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# Music and Spirituality

## 13 Meditations around George Crumb's *Black Angels*

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Things were turned upside down. There were terrifying things in the air . . . they found their way into *Black Angels*.

—George Crumb

“Somewhere there has to be a place for Music, for the world of the unexplainable and unreal, that which feeds the human soul,” craved Galja once again. Somewhere Music must, as a reward for her healing powers, have the right to exist peacefully. Somewhere Music must certainly be declared sacred.”

—Borislav Čičovački, *U starini, ime mu bee Haemus* (translation mine)

### 1. DEPARTURE

*Every time I hear George Crumb's string quartet Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land, I am fascinated by it. Fascinated, as I'm thrown into an*

*abyss upon hearing its abrupt, surprising beginning. Fascinated. According to the OED, that means that I am deprived of the power of escape or resistance. Powerless. Perhaps one could say that this music is beyond my control. Out of control. Beyond thinking (in the ordinary sense). When I listen to the sounds of this music, I am caught in an event in which I cannot not participate. I cannot not respond. An encounter that does not appeal to (my) freedom (“my will”) for an alliance. I am in relation (Buber 1958, 11).<sup>1</sup> That is, I am created (for example as a listener) in this relationship (just as music is created in this relationship) and, simultaneously, I am dissolved in it. Beyond control. It is the music that encounters me. But it is I who relates to it, who offers it hospitality. So, the relationship entails both choice and being chosen, activity and passivity.*

*Fascinated. Beyond control. That is, beyond rationality, controllability, measurability. An encounter with music beyond the words that frame, name, and contain it as music. A relationship with music beyond theories, methods, and categories that try to get a grip on it, that seek to suture all contingencies. Beyond (or between) the casualness—sometimes even carelessness—by which music scholars apply language and try to lay bare its structures, secrets, Truth.<sup>2</sup> In short, beyond musical pornography. This is my confession of faith, my credo: it is in the awareness of this fundamental uncontrollability of music that we can come into contact with the spiritual—with a space between listener and music that could be called spiritual. In my opinion, so-called “spiritual experiences, aspirations, and values” do not refer to a reality beyond the material world (of music), to some otherworldliness, but to a reality beyond its categorical frameworks. They refer to a space between category and reality, language and being, a space that cannot be filled by definition—an empty space.*

*Music: always more and less than the categories, theories, and methods that name and divide it, beyond and between the knowable and the already known, an always available (re)source of difference and resistance. Music: being-otherwise-than-being. It is in this excess of being overthought (and vice versa) that I situate or recognize music’s spirituality (Finn 1996, 152–65).*

*Oh, no, no. No emancipation of music. Of music in the margins. Of this music by George Crumb. No liberation from the chains with which (this) music is reduced to what can be measured, designated, enclosed. No, that is not my aim. Nor do I want to get rid of music theories and categories. I am not dreaming of*

*the pure and simple absence of frames. But neither am I pleading for a reframing, for inventing new categories (Spiritual Music, for example—spirituality as an effect of musical rhetorics), for improving existing theories, or replacing them by new or better ones. (Although, how unavoidable will this be?) What I am alluding to is that “something” always already seems to withdraw from these theories, methods, and categories. There seems to be a space between the sounds that we relate to and the language we have to communicate with, a space between category and experience, representation and reality, language and being, as Geraldine Finn describes it elsewhere (Finn 1996, 172). Is it here that music resides, hides, and keeps its enigmas intact?*

Again, I am not trying to present a new paradigm here or to replace one control system with another. The “space between” cannot be regarded as a category, nor has it any of the characteristics we are acquainted with when dealing with theories and methods; “it” precedes every position(ing). “It” displays itself as a destabilizing of apparently reliable and well-functioning models. In *Mille plateaux [A Thousand Plateaus]*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call this “minority.” Not the minority as opposed to a majority, but a force that offers resistance—the incalculable and unpredictable. The “and” that cannot be governed by a code, a law, a rule, outside everything that can be determined as Being, One, or Whole. The “and” as extra-being, or being between.<sup>3</sup> “Inter-esse.” The power of these minorities does not lie in their capability to become a majority, but in their unpredictable actions and subverting influences on existing models (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 469–71). Rethink spirituality as a minority.

