the given text, the space as defined by the room, and the compositional process, explained in the previous section. The text, as the locus of the piece, remains the same in the sense that new text is not introduced at any point in the composition. All sounding text, and thus, all sonic content of the piece, originates in the same original unit of spoken text. The other element of sameness in the piece is the space (that is, the room) that the composition and thus, the compositional process, occurs in. The instructions ask us to pick a room whose resonant frequencies we want to

evoke. In what way can we say that the room that the compositional process occurs in (given that the performer does not literally change rooms) stays the same? With each moment in the room, in some sense, the room does change. You are in the room. Maybe it is warm and you take off a sweater. Has the room changed? If the room is the sum of all things in the room, then perhaps yes. Is the element of sameness of the room necessary for the piece, prescribed by Lucier in his instructions? I argue no. Rather, I interpret the instruction as an opportunity to 'capture' the room and its resonant frequencies *at the time-space of that moment in time in which the compositional process occurs.* The room is not static and thus the composition will not be static either, even without the process from generation to generation. This offers an opportunity for a multiplicity of *I am sitting in a room* to be done in the 'same' room over and over, over different time spans, through different people's experiences and text choices. This destabilizes the 'work' concept since all of these different performances of the piece are still *I am sitting in a room.*

Following my own interpretation of sameness and difference in *I am sitting in a room*, I now return to Lucier's explicit formulation of the piece in the next section through an interpretation of Lucier as a furniture musiker.

Alvin Lucier as Furniture Musiker

In this section, I argue that Lucier is a furniture musiker; that is, that Lucier does furniture music. First, I begin with a quote by Lucier on two early recordings of the piece, which prompts me to wonder about Lucier's intended orientation to the piece for listeners. Second, I suggest that the transformation of music into furniture is already built into *I am sitting in a room* and thus, argue that the piece is a composing-out, or becoming, of furniture music.

Consider that in the case of *I am sitting in a room*, the room also becomes an instrument. Furniture becomes an instrument of sound, and sound becomes furniture. In the score for *I am sitting in a room*, Lucier instructs us to, "choose a room the musical qualities of which you would like to evoke."[22] In an interview he said,

> "I am not as interested in the resonant characteristics of spaces in a scientific way as much as I am in opening that secret door to the sound situation that you experience in a room. For example, I made a preliminary version of "I am sitting in a room" in the Brandeis University electronic music studio, a small, bright, somewhat antiseptic room in which I never enjoyed being very much. It was filled with electronic equipment, and one wall consisted of several large glass windows. The resonant frequencies got reinforced very quickly after the fifth or sixth generation, resulting in harsh, strident sounds. But the version I did at 454 High Street, in Middletown, took a longer time because it was a softer, friendlier room with a wall-to-wall carpet and drapes on the windows...Anyway, the carpet and drapes cut down on the production of the resonant frequencies so they took longer to achieve, but it gave us a more beautiful result. Didn't we get a different set of intervals in the Brandeis Studio than we got in this room?"[23]

What does it mean to open "that secret door to the sound situation that you experience in a room?" Like Brian Eno (to be discussed in the next chapter), Lucier composes *for*, that is, in conscious awareness of, the room. Unlike in the case of the other two composers Satie and Eno, however, it is unclear what kind of listening orientation Lucier, as the composer and performer wants, expects, or suggests for the consumers, that is, listeners, of his work. Should we listen, as we might to other pieces of art music, or should we simply hear this music in the background, as we do with furniture music?

In *I am sitting in a room*, it is possible to not only hear, but actively *listen* to sound transform into furniture through each iteration of the repeated text's reaction to the properties of the

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[22] Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 30.

[23] Lucier and Simon, *Chambers*, 36-37.

room. Each iteration is a new recording of some number of recordings of a recording of the text being played into the room. To the extent that furniture is a part of the room, or even, is the room, furniture music must also be a part of the room, or even, encapsulate the room itself. The repetitive experience of a piece of furniture in the room consumes the piece of furniture into the room as a part of the room. In *I am sitting in a room*, this process is short-circuited. The transformation of music into the room (that is, of sound into furniture) is already built into the piece. The process of furniture music becoming part of the room is a process that can literally be listened to. With each repetition of the spoken text, the sounding material speaks back the resonant frequencies of the room, producing a unique fusion of the musical component of furniture music (the sounding component) and the 'placefullness' of its sounding experience. The built-in transformation, or composing-out, of sound into furniture enables the possibility of a listening orientation to furniture music that may accommodate not only hearing, but also listening. The listener can hear the room consume or envelop the musical furniture, rather than the process of consumption or envelopment happen solely as a process of the listener's orientation *away* from the sonic object of furniture music. *I am sitting in a room* allows listeners to maintain a turn towards the sonic object of furniture music to experience without a turn away from a process of becoming furniture music: sonic disappearance through repetition. In other compositions of furniture music, the becoming of the room (that is, the process of instrumentalizing the room) is dependent not on properties of the musical object, but of the listener's orientation (which is why I require a queer phenomenological approach in my analyses of furniture music in this thesis).[24]

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[24] For more discussion of "I am sitting in a room," including some analogies to recursion in the visual arts, see Jonathan Bernard, "Theory, Analysis, and the 'Problem' of Minimal Music," in *Concert Music, Rock, and Jazz* since 1945, ed. Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 259–284.

In this section, I introduced my case study of Lucier's *I am sitting in a room* by (1) explaining the piece's compositional mechanism, (2) providing an analytical insight into the piece's instrumentalization of sameness and difference, and (3) arguing that Lucier is a furniture musiker through his built-in sound-to-furniture transformational process. In the next section, I move on to my analysis proper of the piece.

Part III: Entry into Lucier's Soundworld via Visualizing Transformation

In this section, I present two graphics as new mediums to understand *I am sitting in a room*. The first graphic is a bar graph that maps resonance over time. The second graphic is a collection of images corresponding to each generation of the piece.

Visualizing Transformation: A Bar Graph of Resonance Over Time in Lucier's I am sitting in a room

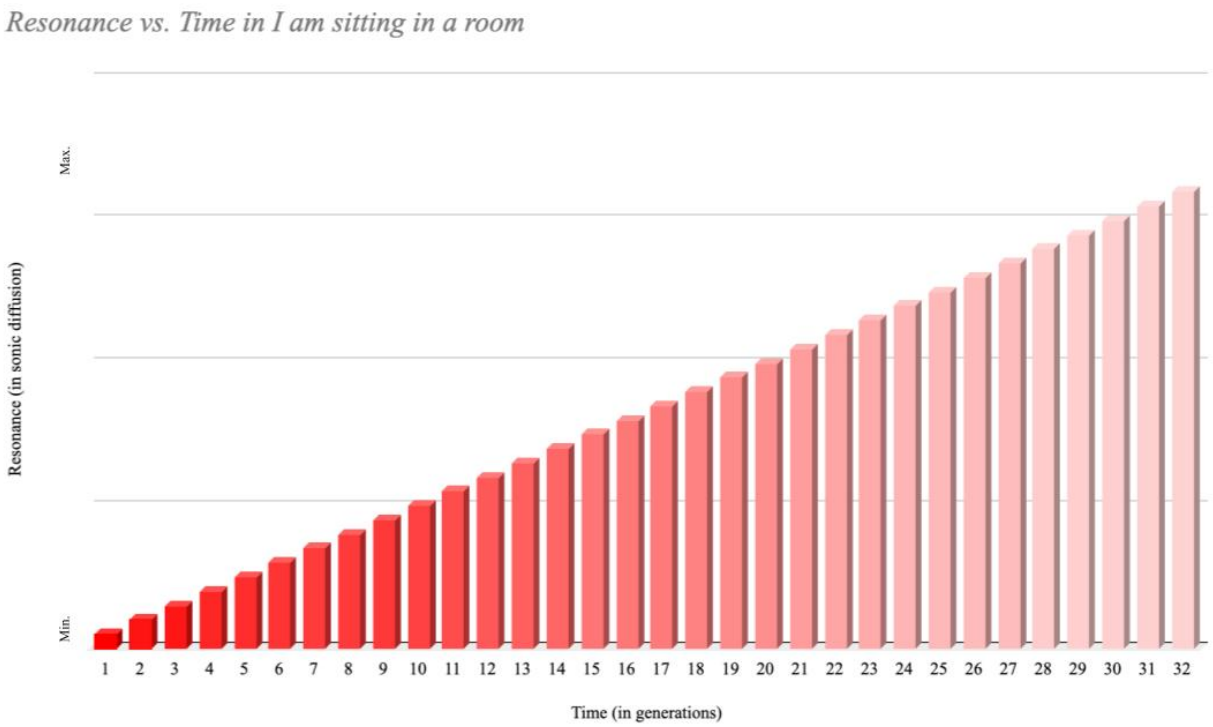
In this section, I first explain what the x- and y-values of the bar graph represent. Second, I address how the bar graph maps the progression of the piece diachronically (that is, over time). Third, I discuss the significance of the hue of the bar graph's bars.

The bar graph in Figure 3.1 shows the relationship between time and resonance in *I am sitting in a room*. The idea of reinforcing resonant frequencies is Lucier's term. The x-axis represents time measured in n generations where n is the number of generations. Thus, an x-value 1 represents the first generation (or iteration) of the piece, or the first recording of text being spoken into a room. An x-value of 2 represents the second generation of the piece, or the recording of the recording of text being spoken into a room, and so forth.

The y-axis in this bar graph represents the degree of resonance of the room heard in each generation n. The resonance is symbolized by abstract 'units' of diffusion of the spoken text into the room. That is, the y-values merely represent the experience of a gradual increase of resonance starting from the minimum level for generation 1 at x-value 1 continuing gradually on the spectrum of resonance until the last generation at x-value 32, where the y-value is at its maximum.[25]

[25] Lucier's commercial recording features 32 generations. See Alvin Lucier, *I am sitting in a room: for voice on tape* (New York, NY: Lovely Music, 1990), CD.

Figure 3.1: Bar Graph of Resonance Over Time in Lucier's *I am sitting in a Room*



Next, it is possible to look at the progression of the piece, in terms of repetition of iterations (that is, of generations), from a bird-eye's-view or 'out of time.' By aligning the values of any generation n with the same value in x in the bar graph, an out-of-time snapshot of how the resonance of the piece increases with each generation n is provided in this bar graph. It is then possible to take some generation n, plug that number n as an x-value in the bar graph, and get a sense of the comparable or relative resonance in the room (by which I also mean the degree of transformation of the initial recording). Each generation (or iteration) thereby stands in for many things. One being the number n of generations, which then corresponds to an x-value, which then corresponds to a level of transformation of the original spoken text.

An additional element of the bar graph is the changing hue of the color red. The color red is most saturated with an x-value of 1, and is gradually less and less saturated as the x-value (and thereby, also y-values) increase and thus, the hue of the bar graphs becomes more opaque as x- and y-values increase. This is a poetic element of the bar graph. Take the amount of pigmentation of the color red as the 'energy' of the voice of the spoken text of the piece. This 'energy' stays constant in the piece with each recording but is gradually dispersed throughout the room. The color red stands in for the 'energy' of the voice in the bar graph and likewise, is gradually dispersed through the bar graph with each generation n. In earlier generations n, with there being less resonance of the room, the energy of the voice is more 'condensed' in space and thus the color red is likewise more saturated in space on the bar graph. As the generations unfold and the resonance increases, the energy of the voice then dissipates, or disappears, into the room. Likewise, the color red of the corresponding bar graphs is more dispersed (that is, distributed) across the bar graphs. The more diffuse the color red (that is, the higher values in x and y) the more transformation of the energy of the voice into the room and thus, into being furniture. The concepts of expansion, growth, and diffusion are metaphors of transformation. That is, I do not claim I am pointing to some actual material expansion or growth. Rather, expansion is my analytical transformation.

While the bar graph of Figure 3.1 captures the process of *I am sitting in a room* over time, I present a contrasting graphic in the next section which consists of unique snap-shots for each iteration.

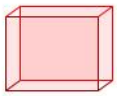
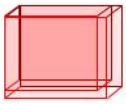
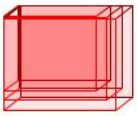
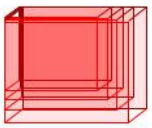
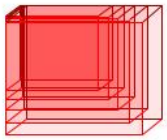
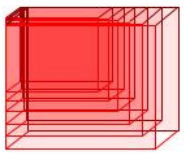
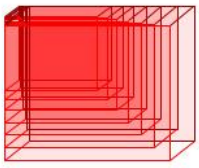
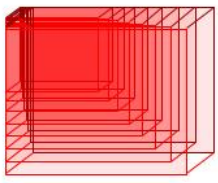
Visualizating Transformation: A Collection of Images

In this section, I present my second graphic analysis of *I am sitting in a room*: a collection of 32 images (see Figure 3.2). Each image represents a single iteration of the piece. The collection of images describes less of an aesthetic experience of the piece than a poetics of how the piece was put together. The diagram visualizes the process of transformation from generation to generation. Otherwise left 'invisible' or 'silent' to the listener of the piece, the transformation is made visible and thus metaphorically speaking, sounds, in the collection of images.

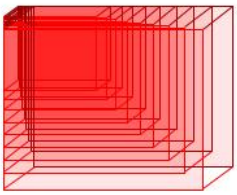
The practice of analysis is a process of making, or generating, something. For this reason, perhaps something is to be said about understanding art by making more art. That is, to make a case for my diagram below to be considered an artwork of its own interpreting Lucier's artwork. The figure is a visual representation of my experience of the piece or a relation to the piece. I characterize my orientation to the piece as analytical, with the analytical focus on the queer phenomenological experience of furniture music.

Below I provide an analytical interpretation of the graphic through an investigation into seven different topics: (1) the images' growth in size, (2) the diagram as a metaphor, (3) resonance, (4) transformation, (5) the significance of overlapping, (6) materiality, energy, and distribution across space, and lastly (7) geometry.

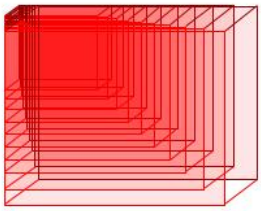
Figure 3.2: Collection of a Growing Image or an Attempt at Drawing New Analytical Lines

1. Image 1 of Generation 1: n = 1 
2. Image 2 of Generation 2: n = 2 
3. Image 3 of Generation 3: n = 3 
4. Image 4 of Generation 4: n = 4 
5. Image 5 of Generation 5: n = 5 
6. Image 6 of Generation 6: n = 6 
7. Image 7 of Generation 7: n = 7 
8. Image 8 of Generation 8: n = 8 