*Music and spirituality. Spirituality in music. Or music as a place to encounter the spiritual. Which makes Black Angels an understandable point of departure.*

First level. The work, written in 1970 and intended to pay homage to the victims of the Vietnam War, consists of three parts: “Departure,” “Absence,” and “Return.” According to Crumb, this tripartition reflects the journey of the soul: falling from grace (“Departure”), spiritual annihilation (“Absence”), and redemption (“Return”). Crumb’s notion bears a remarkable resemblance to a form of Jewish mysticism. “The moment of conception on Earth brings about a similar event in Heaven. When the child is born, a Neshamah (the soul that resides with God) is assigned to inspire the new earthly life. The Neshamah is aware that the journey to Earth implies leaving the house of the Father and will

*involve enormous desolation, an incredible exile*" (Weinreb 1974, 8–9, translation mine). A soul leaves Heaven in order to descend upon an unborn child. It will lose all conscious contact with its source; this will even be considered impossible and unacceptable. The connection with the source—with God—will be broken. This is how "Departure" and "Absence" come about. Ultimately, however, there will be a "Return." But not before "the last Neshamah has brought the divine on Earth to its ultimate conclusion . . . That is the piece in God's Words by which He renews his creation everyday, words in which the prophets, the deliverers, the transmitters of God's Word speak of the future, of a life after this world, of a great return and of a great salvation" (Weinreb 1974, 8–9, translation mine).

In a second superimposed framework—although difficult to recognize by ear—Crumb makes use of numerology. Rhythms, repeated motives, tone duration, and formal structures are all determined by the "holy" numbers, 7 and 13 (Crumb 1970, program notes). In a symmetrical arch form of 13 movements, movements 1, 7, and 13 can be considered key points in this work (because, for example, these are the only movements where all four musicians are playing simultaneously). An important pitch element in the work—descending E, A, and D#—also symbolizes these "fateful numbers" (7 half-tone intervals between E and A, 13 between E and D#). The special esoteric significance of the number 7 is related to the physical existence of mankind. Additionally, 7 and 13 play important roles in the scriptures (for example, the 7 days of Creation and Jesus and his 12 disciples, though the number 13 is as often connected with evil).<sup>4</sup> Crumb's sketches of the Dark Land appear to be the stage of a cosmic battle between 7 and 13.

Third level. *Black Angels* is filled with music symbols such as the "Diabolus in Musica" ("Devil in music"; the diminished fifth, the tritone) and the "Trillo di Diavolo" (the "Devil's Trill," first introduced in a composition of the same name by the eighteenth-century Italian composer and violinist Giuseppe Tartini). Finally, the subtitles of two movements, "God-Music" and "Devil-Music," enhance the symbolic connotations of a religious or spiritual experience.

*Black Angels. Spirituality and music. In music. Or at least around music. But this is not what I mean. This is not how I like to (re)think spirituality. In my opinion, in my relation with this work, Black Angels testifies to another spirituality. Although numerology, specific musical symbols, and linguistic allusions definitely add to a certain spiritual working of this music, the spirituality I am after has to*

be found or situated elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> Situated? Found? No! Wrong words. How not to enclose spirituality in some kind of knowledge, some kind of segregated place once again? Let's turn to Crumb's own words: "I have always considered music to be a . . . substance endowed with magical properties . . . Music is analyzable only on the most mechanistic level; the important elements—the spiritual impulse, the psychological curve, the metaphysical implications—are understandable only in terms of the music itself." The important elements of (and in) music, that which makes music music—spiritual too—can, by definition, not be grasped by linguistic analyses. Music is not reducible to linguistic forms. It cannot be wrapped up in linguistic concepts and categories. Crumb makes clear that the use of music-theoretical terms and musicological concepts are always already inadequate to write and talk about the important elements of (this) music (for example, its spiritual impulse). However, does this mean that we cannot (and should not) communicate about music anymore (except perhaps in other music)? Are we approaching Wittgenstein's famous statement: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent"? (Both necessity and obligation?<sup>6</sup>) What do Crumb's black angels have to say? What do these messengers want to tell us? Beyond discursive language, beyond linguistic frames that try to explain or to say in (other) words the message of Black Angels? How can one speak about (this) music? How can one reach the "spiritual impulse"? The groping, cautious thoughts that follow are directed by listening to Black Angels, to this music that makes the walls of Jericho collapse.