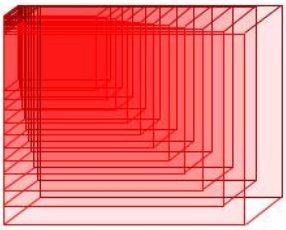
9. Image 9 of Generation 9: n = 9



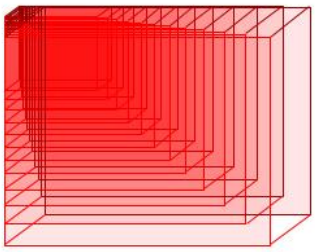
10. Image 10 of Generation 10: n = 10



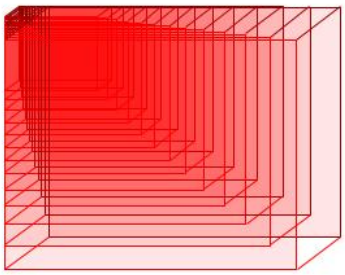
11. Image 11 of Generation 11: n = 11

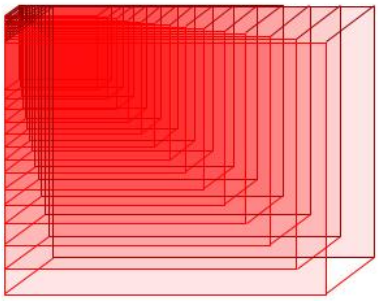


12. Image 12 of Generation 12: n = 12

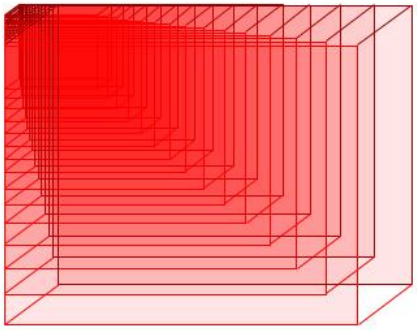


13. Image 13 of Generation 13: n = 13

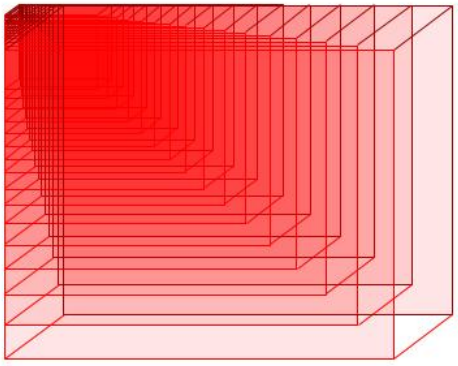




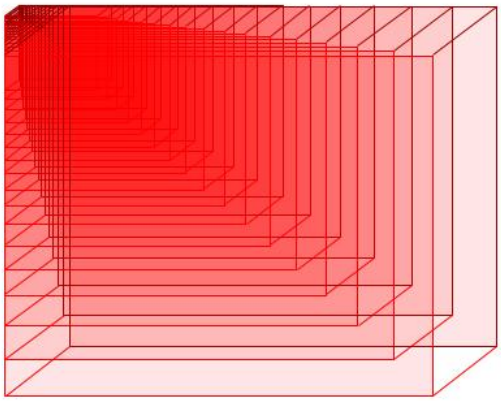
14. Image 14 of Generation 14: n = 14



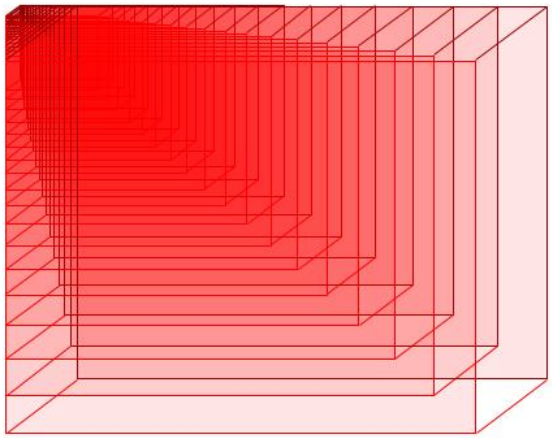
15. Image 15 of Generation 15: n = 15



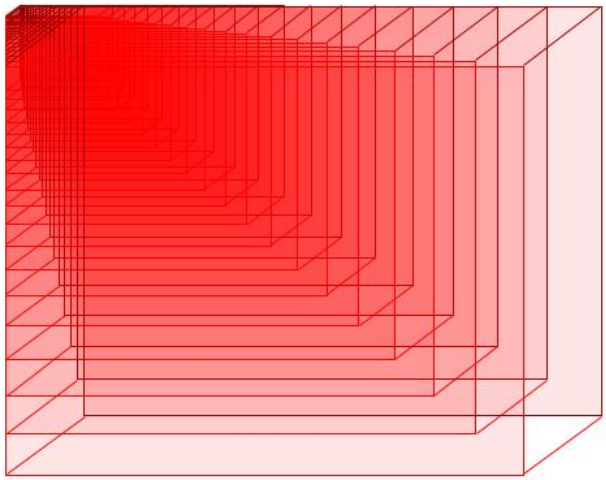
16. Image 16 of Generation 16: n = 16



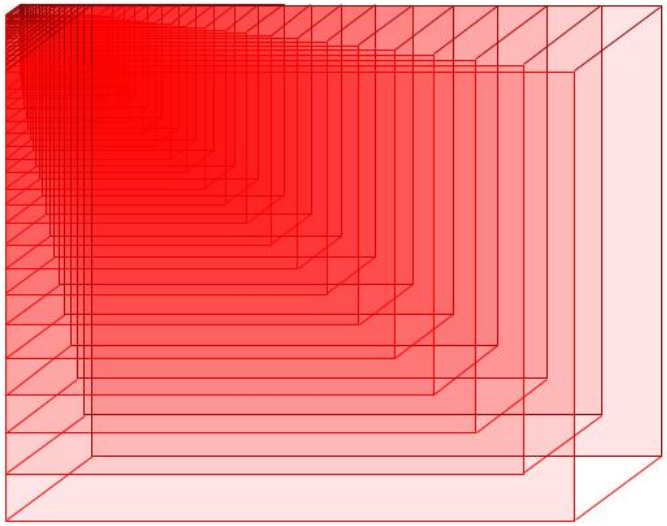
17. Image 17 of Generation 17: n = 17



18. Image 18 of Generation 18: n = 18

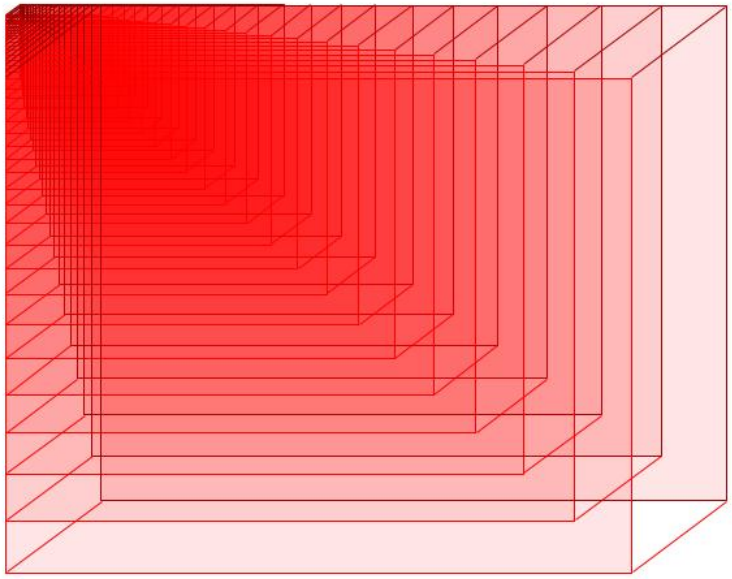


19. Image 19 of Generation 19: n = 19

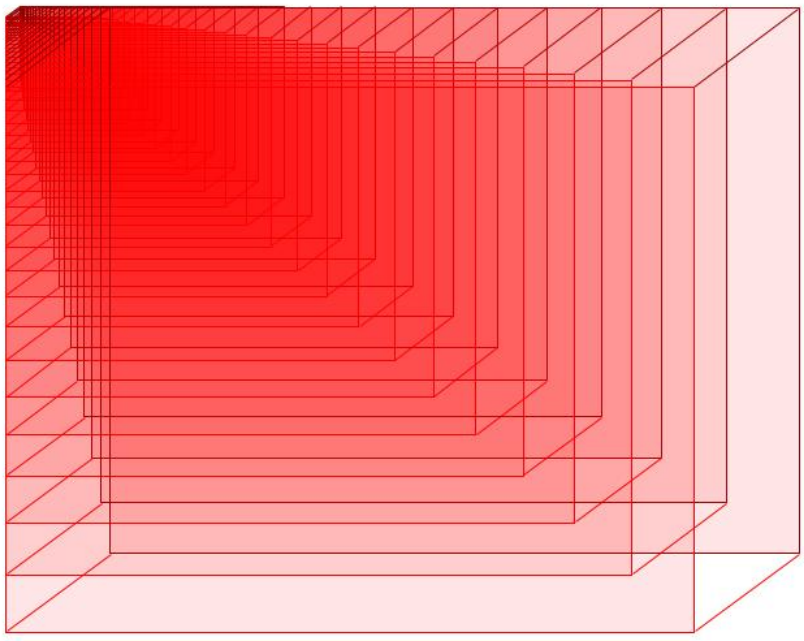


20. Image 20 of Generation 20: n = 20

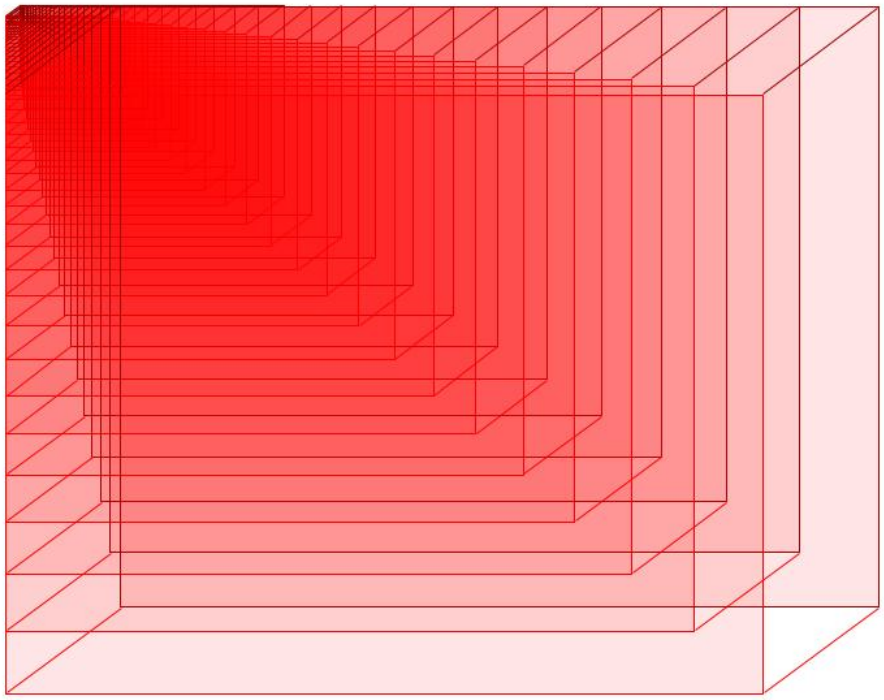
21. Image 21 of Generation 21: n = 21



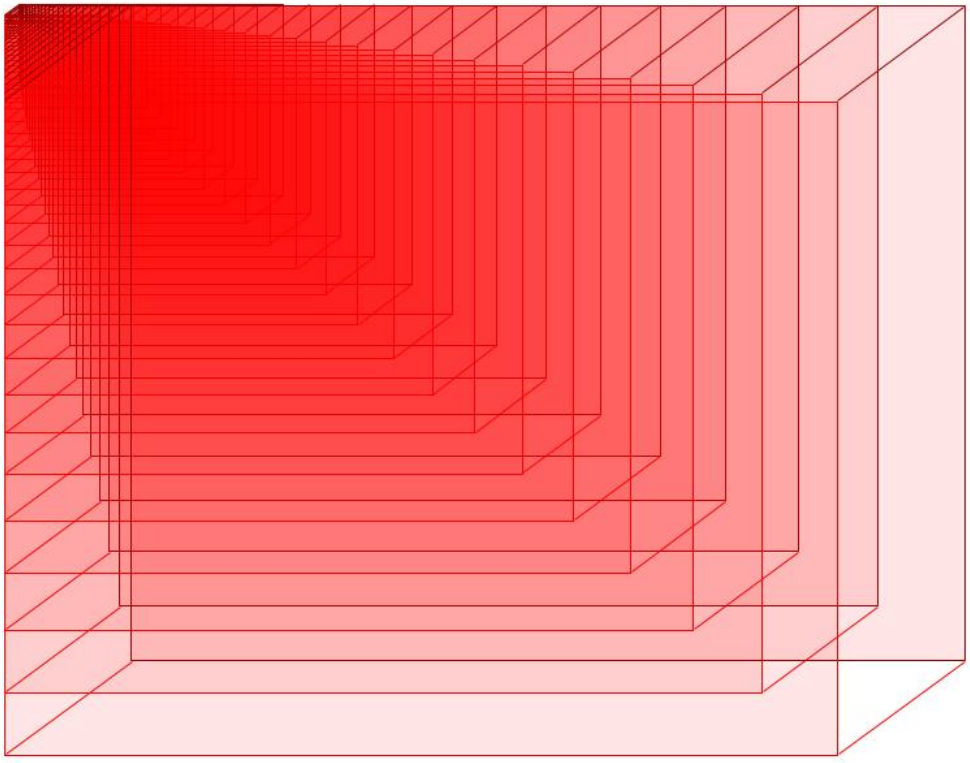
22. Image 22 of Generation 22: n = 22



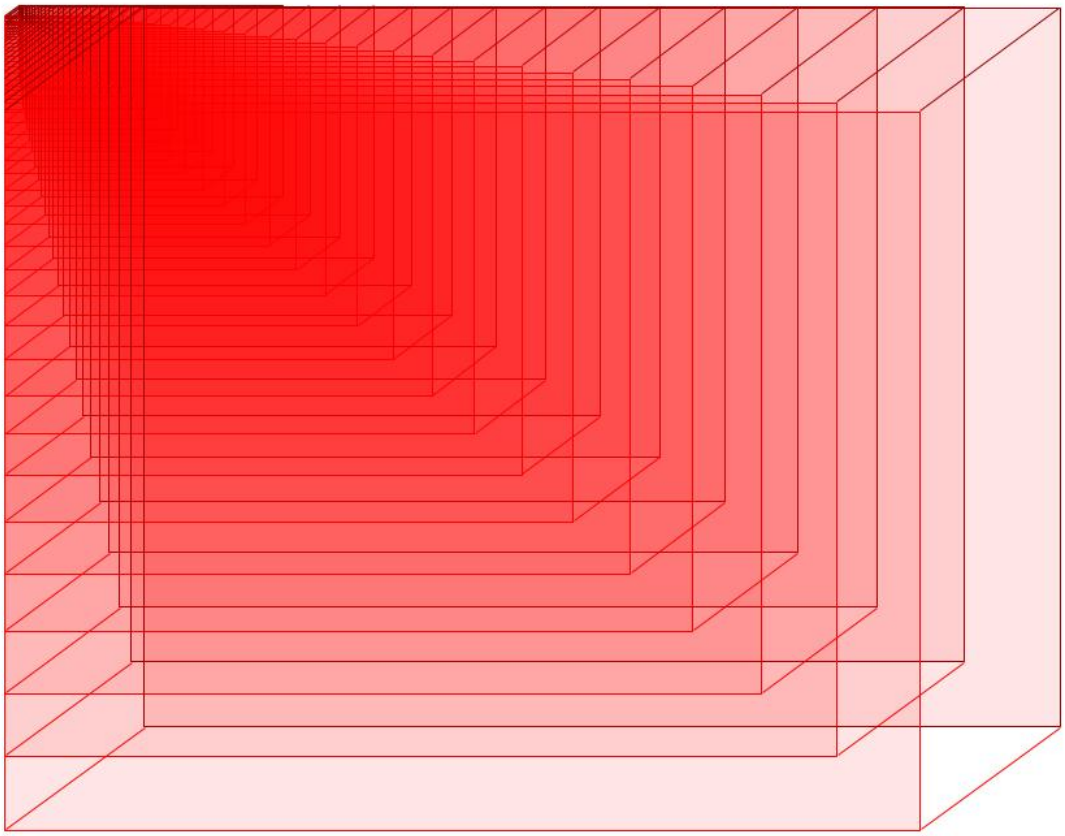
23. Image 23 of Generation 23: n = 23



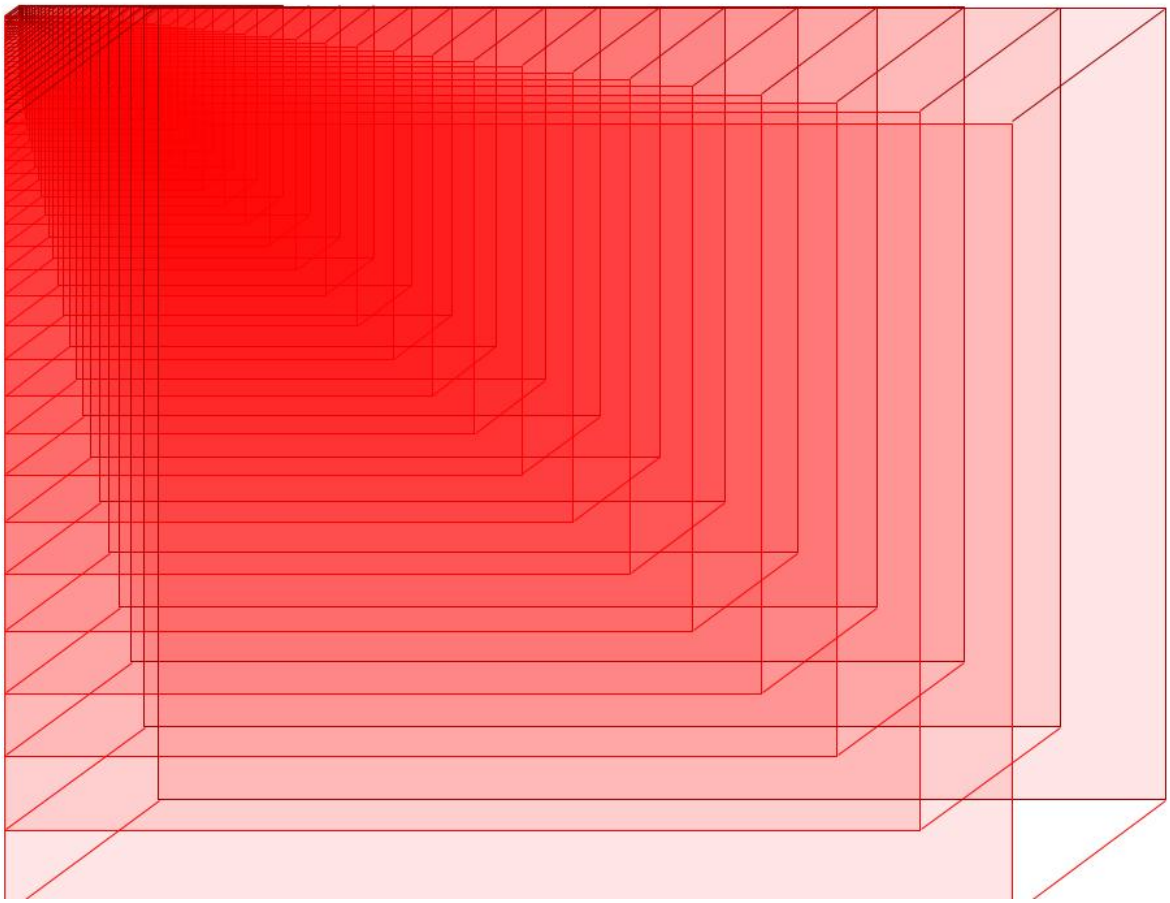
24. Image 24 of Generation 24: n = 24



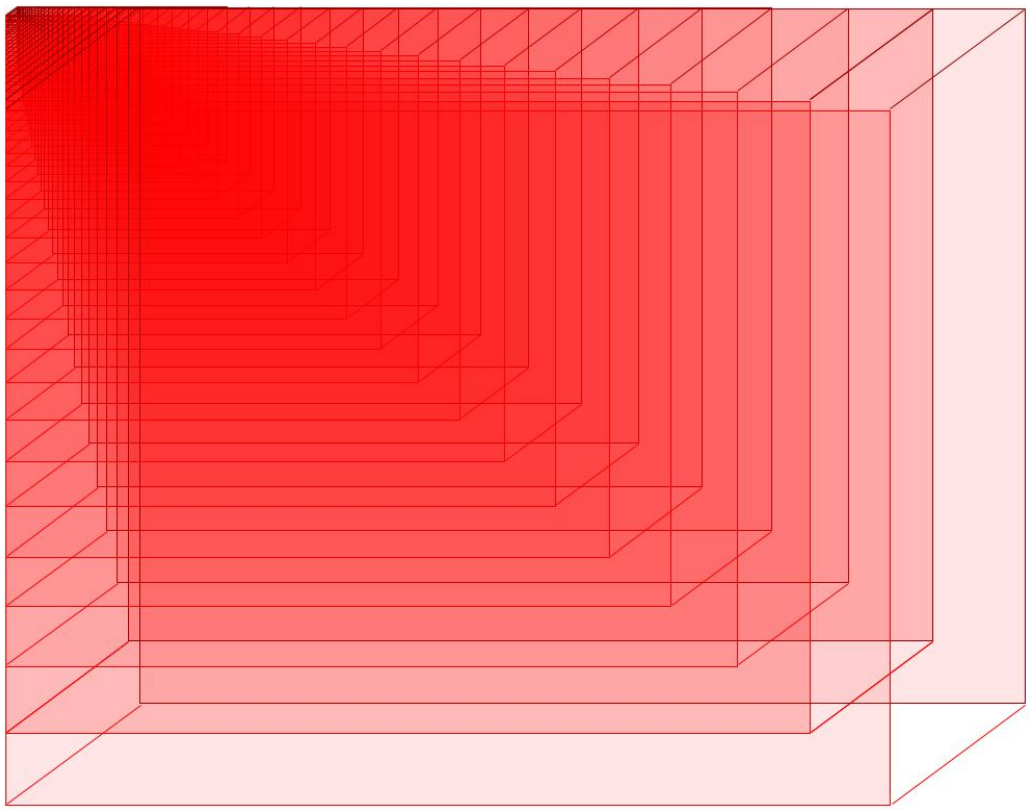
25. Image 25 of Generation 25: n = 25



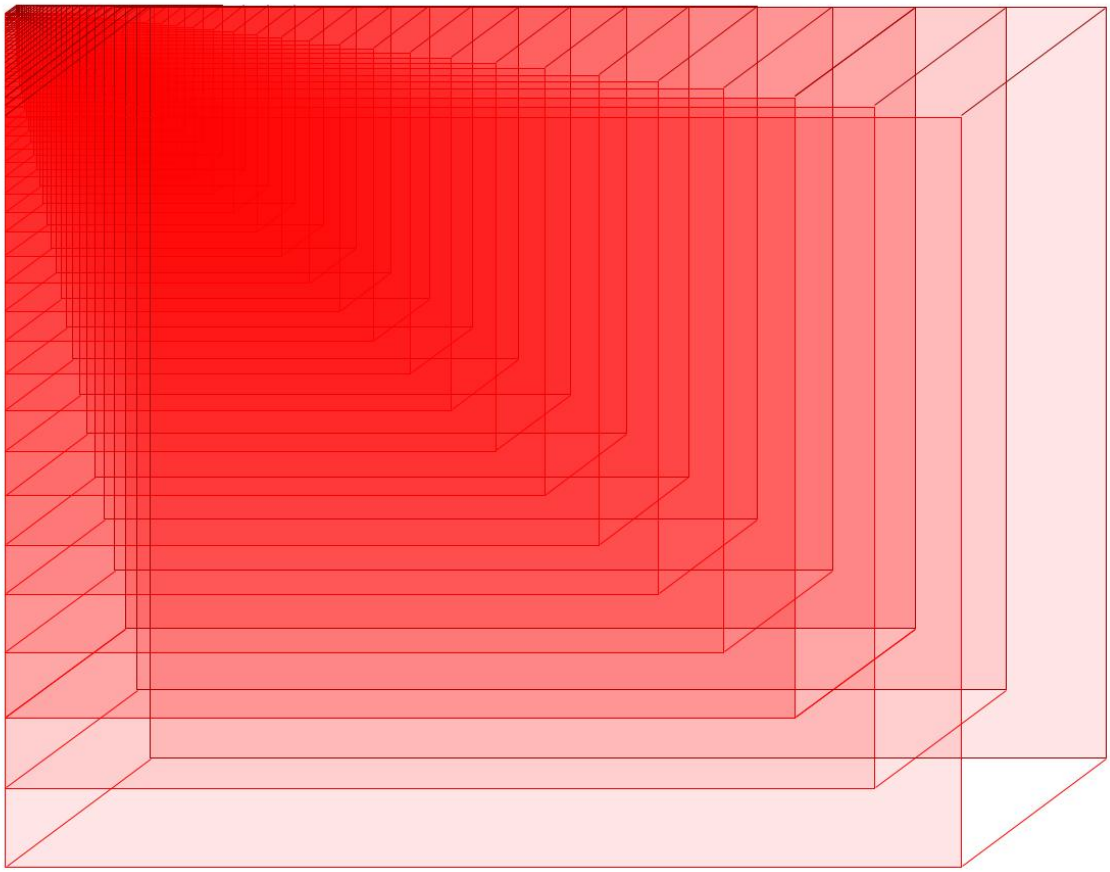
26. Image 26 of Generation 26: n = 26



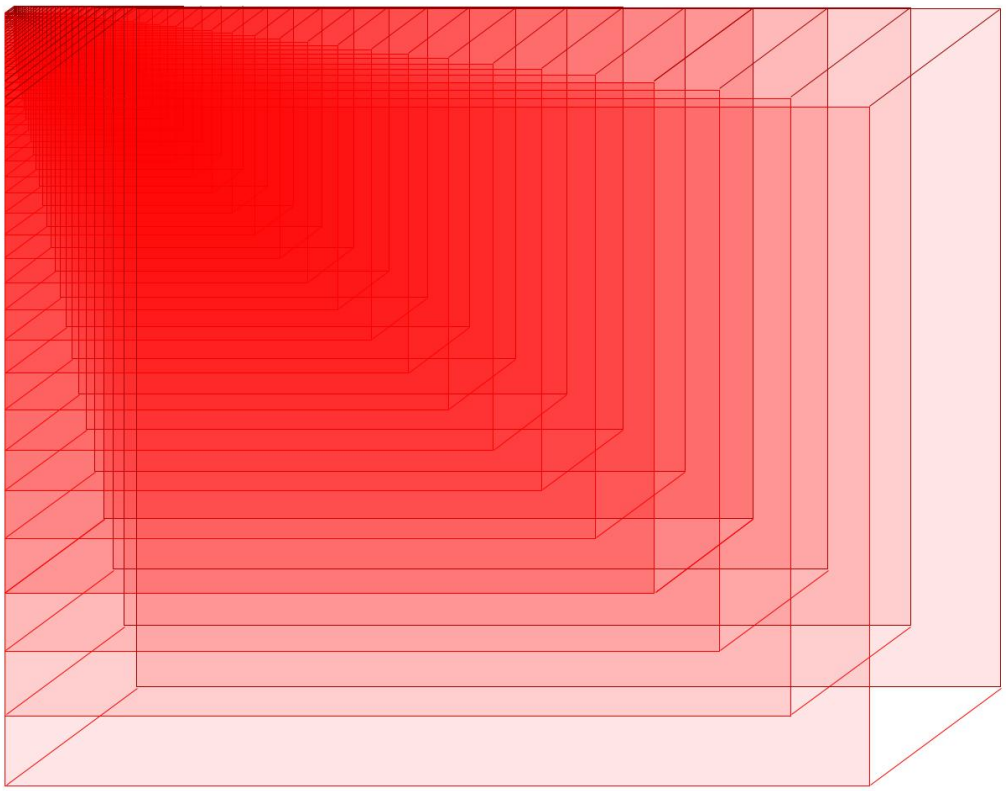
27. Image 27 of Generation 27: n = 27



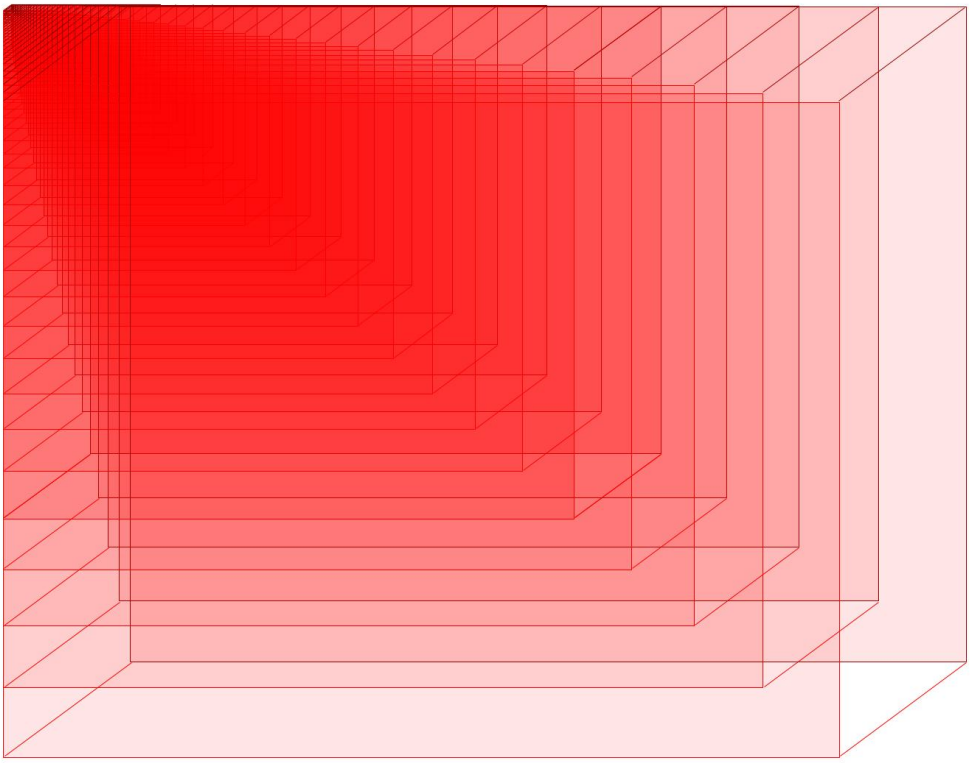
28. Image 28 of Generation 28: n = 28



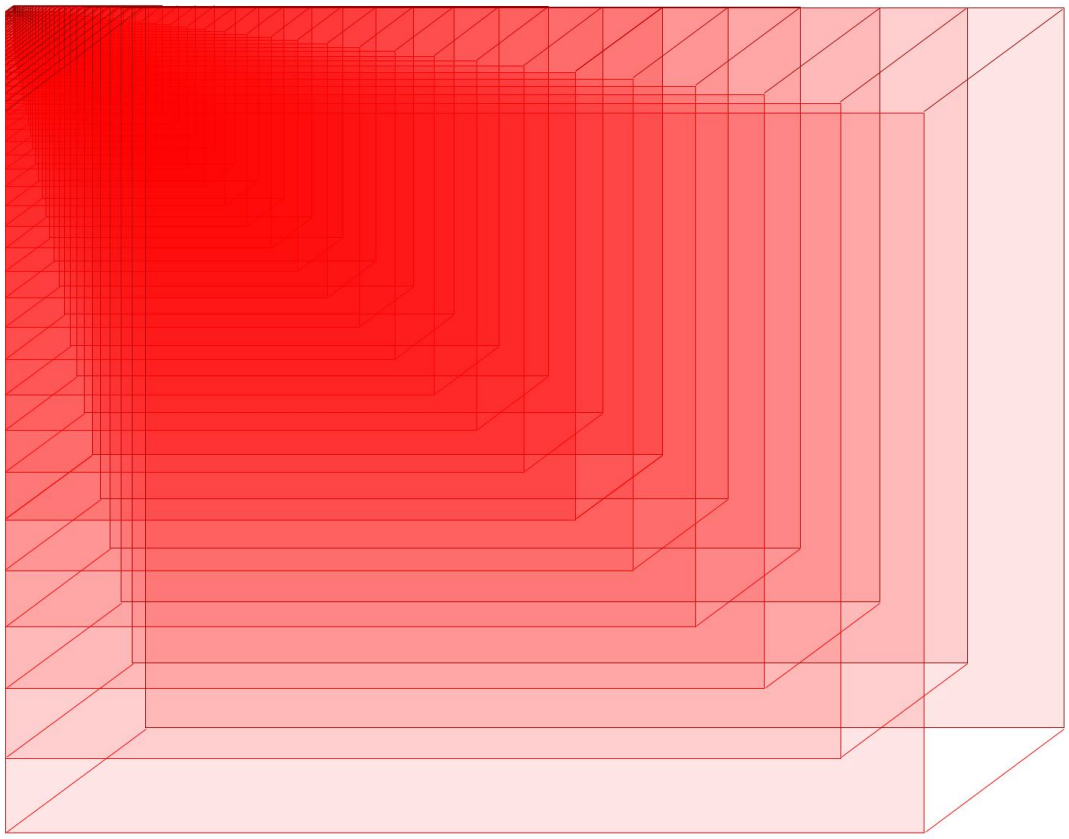
29. Image 29 of Generation 29: n = 29



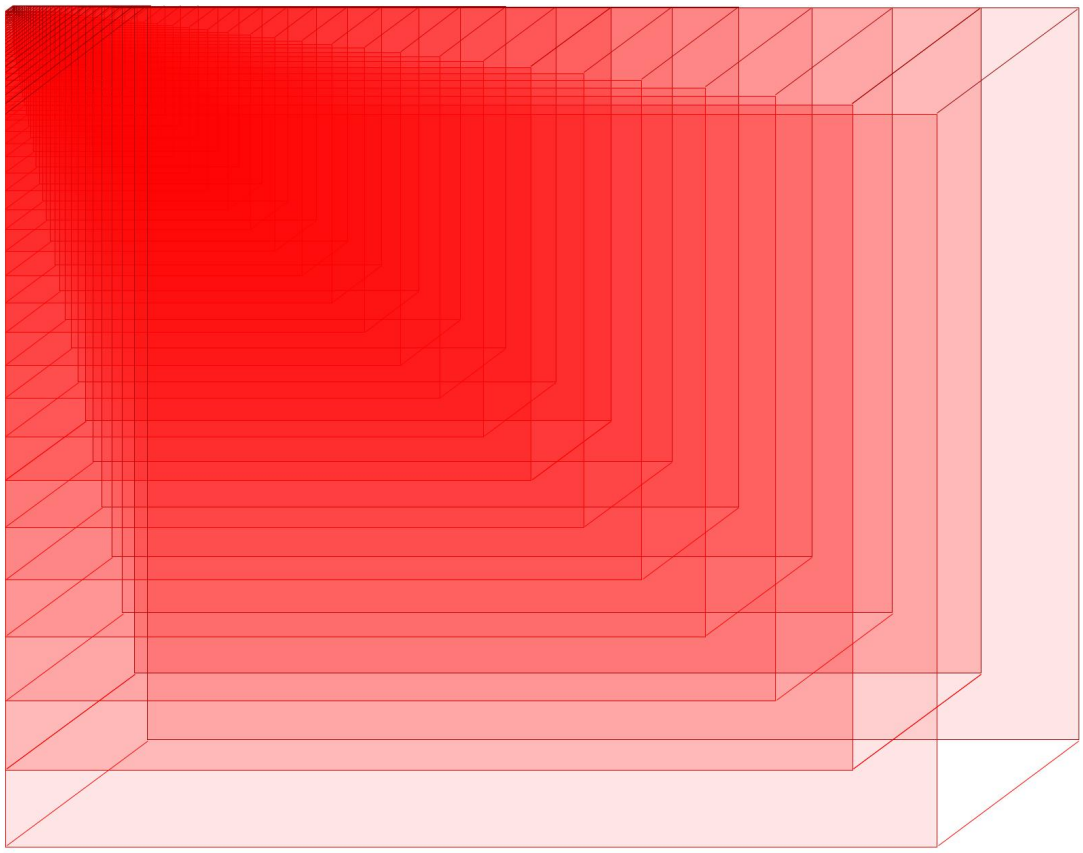
30. Image 30 of Generation 30: n = 30



31. Image 31 of Generation 31: n = 31



32. Image 32 of Generation 32: n = 32



Seven Characteristics of the Diagram:

1. Growth in size:

This is an image of a growing shape. The first iteration is very small. With each iteration and thus, each new image, the image gets larger and larger.