(to be continued)

### 1.1 Threnody 1: Night of the Electric Insects

Hear the sounds of the jungle. Hear the night. Hear the Dark Land. Hear the fear. *In tempore belli.*<sup>7</sup> Foreign warriors in an unknown land, fighting an invisible opponent. No dramatized lamentation, no still moment of contemplation following a lost battle as in Samuel Barber's *Adagio in Platoon*, but rough and raucous, all-penetrating: sounds of an inconceivable terror when the night falls and the enemy approaches. Like insects.

No, Crumb not only makes us listen to this experience, he makes us smell it, feel it, see it. This is not music for the ears alone. This is music for the whole body, including the brain.

Electric Insects. Electric insects and music. Music as electric insects. The music is a becoming-insect; the insect becoming music.<sup>8</sup> It is a becoming-insect that can only occur to the extent that the insects themselves are in the process of becoming something else: pure sounds, amplified and modified violins, crystal glasses. Therefore, becoming is never imitating. One does not imitate; one constitutes a block of becoming (lines of deterritorialization). Imitation enters in only as an adjustment of the block. In other words, there is no identification between insect and music; there is a zone of proximity because both change (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 305).

I wonder whether Deleuze and Guattari had Crumb's string quartet in mind when they wrote that:

The reign of birds seems to have been replaced by the age of insects, with its much more molecular vibrations, chirring, rustling, buzzing, clicking, scratching, and scraping. Birds are vocal, but insects are instrumental: drums and violins, guitars and cymbals. A becoming-insect has replaced becoming-bird, or forms a block with it. The insect is closer, better able to make audible the truth that all becomings are molecular (cf. Martenot's waves, electronic music). The molecular has the capacity to make the elementary communicate with the cosmic: precisely because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and slownesses, which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits . . . the question in music is that of a power of deterritorialization permeating nature, animals, the elements, and deserts as much as human beings. The question is more what is not musical in human beings, and what already is musical in nature. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 308–9)

### 1.2 *Sounds of Bones and Flutes*

Using a multitude of sound options, ranging from several “unconventional” bow techniques and the use of amplification to the employment of percussion and various voice techniques, Crumb turns effects into instruments,

dissolving the boundaries between violins and crystal glasses, maracas and voices.<sup>9</sup> Effects are the lead instruments, uncoupling sound from source, derealizing the sonic from the origin.

Kodwo Eshun puts it this way: “Effects are now acoustic prosthetics, audio extensions, sonic destratifiers, electric mutators, multipliers and mutagens . . . Electronic effects are destratifiers because they dissolve the organization of the instrument, liquefy the stratification of sound . . . Effects defect from cause, redistributing themselves until it’s impossible to hear which instrument generates which sound. A sound-vision schizmatix emerges; audio escapes from its acoustic body” (Eshun 1998, 6–7).

Chittering, cawing, creaking, shrieking, rattling, shaking: *Black Angels* make(s) a lot of strange noises. Where is the difference between technological sounds and noises from tropical rainforests? The difference between electrically and acoustically produced sounds? The difference between human and artificial sounds? This music is a biotechnology. Producer and jungle artist Dr. S. Gachet calls it the *audiomaze*, the electric insectland that incites invisible excitement. Invisible because it teems with sounds evolved into unseen insectile life forms . . . : this music becomes a nonlinear malevolence (Eshun 1998, 7–8).

### 1.3 *Lost Bells*

(To be recited in a remote, transfigured way)

*But evil days came on apace  
War spread his banner wide,  
And from his village snatched away  
The artist’s love and pride.*

*At dewy morn and stilly eve  
The chimes no more he heard;  
With dull and restless agony  
His spirit’s depth was stirred.<sup>10</sup>*

## 1.4 Devil-Music

Since Crumb carefully composed a palindromic structure with *Black Angels*, it comes as no surprise that “Devil-Music,” the fourth image, has its clear antagonism in the tenth image, “God-Music.” Both parts are solos—a cadenza by violin adorned with the note “vox diaboli,” and an aria by the “vox dei,” the electric cello—occasionally accompanied by other instruments. In “Devil-Music” they are required to play “ugly obscene,” while Crumb’s elucidation of the violinist’s first note is: “Gradually increase bow pressure until pitch becomes pure noise”; the instruction at the outset of “God-Music” is, conversely, “adagio (with profound calm),” and the accompaniment should be performed by bowing on crystal glasses, producing ethereal (celestial) sounds.