In this section I discuss (1) the growth in size of the collection of images of Figure 3.2 and (2) how I generated the images. That the collection of images grows in size is quite obvious in the linear succession of images presented above. See that the image that represents generation 1 (labelled 1) is smaller in size than all succeeding images and likewise for all subsequent images

of any generation n. This is to say that the linear dimensions of the image increase in size with each subsequent generation n. It is in this sense that this diagram is a set of growing images.

The growth of the image was a set control in the generation of the images. With each new generation a new, slightly larger rectangular prism was superimposed upon the previous image. That is, each generation contains all of the generations before it, with the addition of a slightly larger rectangular prism. The new rectangular prism was generated using the following procedure. For each generation n, I took the largest rectangular prism of the generation n-1. With this rectangular prism from generation n-1, I increased the size of that rectangular prism by 10% and superimposed it upon the image of generation n-1 to produce generation n. As a result, the image grows proportionally.

In an alternative generation of images for this diagram, I created a set of images that grew by a set amount with each generation n, rather than proportionally by 10%. In this alternative set of images, I grew the rectangular prism that was added with each generation n by 0.10in. That is, similar to the above process of generated images, I increased the size of each rectangular prism that was new to the generation n-1 by 0.10in for each generation n. This set of images differed from the set that grew by 10% in several ways. First, the growth rate for each generation n was static. As a result, the change in size from the first image to the last image was not nearly as dramatic as that for the set of images that grew by 10%. The visual effect was thus of much more close lines and much more of a dense image with each subsequent generation.

2. *Diagram as metaphor*

In this section, I explain how the diagram (the collection of images) operates as a metaphor in two manners: (1) as a metaphor for the sound of *I am sitting in a room* and (2) as a metaphor for my listening experience of the piece. In both, the collection of images stand in for *I am sitting in a room* while not *being I am sitting in a room* proper.

First, the images stand in for the sound of the piece. It is the addition of a new rectangular prism with each generation n that constitutes the change in each generation n. Since the transformation from generation to generation is experienced as sound, the rectangular prism can be thought of as sound.

The collection of images is also a personal artistic refraction of the piece, through me (the artist-analyst) into the visual dimension. A performance of the piece is always a representation and the collection of images is a representation of what I hear as salient in my experience of the piece or, in other words, my interpretation of some sense of the piece. In this sense, the collection of images is a further instantiation or 'performance' of the piece. Whether the locus of 'the piece' is a representation (my intuition tells me yes) is an open question.

3. *Resonance*

In the following section, I discuss the resonance of the piece with regard to the collection of images. I address (1) how the rectangular prism symbolizes the resonance in the piece and (2) how the collection of images visually represents characteristics of resonance.

The symbolism of the rectangular prism provides insight into the resonance of the piece. The larger the rectangular prism, the more feedback there is from the room in that generation of the piece. That is to say that the larger the total size of the image of that generation n, the more

resonance there is at that corresponding moment. This is because the largest rectangular prism in each generation n is the rectangular prism that was added to the image of generation n-1 to generate that generation n. What distinguishes each new generation of the piece is the increasing resonance of the room. Thus, each effort to record the nth recording of the playing back of the recording into the room is represented in the collection of images as the addition of another rectangular prism that was generated based on the largest rectangular prism of generation n-1 by 10% in size. Thus, each recording of each generation is each rectangular prism in the image. Each subsequent recording increases in resonance and thus, each subsequent rectangular prism and each iteration of the image is a symbol for increased resonance in the piece.

The visual characteristics of the sum total of the rectangular prisms of each generation n may be thought of as visually representing characteristics of resonance. That is, visual characteristics of each image help to illustrate the sonic affect of resonance increasing with each generation n in the piece. Consider the following. The rectangular prism is a combination of two opaque squares that intersect to form a less opaque (that is, more saturated) square. This is easily seen by looking at the first few generations of images where the rectangular prisms are clearly distinguishable. With each generation, there is a further overlapping of more opaque squares which results in more saturated red figures where the less opaque and more opaque shapes from previous rectangular prisms overlap. The effect with each generation is that a more saturated red is introduced with each generation as a result of more layers of opaque reds overlapping. That is, that the darker the red in the image, it is possible to deduce more layers of the image. From here, it is possible to observe that the darker the red (caused by the increase in layering of rectangular prisms) in each image represents the increase in resonance.

4. *Transformation*

In this section I address the element of transformation in the collection of images. Each generation in the collection of images, and thus each generation in the piece can be thought of as an instantiation or level of the transformational process that occurs across the entire piece. For example, the original material, presented in generation 1 as the starting material, can be considered to be on a level of least or no (that is, zero) transformation. Each generation increases the level of transformation by some amount. The amount does not interest me, only the fact that each generation does *bring* the composition to a new, higher level of transformation of the opening material. Generation 2 represents a transformation of level 2, generation 3 that of 3, and so forth until generation 32, which represents the maximum level of transformation. This transformation occurs both in the sonic component of the piece and in the visual representation of the piece in the form of the generation of the collection of images. For the latter, the original image is transformed, starting from a least amount of transformation in generation 1 to a maximum amount of transformation in generation 32.

5. *Significance of overlapping*

In this section I address the significance of the overlapping lines in the collection of images. Every previous iteration of the image is still present within the image. This is important to both the symbolic representation of the sound of the piece and to the process of generation of that sound. The overlapping is important to the sound in the sense that it creates the increased saturation of red, as mentioned earlier, that helps to visually represent the increase in resonance (and

overall transformation) with each subsequent generation. In this sense, the overlapping visualizes transformation overtime into one 'snapshot.' The overlapping is particularly helpful to visualize this transformation because of the effusiveness of this transformation happening in the aural content. The transformation of increasing resonance can be evasive to the listener since the process of transformation happens relatively slowly. The piece can be a disorientating experience of time, space, and thus sound. The visual explanation is not a 'corrective' or a straightening of the path of a queer phenomenological experience of this kind of furniture music, although it can be understood as such. Rather, it is a representation of disorientation.

6. *Materiality, energy, and distribution across space*

The energy in the voice — this is the material — is distributed across an area of space, represented by the growing of the image with each iteration.

In this section, I propose that the materiality of the piece is the energy of the voice and that the collection of images is a visual representation of the process of sound fusing with the room (or becoming furniture).

What is the material of the piece? An initial response to this question may be *well, of course it is sound.* Since sound itself, though, is a perception of vibration, what is the materiality of this vibration? Consider the energy of the voice of the spoken text in the first generation of the piece to be the locus of the materiality of the sound. This is the most condensed version possible to find the materiality of the piece. With each subsequent generation, and thus, with each transformation, what happens to this materiality? To the energy of the voice? Seen in the collection of images, it is possible to perceive that this condensed material seen in generation 1 is gradually

distributed across an area space with each generation vis-à-vis each transformation that 'grows' a rectangular prism by 10% in size. It can be thought that there is only a set amount of energy of the voice (that found in generation 1), which is most condensed by being confined to the smallest amount of space in the visual representation of generation 1. This finite amount of energy is then gradually dispersed in space by the growing of the image in the collection of images, which represents how this energy is gradually dispersed in the room with each generation in the piece. This dispersal of the energy of the voice into the room generates the characteristic increasing resonance in the piece, which is what distinguishes one generation from another. In this way, the growth of the image is a representation of a growth in space on the page that disperses the original image across that space.

7. *On geometry*

In this section, I discuss how I conceive of the collection of images not as a mathematical, but rather, as metaphorical. Although I used geometrical terms such as "rectangular prism," this collection of images is primarily intended as a metaphorical representation of sound and not a mathematical representation of sound in the piece. When I was first experimenting with generating these visual images of the piece, I had the x-axis representing time (in terms of the passing of time over the piece) and the y-axis representing spaciousness (in terms of the resonance of the room). While in some way, it is possible to interpret these axes in these sets of images in the form of "more width in each image relates to an increased amount of time in duration of the piece" and "more height relates to an increased amount of resonance over time in the piece," I decided ultimately not to conceive of the axes in this way. First, it was possible to map resonance

over time more closely in the bar graph presented earlier, where each x-value maps onto only one y-value. The issue with the axes on the collection of images was that it was impossible to 'go back in time,' as it were, in terms of x-values with each subsequent generation n. The bar graph was created to accommodate this missing aspect in the collection of images.

Part IV: Conclusion

In this chapter's analysis of Alvin Lucier's piece of furniture music *I was sitting in a room* I built upon chapter 2's key ideas of sameness, difference, and repetition through addressing Lucier's meta-furniture music potential. In this investigation, I continued the work from chapter 2 on brackets of repetition through the creation of a collection of images that reflected the poetic element of the piece. This was supplemented with an earlier bar graph that also addressed the poetic dimension. In the next chapter, I will continue to build upon the work of this chapter through a third case study of furniture music analyzed through my queer phenomenological lens.

Part I: Introduction

Introducing Eno

Brian Eno (1948-) is an "English composer, singer, keyboard player, sound artist, and producer."[26] He began his career in the band Roxy Music in the early 1970s, after which he became a highly-regarded record producer and experimental composer in his own right. His early work pioneered the genre of ambient music. In this chapter, I investigate the resonances between Eno's ambient music and furniture music through my queer phenomenological lens. I focus specifically on how ambient music's repetition contributes to the phenomenologically queer, disorienting experience of sonic disappearance, or, at least, of sonic ambivalence.

Approach

Attending to furniture music's peripherality (that is another way to say, queerness) is an analytical choice to (re)center what is already decentered: investigating a listening experience of 'non-listening,' repetition of the same material which really is not the 'same,' and so on. This is what I argue as a queer phenomenological approach to furniture music. The starting place for such an analysis is to address the following question: how do we experience these disorientations? The bracket diagrams presented later in this chapter are one proposed explanation of how this kind of disorientation is experienced. My analysis of Eno's graphic notation makes some 'invisible' or 'silent' transformations, congruences, and especially discongruences, visible. I am not 'straight-

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26 David Buckley and Cecilia Sun, "Eno, Brian," *Grove Music Online,* 31 Jan. 2014, accessed 3 Jun. 2021, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002256532.

ening' the path towards these compositions, but rather, highlighting the unconvention lines that bring us there.

In what follows, I introduce my case study of Eno's track 1/1 from his album *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978) through (1) a brief historical contextualization of Eno's compositional process of the piece and (2) an analysis of Eno's ambient music as furniture music. Afterwards, I present my analysis of repetition in track 1/1, where I first examine Eno's graphic notation for the piece and then relate the graphic notation back to the aural component of the recording.

Part II: Case Study of *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Track 1/1

This section introduces the analytical case study of the chapter: track 1/1 from Eno's album *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*. First, I begin with an anecdotal quote from a lecture by Eno where he explains how this track was composed in the studio. Second, I use a secondary source, philosopher John Lysaker's monograph devoted to *Ambient 1*, as a starting point to introduce the graphic notation that Eno created for track 1/1. Third, I present another quote by Eno -- this time from *Ambient 1*'s liner notes -- to demonstrate that Eno, like Satie and Lucier, is a furniture musiker.