The contrast is evident and once more affirmed by the short text Crumb added as a kind of explanation with the score: “*Black Angels (Thirteen Images from a Dark Land)* was conceived as a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world. The numerous quasi-programmatic allusions in the work are therefore symbolic although the essential polarity—God versus Devil—implies more than a purely metaphysical reality.”

“Essential polarity”: with *Black Angels*, Crumb seems to confirm a traditional thinking in hierarchically organized binary oppositions. And yet, does not the music—dissociated from its creator and (therefore) independently (re)acting in a network of other (musical) texts—justify other readings, other interpretations, other conceptions of God and Devil, for instance one in which the polarity is less pronounced? Crumb himself makes an opening and elicits such thoughts by his numerological additions to both parts: “Devil-Music” (7 and 13) and “God-Music” (13 and 7). If we accept for a moment the idea that in our Western, Christian culture, 7 is usually connected to the Go(o)d and 13 to the (D)evil, then Crumb himself indicates that the two poles are actually interwoven; the one is always already at work in the other.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Devil shows his softer, sweeter side (albeit for a very short time) following the first harsh note in “Devil-Music” when a thin, remote violin sound interrupts the violent and aggressive outburst.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting and countering this, the ethereal sounds of the accompanying crystal glasses

in “God-Music” are far from being soothing consonants and/or dissolving dissonants. Judging by conventional and traditional listening experiences, “God-Music” primarily represents the Good by its soft tone and calm tempo. Speaking of the harmonies, however, one could say that the (D)evil hides in God or even precedes it: “God-Music” is introduced by 13 (!) seconds of silence.

Devil-music . . . Electronics and distortion . . . Devils trills and tritones . . . The music . . .

### 1.5 *Danse Macabre*

. . . goes wild . . . Jumping like a mad man . . . Lugubrious . . . Tapping, plucking, gliding, shrieking, screeching, growling, grating, rasping . . . Like a cornered cat . . . No escape possible . . . Mortal fear . . . The heat of the battle . . . The horrors of the (Vietnam) war, made audible, imaginable, almost tangible . . . “Danse Macabre”: the fifth image from the Dark Land . . .

And then . . . In the midst of all this violence, initially jostled away but gradually allowed more space to spread its wings, hesitantly, shivering, and distorted, the Dies Irae sequence resounds.<sup>13</sup>

<i>Dies iræ! dies illa!</i>	<i>Day of Satan's painful duty!</i>
<i>Solvēt sœclum in favilla</i>	<i>Earth shall vanish, hot and sooty;</i>
<i>Teste David cum Sibylla.</i>	<i>So says Virtue, so says Beauty.</i>
<i>Quantus tremor est futurus,</i>	<i>Ah! what terror shall be shaping</i>
<i>Quando Judex est venturus.</i>	<i>When the Judge the truth's undraping</i>
<i>Cuncta stricte discussurus.</i>	<i>Cats from every bag escaping!</i>
<i>Tuba mirum spargens sonum</i>	<i>Now the trumpet's invocation</i>
<i>Per sepulchra regionem,</i>	<i>Calls the dead to condemnation;</i>
<i>Coget omnes ante thronum.</i>	<i>All receive an invitation.</i>

Why this Dies Irae theme? Why a reference to this personal meditation on death and judgment? Why this apocalyptic outlook, based upon a deep fear of God? This prayer is far from a last elegy recited for the deceased, invoking light and inspiring hope for eternal life. Especially in the third

stanza, the dead are confronted with anything but eternal peace as the Last Trumpet—the Trump of Doom—resonates, rocking the foundations of the underworld. Both the personal impetus and the frightful tenor of the text turn the Dies Irae into something different than a requiem embalmed in solemn serenity.<sup>14</sup> And still, the melody is played so sweetly, softly, innocently, vulnerably. As if the war for Crumb has two sides continuously alternating with each other: between temptation and repugnance, between beauty and ugliness . . .

Without a doubt, the Dies Irae theme. This is the way one must feel in the trenches: like the Day of Judgment has come. And that does not promise well. But again, why quote such a personal meditation, such an intimate conversation with God, filled with doom, fear, gloominess, violence, and deterrence? Why this gaze inside of a human being who is far from sure that it will end happily for him? Is Crumb struggling with two wars, the one a historical and political event, the other Man's possibility to use violence and to kill? This "other war," the fundamental violence in and between human beings, always lurks and suddenly stares us straight in the face during a concrete war. There is always the possibility that man turns against his reason, overindulges himself, loses himself.

The devoted contemplations as expressed in the Dies Irae sequence can very well be interpreted as an encounter with this inner war, the confrontation with our dark sides, war as extremity. It is this inner war that primarily occupies Georges Bataille in his *La somme athéologique* [The Summa Atheologica].<sup>15</sup> Only when one seeks to repudiate the evil—the production of death, this inner war—does an unbearable and actually inhuman situation arise, Bataille writes. Therefore, he argues in favor of another relation to war, evil, and violence—one of respect and attention. The value of life is only revealed in extremities; that is why one should cherish it. An extremity is not so much an antipode of life as it is a boundary or limit (low point and high point). Bataille is concerned about an alternative relation to war and, through war, to excluded extremities. Because that is what war reveals: the extremity that haunts and menaces us. And it is the extremity—the border experience also sought out in this Dies Irae sequence, or conceivably evoked in this whole "Danse Macabre"—that is important here. Bataille thinks of

this extremity as that with which one is not able to come to grips. Extremities always escape the rules, leaving them powerless and insignificant.<sup>16</sup>

War can be considered as a representation of this extremity. Ideology plus the whole network of imaginary fixations and identities (race, nation, doctrine, tradition) only function as a pretext for war; their phrases and images only accompany the war. If a war breaks out, it goes its own way; the “discourses” that legitimize it blur. In other words, extremity escapes the idea of means of the war. It approaches us with a merciless and uncontrollable violence. Through the experience of extremities, the inner war also comes into existence. However, in that experience—in that encounter—we are left empty-handed; this war that occupies us is neither means, nor goal, nor representation. What remains is an experience without certainty, without substance, without sense; it is a no man’s land between life and death. Would it be possible to dance there?

## 2. ABSENCE

(...)

*Can we go from the images from the Dark Land to some open place, such as please remove ‘such as’ a clearing, or lighting? Through language, in order to encounter the spiritual? Let’s turn for a moment to Heidegger. In Die Zeit des Weltbildes [The Age of the World Picture], Heidegger writes about the dominance of technological thinking; the relation of Man to himself, of human beings among themselves, and of Man to nature is technologically determined. Man interprets himself in terms of technical availability. According to Heidegger, the same technologization dominates art and culture. Culture is considered as a hoard of values that can be exploited, calculated, planned, and deployed. Underlying this development of early twentieth-century culture, one can find the fundamental metaphysical position that places Man as a subject in opposition to the world. Things are considered objects that can be used and controlled. In these times, Man is the prisoner of his urge to control, and everything he cannot unravel is an anomaly or a coincidence; enigmas tend to disappear from the world. Technological and scientific objectification aims to penetrate objects and finagle from them the secrets*

of their functioning. It seeks to use the objects of its knowledge; it is an assault upon things. By a compelling unconcealedness, things are not only used, but also claimed (the “calculating thinking”).

This is not the proper way to learn to know things.<sup>17</sup> Heidegger claims that things withdraw from objectification because of this interested knowledge. His thinking is directed at regaining perspectives that allow the world to become a space in which “every thing, a tree, a house, the call of a bird, completely loses its indifference and commonness.” *Nachdenken*. “To think about.” But also “to think after”—that is, to follow, to serve the object of thinking, to adopt an expectant attitude. “Das Denken dankt.” Thinking thanks.<sup>18</sup> Thinking owes. And this attitude is foremost reserved for artists. According to Heidegger, it is art that makes the nondisclosure of the world experienceable. It opens a space in which the closing off of things is able to make itself visible, audible, tangible. Man ought to learn to turn toward a being, think about it in regard to its being, but by means of this thinking, at the same time, let it rest upon itself in its very own being. And it is art that reveals a secret without affecting or harming it.<sup>19</sup> It breaks open a place, in the openness of which everything is other than usual. Otherwise than being. And this is not an experience of some otherworldliness, some “higher” world; no, Heidegger talks about amazement—amazement about the inexhaustibility of reality. This “truth” (Heidegger prefers the Greek word *aletheia*) is no metaphysical concept, hanging over beings; it is a “truth” that reveals itself always and only in beings.