Historical Contextualization: Eno on Producing Track 1/1 of Ambient 1

In a 1979 lecture at the festival New Music New York (reprinted in Downbeat magazine), Eno said:

> "I had four musicians in the studio, and we were doing some improvising exercises that I'd suggested. I couldn't hear the musicians very well at the time, and I'm sure they couldn't hear each other, but listening back, later, I found this very short section of tape

> where two pianos, unbeknownst to each other, played melodic lines that interlocked in an interesting way. To make a piece of music out of it, I cut that part out, made a stereo loop on the 24-track, then I discovered I liked it best at half speed, so the instruments sounded very soft, and the whole movement was very slow. I didn't want the bass and guitar - they weren't necessary for the piece - but there was a bit of Fred Frith's guitar breaking through the acoustic piano mic, a kind of scrape I couldn't get rid of. Usually I like Fred's scrapes a lot, but this wasn't in keeping, so I had to find a way of dealing with that scrape, and I had the idea of putting in variable orchestration each time the loop repeated. You only hear Fred's scrape the first time the loop goes around."[27]

Eno tells us that the musical content for track 1/1 originates in improvisation that occurred in the studio. Eno's compositional process explains how repetition structures the piece: a tape loop of two (improvising) pianos played at half speed is looped for some unspecified number of loops. It may be useful to consider his looping to be the backbone of the piece. Some residual guitar improvisation is heard in the first loop. In the remaining loops, Eno added variable orchestration, or randomly generated synthesized "orchestration" unique to each of the following loops. This mixture of looped repetition and controlled variation characterizes the piece. In the next section, I introduce the second component of the piece: Eno's accompanying graphic notation.

Introducing Eno's Graphic Notation to Track 1/1

On the back cover to the CD of *Ambient 1*, Eno included a graphic representation (in other words, a score) for each track on the album. Understanding this image is not straightforward since Eno's symbols do not have a conventional interpretation nor did Eno provide any accompanying text to explain the images. Let's turn to John Lysaker's explanation of the graphic notation:

> "Because they do not refer to any instruments, Eno's marks are even more obscure than Brown's. Moreover, they are not instructions for performers, given that the album was

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[27] Brian Eno, "The Studio as a Compositional Tool: Part Two," *Downbeat*, August 1983.

> assembled from tape loops and synthesizer overdubs. A tape loop involves the continual repetition of musical material on a run of magnetic tape that has been cut and reattached or spliced together, thus forming a loop that plays on a reel-to-reel machine until stopped. In the case of "1/1," which contains sounds from two pianos, the parts were initially recorded as improvisational exercises. Eno liked a short bit where the two piano parts interacted when mixed together. (The players were improvising independently of one another, as were two other musicians on bass and guitar.) Eno cut the segment of tape that captivated him, ignored the bass and guitar tracks he also had, and created a loop that he elected to play at half speed, preferring a rounder tone from the pianos and overall slower pace. "1/1," therefore, does not represent the performance of a scored piece or even a part of a piece. Nor does it capture the improvisational interplay of two musicians. Instead, it is music composed from tape for tape."[28]

Lysaker does not provide much of an explanation of Eno's graphic notation other than noting its obscurity. This non-explanation is where we begin for the analysis of Eno's graphic notation later in this chapter. Before beginning this analysis, I will first describe how Eno's ambient music can be interpreted as furniture music.

Brian Eno as Furniture Musiker

In what follows, I argue that Eno's ambient music can be understood as furniture music since ambient music affords being experienced as heard, rather than listened to. First, I discuss how Eno's conceptualization of the listener orientation to ambient music is aligned with furniture music and queer phenomeonlogy. Second, I explain ambient music's intimate relationship to the idea of the room. Third, I address ambient music's lack of immunity to becoming Muzak.

To begin, Eno's ambient music often resides in a peripheral, space-specific sonic orientation for the listener characteristic of furniture music. Eno writes in the liner notes to the album of *Ambient 1* that

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[28] John T Lysaker, "A First Listen, or Through a Glass Lightly." In *Brian Eno's Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 12-15.

> "[a]n ambience is defined as an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint. My intention is to produce original pieces ostensibly (but not exclusively) for the particular times and situations with a view to building up a small but versatile catalogue of environmental music suited to a wide variety of moods and atmosphere...Ambient Music must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting."[29]

Reading this quote through a phenomenological lens, one might say the following. Eno's *atmosphere* is a property of *space*. A *mood*, usually, is a property of a *body*, or at least is a residual bodily manifestation of a relation between a body and something else. A *tint* is usually a property of an *object*. The relation between these may tell us a particularly phenomenological rendering of ambient music. Eno's ambient music instrumentalizes the room. That is, the aural component turns the room — a synecdoche for space experienced — into its own instrument: its own technology of consciousness or agent capable of "doing" things. Like Satie's furniture music, Eno's ambient music brings the composer, performer, and listener into a kind of ideal symbiosis. The listener's body is extended into space through the object of ambient, furniture music.

Eno's ambient music's relationship to the room is akin to that of furniture music. That is, ambient music is like a piece of furniture in the room. Eno's ambient music is for the room and specifically, for the room's atmosphere since Eno co-composes with the atmosphere of the room. That is, Eno composes in collaboration with the existing space in which his music is ostensibly intended for sounding.

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[29] Brain Eno, *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, 1978.

Though Eno writes against the trend of Muzak (commercial furniture music) and commodification of sounding environments also in the liner notes,[30] Eno's ambient music is not immune to the consumption of commodification.[31] For example, I have heard *Ambient 1* in the US-based spa Hand & Stone. In his self-conscious historization of his own work, Eno defines his ambient music against Muzak, or mainstream commercial furniture music, opening up a third-space for sound which is to be experienced as furniture music.

Part III: Analysis of Repetition of Eno's Graphic Notation for Track 1/1 of *Ambient 1*

I present my analysis proper of Eno's track 1/1 from *Ambient 1* in this section. I consider both the 'score' (Eno's graphic notation) and the aural component of the recorded track to be integral parts of the artwork. In this chapter, however, I choose to focus on the graphic representation. I begin by categorizing objects in Eno's graphic notation into two categories: objects that repeat and objects that do not repeat. The nine objects that repeat recur regularly as a fixed group. Second, I present a variety of what I call bracket diagrams of Eno's graphic notation. These diagrams bracket together objects that do repeat and reveal the periodicity of these objects' repetition. Afterward, I put my visual analysis of the graphic score in dialogue with the sounding recording to hypothesize how Eno's visual and audio materials may relate to one another.

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[30] In the liner notes, Eno writes the following "The concept of music designed specifically as a background feature in the environment was pioneered by Muzak Inc. in the fifties, and has since come to be known generically by the term Muzak. The connotations that this term carries are those particularly associated with the kind of materials that Muzak Inc. produces -- familiar tunes arranged and orchestrated in a lightweight and derivative manner. Understandably, this has led most discerning listeners (and most composers) to dismiss entirely the concept of environmental music as an idea worthy of attention. Over the past three years, I have become interested in the use of music as ambience, and have come to believe that it is possible to produce material that can be used thus without being in any way compromised. To create a distinction between my own experiments in this area and the products of the various purveyors of canned music, I have begun using the term Ambient Music." See Eno, *Ambient 1*.

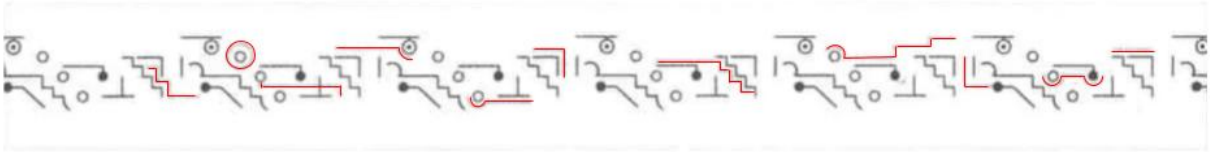
[31] Eno, *Ambient 1*.

Categorizing Objects in Eno's Graphic Notation

In what follows, I categorize all of the objects in graphic notation into two separate categories. I then isolate the identified visual objects from Eno's graphic notation and organize each object into two separate lists of objects.

The objects in Eno's graphic notation for *Ambient 1*, track 1/1 can be broken down into two categories: (1) objects that repeat periodically and (2) objects that do not repeat. In Eno's graphic notation these two categories of notation are differentiated also by shade. Objects that repeat (1) are black, whereas objects that do not repeat (2) are grey. To help visually differentiate the categorical distinction between those objects that repeat periodically from those that do not, I present the following graphic notation with the objects that do not repeat overlaid in red (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Graphic Score of Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Track 1/1 with Visual Objects that Do Not Repeat Overlaid in Red



Having determined that there are two types of visual objects in Eno's graphic notation, I will now take stock of each discrete visual object I have identified according to these two categories. In Figure 4.2 below, I present a list of the nine visual objects that repeat in the graphic notation.

Figure 4.2: Stock of Objects that Repeat in Eno's Graphic Notation for *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Track 1/1

1. Object that repeats #1: 
2. Object that repeats #2: 
3. Object that repeats #3: 
4. Object that repeats #4: 
5. Object that repeats #5: 
6. Object that repeats #6: 
7. Object that repeats #7: 
8. Object that repeats #8: 
9. Object that repeats #9: 

In Figure 4.3 below, I present the corresponding list of objects that do not repeat in Eno's graphic score. I identified 10 objects that do not repeat.

Figure 4.3: Stock of Objects that Do Not Repeat in Eno's Graphic Notation for *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Track 1/1

1. Object that does not repeat #1: 

2. Object that does not repeat #2: 
3. Object that does not repeat #3: 
4. Object that does not repeat #4: 
5. Object that does not repeat #5: 
6. Object that does not repeat #6: 
7. Object that does not repeat #7: 
8. Object that does not repeat #8: 
9. Object that does not repeat #9: 
10. Object that does not repeat #10:

I will now first analyze the patterns of the repeating objects, before turning to the non-repeating objects

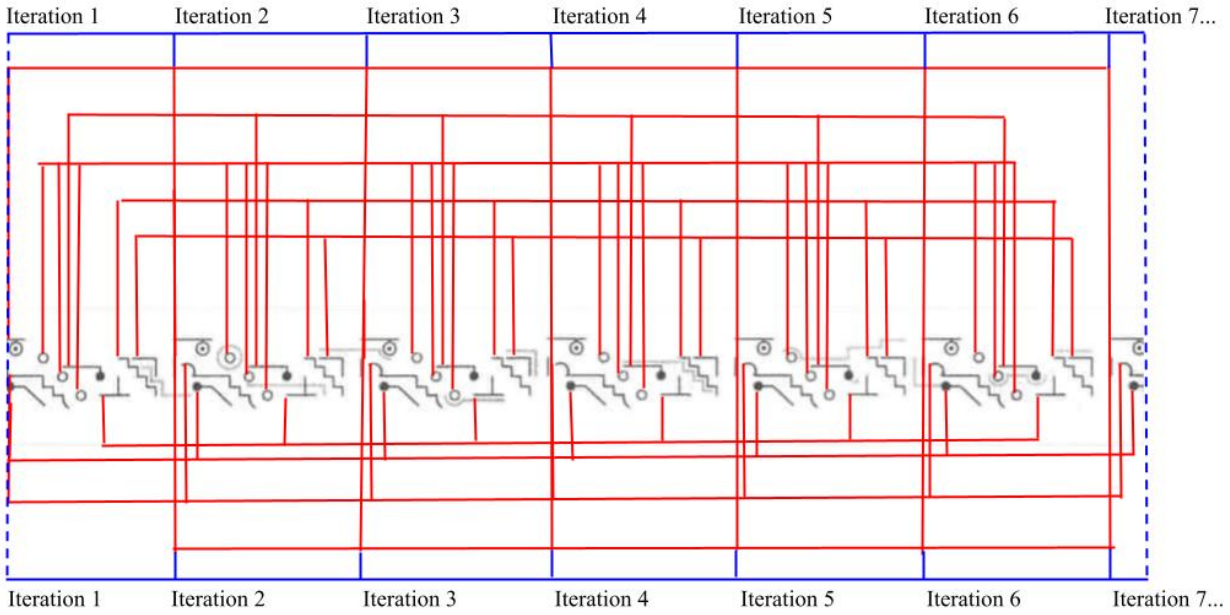
Bracket Diagrams for Eno's Ambient 1*, Track 1/1*

In this section, I present a series of bracket diagrams to help interpret the structure of repetition of Eno's graphic notation. First, I present a diagram that shows how all of the objects that do re-peat repeat in the graphic notation. Second, I break down the cumulative diagram into separate diagrams for each of the nine objects that repeat. Third, I present a diagram accounting for the objects that do not repeat in the graphic notation.