In fabricating equipment, the material is used, and used up. It disappears into usefulness. The material is all the better and more suitable the less it resists perishing in the equipment. By contrast, an artwork does not cause the material to disappear, but rather causes it to come forth, to come into the open of the work’s world. “Metals come to glitter and shimmer, colors to glow, tones to sing, the word to speak . . . Color shines and wants only to shine. When we analyze it in rational terms by measuring its wavelengths, it is gone. It shows itself only when it remains undisclosed and unexplained . . . To be sure, the painter also uses pigment, but in such a way that color is not used up but rather only now comes to shine forth” (Heidegger 2002, 24–25).<sup>20</sup>

Crumb, by stating that (the spiritual impulse of) music cannot be understood by linguistic concepts, seems to follow Heidegger’s analyses: in framing and naming

music, its musicness (Heidegger) or “magical properties” (Crumb) cannot be encountered. By trying to lay bare its structures through formal analyses—by reducing it to the parameters of a score or to a positive object of a musicological hermeneutics—the “music itself” (Crumb) withdraws. Scientific language seems to be unsuitable to help to reveal music’s spiritual powers and to let the tones sing.

In a similar move, Heidegger, in *Die Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* [*The Origin of the Work of Art*], shows hardly any sympathy for art history and art theory. The former turns art into examinable objects, whereas the latter sticks to formal schemes of definition. Neither of them is able to grasp art’s artness, its truth (aletheia).

So, how can one speak “about” music beyond or between music historical categories and fixating theories? How can one reach beyond these languages in order to encounter music’s spiritual impulse? (Let me immediately add that it is not at all clear if we can make use of this possessive pronoun.) The spiritual in music? As music (perhaps)? In *Black Angels*? How to reveal this spirituality through language? If I dwell in Heidegger’s house for some more time, I could say that what I am looking for is a language that does not explain, that does not fix. To go beyond the concepts with which we want to frame and name music. To let music appear—to appear as music—language should “behave” like art.<sup>21</sup> Heidegger: “To see this, only the right concept of language is needed. In the current view, language is held to be a kind of communication. It serves for verbal exchange and agreement, and in general for communicating. But language is not only and not primarily an audible and written expression of what is to be communicated. It not only puts forth in words and statements what is overtly or covertly intended to be communicated; language alone brings what is, as something that is, into the open for the first time . . . Language, by naming beings for the first time, first brings beings to word and to appearance.” Heidegger calls this “projective saying.” But he immediately adds, “Projective saying is saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into the world” (Heidegger 2002, 45–46).<sup>22</sup> Language and art, regarded this way, are both a bestowal and a beginning: they thrust up the unfamiliar and extraordinary, which means that it also brings with them a strife with the familiar and ordinary.

Might this be an opening? A clearing to talk and write about (or better, around) music?<sup>23</sup> Through the becoming-music of language. Is that a possible

way to encounter “the important elements” of music (the spiritual impulse, for example)?<sup>24</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari speak of two possible treatments or functions of language: the one they call “major” (defined by constants, homogeneity, and systems), the other “minor” (defined by variation, heterogeneity, and creativity). The minor is grafted in the major, always already a part of it, yet separable from it. It refers to a strange proliferation of shifting effects, a taste for overload and paraphrase; the unlocalizable presence of an indirect discourse at the heart of every statement, a dissolution of constant form in favor of differences.<sup>25</sup> Paragrammar. Music. Deleuze and Guattari see an analogy between the becoming minor of (a) language and music: “The closer a language gets to this state, the closer it comes not only to a system of musical notation, but also to music itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 104). *Deterritorializing the major language. A becoming minor of the major language. The minor as a becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the major. (And the bigger and more dominant the major language, the more it is affected by variations that transpose and transform it.)*

This is my idea: to talk in a minor language around music, to write (in) a musical language, deferring to name and frame music and thereby tracing a spiritual force.