To begin, I argue that the objects that repeat repeat in set iterations with a constant period. Figure 4.4 marks all of the 9 different objects that repeat with brackets to indicate their periodic

occurrences in the graphic notation of the piece. Though the brackets usually point towards the onset of each object, the brackets are intended to point toward each object generally and not to any specific part. The cumulative bracket diagram (Figure 4.4) is complicated due to the fact of there being many different objects occurring and repeating periodically at different time points. As a result, each bracket corresponding to each object that repeats in the graphic notation was later teased out from this cumulative diagram into respective individual bracket diagrams that are listed below (see Figure 4.5). All of these diagrams include indications for the number of iterations in the graphic notation at the top of the highest bracket. I hypothesize that the iterations (that is the periodicity of the graphic notation and thus to some extent of the piece) are demarcated with the first object that repeats, which looks like a horizontal line with a circle on the bottom right with a dot in the middle of the circle (see object that repeats #1 in Figure 4.2). According to my interpretation, the beginning of this horizontal line indicates the beginning of a new iteration. Note that the piece does not begin with the 'real beginning' of an iteration number one. That is, if the first object that repeats were to be fully present at the very beginning, then the piece technically would have started slightly 'earlier' than the graphic notation. In this sense, the piece begins a few moments already into iteration number one. Likewise there is an incomplete beginning of an iteration 7 that ends the piece.

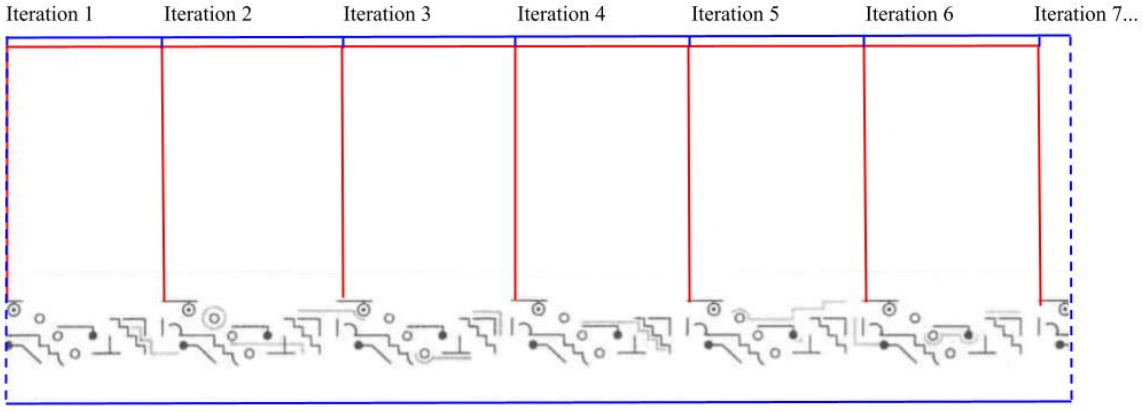
Figure 4.4: Cumulative Bracket Diagram of Objects that Repeat Periodically in Eno's Graphic Notation for *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, Track 1/1



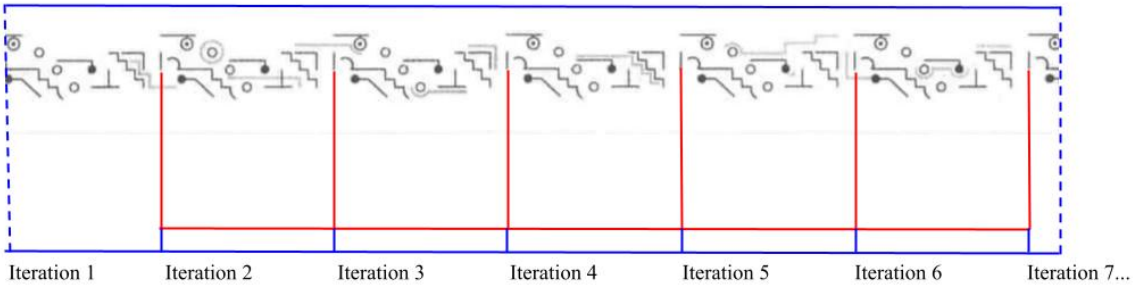
The following bracket diagrams illustrate the objects in the graphic notation that repeat periodically beginning with the objects that occur closest to the beginning of an iteration. Overlaid on top of each of these bracket diagrams (in red) is the bracket diagram (in blue) which indicates the iterations that I am arguing are a periodically structural component of the piece.

Figure 4.5: Bracket Diagrams of Objects that Repeat

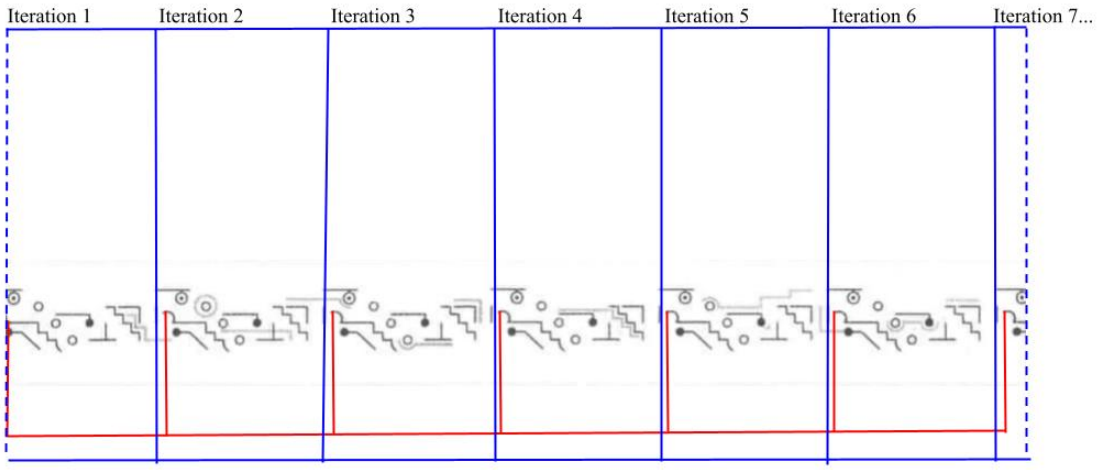
1. Object that repeats #1:  This object that repeats in the graphic notation corresponds to the object that I argue signals the beginning and end of each iteration in the piece.



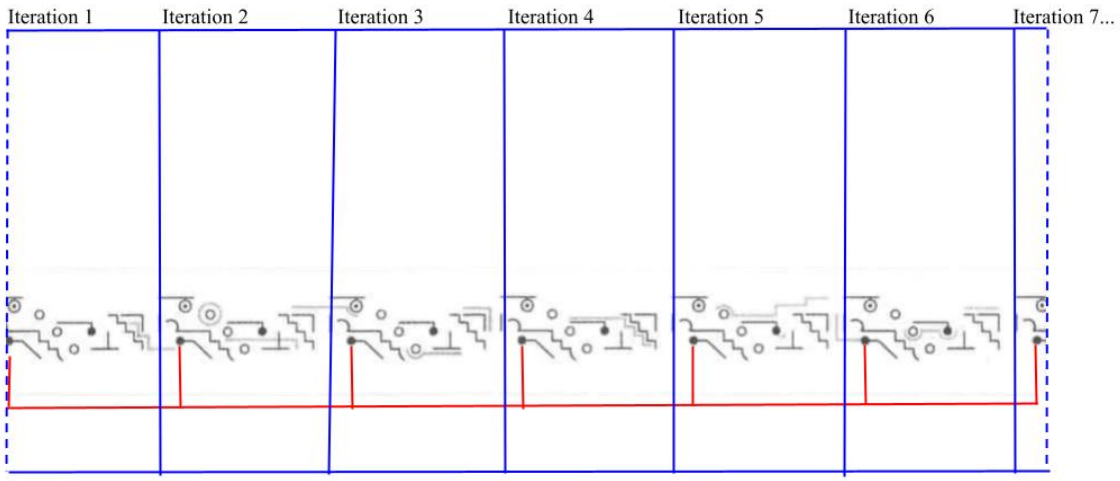
2. Object that repeats #2:  As in the bracket diagram above, this bracket diagram also aligns with the beginning and end of each iteration.



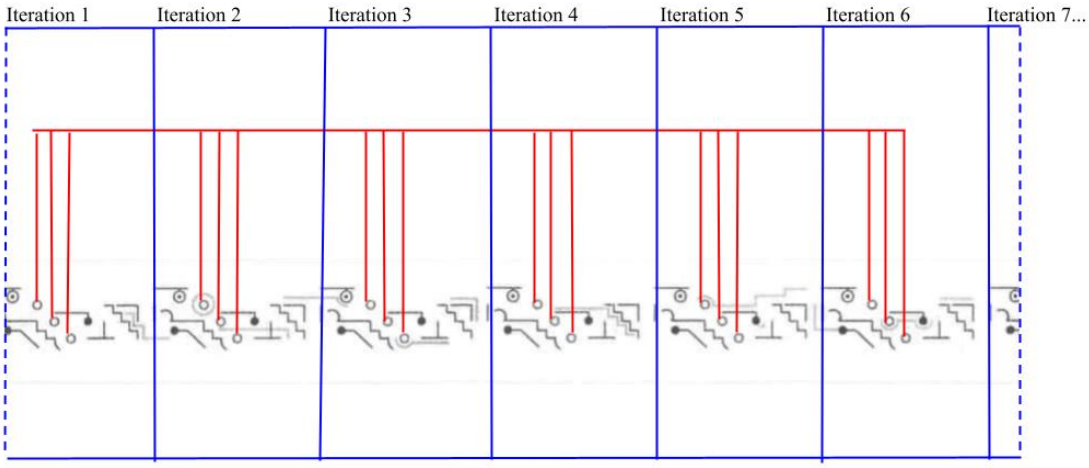
3. Object that repeats #3: 



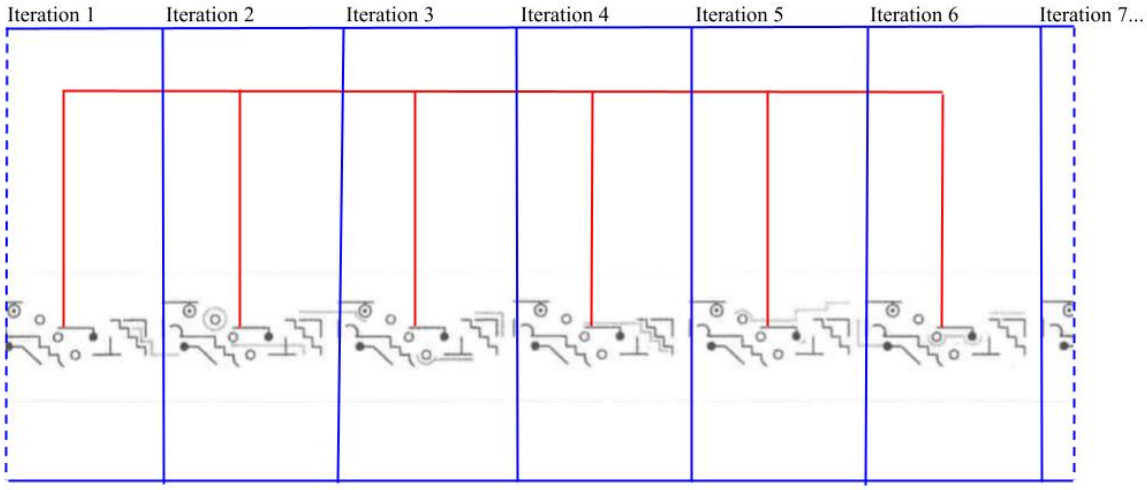
4. Object that repeats #4: 



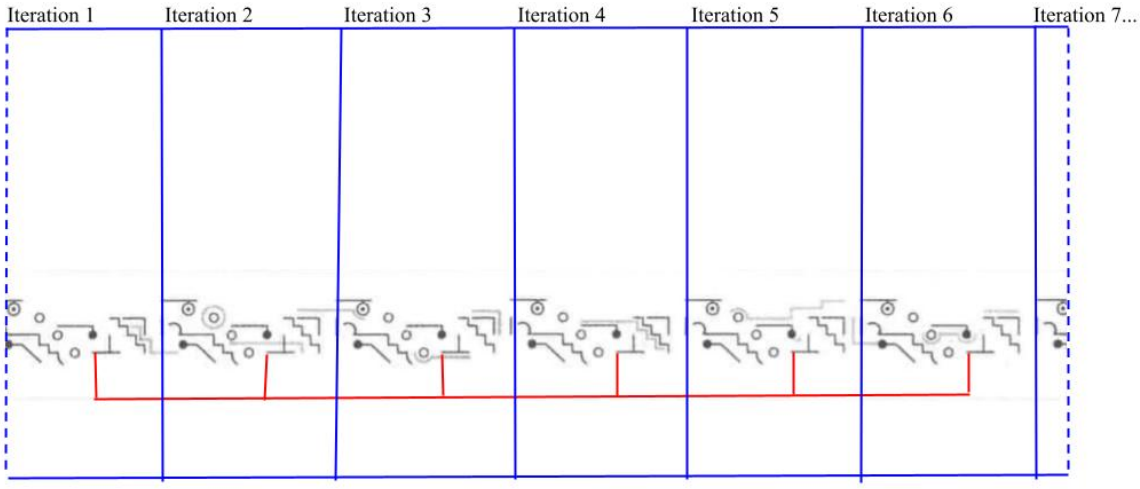
5. Object that repeats #5: 



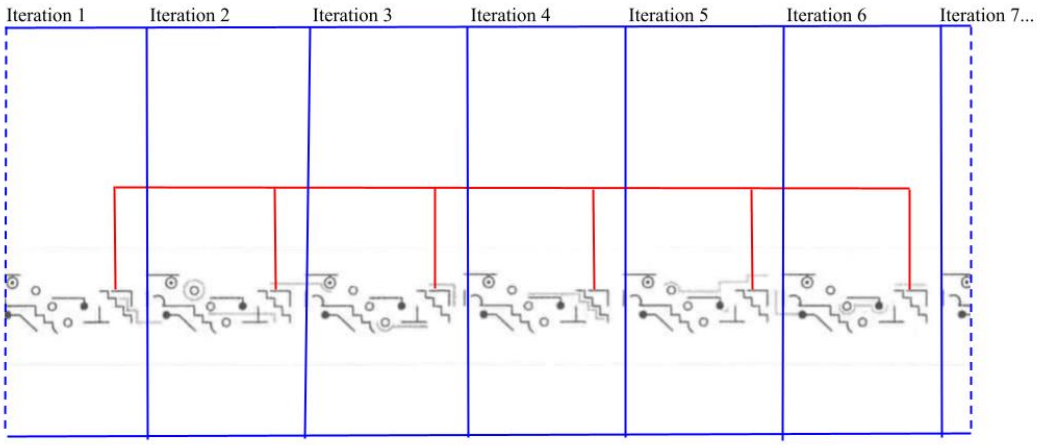
6. Object that repeats #6: 



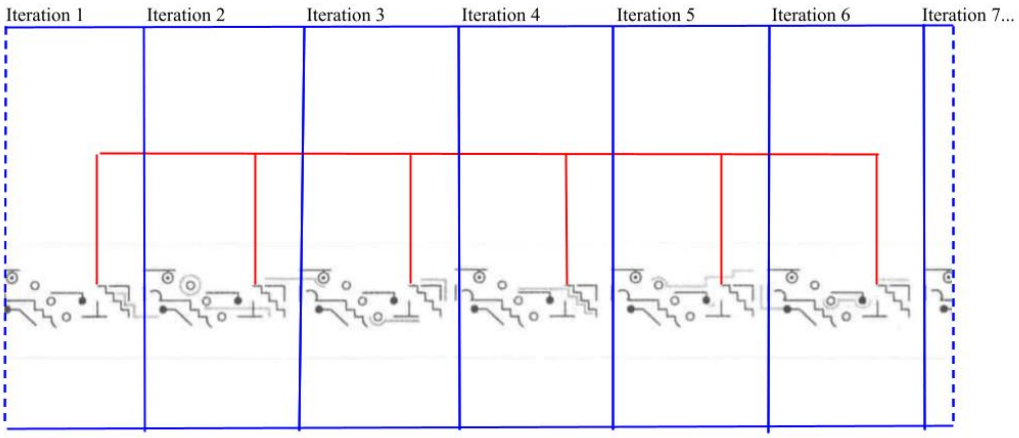
7. Object that repeats #7: 



8. Object that repeats #8: 

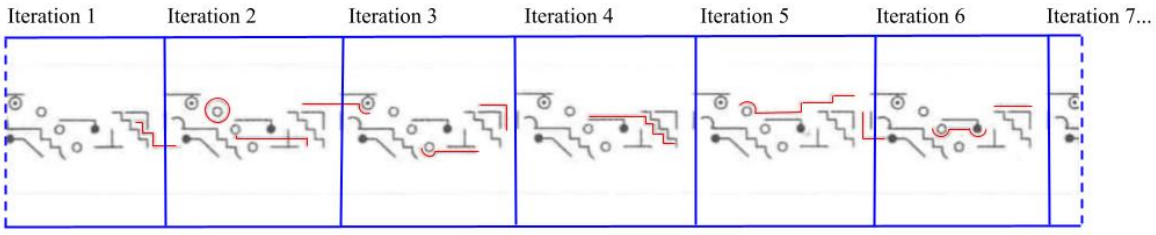


9. Object that repeats #9: 



In the following diagram, the segmentation for the different iterations in the graphic notation is included and overlaid onto the graphic score where the objects that do not repeat are highlighted in red to increase their visual salience.

Figure 4.6: Graphic score of Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, track 1/1, with objects that do not repeat overlaid in red and iterations labelled



Having presented these analytical diagrams of repetition of the graphic notation, what is there to say regarding how these insights might 'sound out' in the piece? I address this question in the next section.

*Sounding the Graphic Notation and Recording Together*s: *(mis)fits and alignments*

Alignment between the graphic notation and the aural component of the piece has proved difficult. The alignment is not intuitive nor is it clear that any object in the graphic notation corresponds necessarily to any specific sonic component. That being said, it is still possible to hypothesize correspondences between the graphic notation and the piece. For example, one might consider the option that the graphic notation shows a typical pattern, an excerpt of the whole which works a bit like a swatch of wallpaper. In this section, I speculate how Eno's graphic notation may map onto the dimension of time in the sounding component of the piece.

On time

In what follows, I first address how the graphic score 'goes through time' similar to my experience of time in the recording. Second, I complicate this understanding through a consideration of linear vs. cyclic time.

It seems a reasonable hypothesis that the graphic score would reflect an 'in timeness' of the piece. That is, similar to traditional Western staff notation, the continuing expansion in visual space as my eyes move from left to right represents an abstract sense of an increased duration of time of the piece, generally speaking. Applying this principle of increasing rightward space, it would seem that this increasing rightward space in the graphic notation might correspond to the increasing linear time-space of Eno's piece. There are several reasons this is a convincing interpretation:

1. Objects in the graphic notation can be read in space from left to right. As function of time, the lines and curves of the visual objects progress from left to right with care not to go 'back in time,' or leftward.
2. Objects repeat from left to right, according to the visual iterations that I have identified above.
3. Similarly, acoustical musical objects heard in the piece also repeat in iterations of patterns. Perhaps these musical objects do not map onto the visual objects one-by-one, but there might be a general sense of correspondence.

These three points being said, even though I hypothesize some sort of linear representation of time (that is, from left to right), there is room for interpretation of some sense of cyclic time both in Eno's graphic notation and in the piece. When we look at my interpretation of the iterations in the graphic notation, it is clear to see that iterations could keep going and that cycles of repetition are happening. That is, the tape loop could keep continuing with varied orchestration and likewise, the graphic score could keep continuing with the visual objects. First, the proposed iteration 7 would continue, followed by an iteration 8, and so forth. This kind of listening experience is also suggested since the piece has already 'begun' in an 'already started' iteration 1.

Part IV: Conclusion

In this chapter, I completed the thesis's third and final musical analysis of a piece of furniture music: Brain Eno's *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, track 1/1 from 1978. Key ideas from the chapter include Eno's ambient music's relation to furniture music and the resistance between visual graphic notation and sound. In the next chapter, I will conclude my thesis by drawing to-

gether connections between the three case studies from chapters 2 through 4 and suggesting avenues for future work on queer phenomenological investigations into furniture music.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this thesis, I applied a queer phenomenology lens in my analysis of furniture music by Erik Satie, Alvin Lucier, and Brian Eno. In this conclusion, I first address the implications of furniture music for the epistemology of the discipline of music theory. Afterwards, I offer future avenues of research in queer phenomenology and furniture music.

Furniture Music and Objectivity

The reader may have wondered how this research falls into the discipline of music theory. I hope to settle, or at least clarify, some disciplinary terrain in this section. I will start with a short statement on objectivity and vision by feminist scholar Donna Harraway, which I then translate to music studies and relate back to furniture music.

Harraway writes that "[s]truggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world are struggles over *how* to see. . . . [O]bjectivity cannot be about fixed vision when what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about."[32] Consider my madlib applying this concept to music theory: "Struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the music are struggles over how to hear/listen. . . . [O]bjectivity cannot be about fixed aurality/listening/hearing when what counts as a musical object is precisely what music theory/history turns out to be about." The struggle over what counts as rational accounts of music exists in many forms, which in short, can be considered the discourses of music studies, or of music theory in particular. We find these discourses most familiarly enacted in music theory classrooms but also in vir-

[32] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14/ 3: 587–588. http://hdl.handle.net/ 2027/spo.0499697.0014.310.

tually all music theory texts that implicitly or explicitly argue that their explanation of the music is in some way 'rational' or even *more* rational. This explanatory power is often framed as pitted against other scholars' own takes (e.g. the literature review, the omnipresent question of what is your scholarly contribution). I would argue that these struggles over rational accounts of music are metonymically the struggle over how to listen and hear. This is not a radical take to the extent that music theory analysis is thought to impinge on how one listens (or hears). I would think that even the most paranoid and skeptical reader would agree that negotiating rational accounts of the music equals negotiating how to listen/hear some piece. Now, to the second sentence, repeated for reference: [O]bjectivity cannot be about fixed aurality/listening/hearing when what counts as a musical object is precisely what music theory/history turns out to be about. What does objectivity mean here in terms of music studies? It means what is argued, implicitly or explicitly, to be objective approaches to understanding (that is, rational accounts of) music. This objectivity in music studies is often posited as *fixed* musical experience (the score, some static, analyzable thing). Then, one might argue that what *counts* as such a musical object of experience is what the history of music theory, or even of 'music,' is (the scare quotation here is telling and explanatory in its own way). The trick is that there is no fixed aurality. There is only discourse.

Now I will apply this argument to furniture music in particular. To the extent that an analysis of furniture music, as a musical object, negotiates what would be a rational account of music, or contests the seemingly 'given' boundaries of a field of music studies, this instability over whether furniture music is to be considered a musical object territorializes the disciplinary landscape. To those who argue that this work on furniture music is not music studies -- since fur-

niture music, in some opinions, is not music[33] -- then, that interpretation proves the argument's case in point. If furniture music is not a 'musical object,' furniture music cannot be the subject of music studies or theory. That interpretation is doing the work of the history of music theory by negotiating what is possible to be considered a musical object at some point in time but not at others. In other words, that interpretation illustrates the limits, or boundaries, of the field. Of course, the history of music theory is a historical phenomenon that takes place over a long period of time and is retrospectively configured as a discipline of music studies or of music theory in particular. Furniture music's uneasy 'fit' as a musical object of study in music theory is such an example of the history of music theory as a history over what counts as musical objects.

Future work

The next avenues of research in furniture music and queer phenomenology can take many directions. For example, the corpus of repertoire can be expanded. Looking at music by John Cage would be a logical next step. In addition to more diverse composers, more diverse forms of 'musical furniture' can be included in future research. For instance, analyzing furniture with integrated loudspeakers and other audio features would build upon the theoretical understanding of furniture music in this thesis. With cases of actual furniture, work should investigate the blurring of the line between metaphorical and concrete furniture. Furniture has served well in this project as a metaphor in this thesis, but what does the turn to actual physical objects imply for future work? Future work on furniture music should also investigate other kinds of theoretical approaches. For example, assemblage theory, actor network theory, and new materialism would be

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[33] For example, see Clifton, *Music As Heard*.

productive avenues. Future work may also address furniture music's role in the production of the neoliberal individual in late-capitalism and the relationship between recursion (i.e. applying the procedure that defined a thing to that thing repetitively) and repetition in furniture music. Considering specifically Lucier's "I am sitting in a room," a consideration of the acoustic properties of the recording (ideally with use of spectrograms) and a comparison of different recordings in different spaces and their sonic results, as suggested by Lucier's own writings on the piece, would build upon the work begun in this thesis. I'd find a development of the concepts of recursion and repetition particularly significant. In addition to Cage, some interesting directions for study of furniture music could be minimalist and post-minimalist music, scores of the Wandelweiser group of composers, and drone-based music including works by La Monte Young, Eliane Radigue, Maryanne Amacher, Ellen Fullman, and others. Various kinds of "soundwalks" by composers such as R. Murray Schafer or Hildegard Westerkamp would also be worth investigating.

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