*(to be continued)*

### 2.1 Pavana Lachrymae

Modal music, tonal and atonal music, chromaticism and soundscapes: the fragmented character of *Black Angels* divulges itself not only in abrupt transitions from one image to another or loose fragments within one image, but also through frequent shifts from one musical language to another. Sometimes these changes take place in a linear (though nonhistorical) way: soundscapes followed by tonal music, atonality followed by modal music. In “Pavana Lachrymae,” however, something else takes place. The slow, solemn melody, referring to and quoting from Schubert’s *Der Tod und das Mädchen* [Death and the Maiden], is somewhere halfway traversed by squeaking glissandi and fleeting chromaticism.<sup>26</sup> (Insects, perhaps, who come to disrupt a

peaceful atmosphere? The becoming-insect of Death?) Here, several musical languages are placed on top of each other; they sound simultaneously. Besides, silence plays an important part in this pavane. Not as a sequential interruption of the composed parts, but sounding amidst them. On the borderline of audibility, the pavane is permeated by silence. (Or maybe it is just the other way around—maybe the silence is permeated by soft composed parts.) Sound and silence interact, while present at the same time.<sup>27</sup>

Rather than saying that Crumb composes *in* (a)tonality, it is better described as composing *with* (a)tonality. (A)tonality no longer functions as the frame or pretext within which *Black Angels* comes into existence; *Black Angels* is the environment in which two or more formerly mutually excluding musical languages encounter one another.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, one could speak of *intermusicality* (connecting two or more musical “texts,” being in relation with other musics, music always already made of other musics) or *hypertonicity* (the prefix *hyper* refers here to the possibility to include any criticism on a concept within the concept itself).<sup>29</sup>

A multiplicity of styles. Sudden changes of style. Music that addresses itself to articulate extreme experiences evidently needs this “fragmentarism” and “interrumpism.” It cannot and should not come to a metalanguage in which a certain distance could be developed with respect to the various influences that affect it. The experience Crumb wants to express through music (or evoke in his music) resists a musical language that stands above it; due to its object, this language cannot surpass its object. One could say that the subject of *Black Angels* is that which can never be the subject of composing, of music, but whose reality can be conjured up, and in that sense, made present: presented, instead of represented.

This play of styles and language turns the music into a many-sided event. But is it the versatility that counts here? Or should the emphasis be more on the broken character of this disparate music, its many breaks and shifts? Perhaps the proper subject (that which cannot be told, which cannot be composed) veils itself precisely in the transitions. The disrupted music only serves to make this experience present as a void within itself. The extreme experience does not allow itself to be pinned down in musical means: styles, languages, genres, scores.<sup>30</sup>

## 2.2 *Threnody II: Black Angels!*

Fascinated by *Black Angels*. By black angels. Still angels. Why? Because they are still endowed with some supernatural powers? And why black? Because of the darkness, where one cannot see clearly, thereby losing control (the logos of the eye, which privileges sight/site<sup>31</sup>)? “*Black Angels* was conceived as a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world . . . The image of the ‘black angel’ was a conventional device used by early painters to symbolize the fallen angel.”<sup>32</sup> The fallen angel. Lucifer. Symbol for the excluded, for the outcast, deprived of their homes. Expelled and offered like a *pharmakos*.<sup>33</sup> Because they cannot be controlled, disciplined, or framed! Is that the reason they are still angels? Intangible, ineligible, between categories. Perhaps you can exclude them, but you cannot get rid of them either; they keep their powers. You cannot *not* relate to them. Beyond your power of escape or resistance. Fascinating.

*Black Angels* is obviously music. But is music also a black angel? Otherwise than being? Otherwise than responding to the manner of questioning that has evolved in most methods and theories? (Ferrara 1991, 39). Otherwise than fitting perfectly into some general categories that are pre-prepared for it? And is it somewhere outside these categories that we have to search for music’s spirituality? Let us return to Crumb’s own words once more: “I have always considered music to be a very strange substance, a substance endowed with magical properties. Music is tangible, almost palpable, and yet unreal, illusive. Music is analyzable only on the most mechanistic level; the important elements—the *spiritual impulse*, the psychological curve, the metaphysical implications—are understandable only in terms of the music itself” (Gillespie 1986, 20, emphasis added).

But how does one think and talk about music as a being-in-the-world that is not always already pre-dicated, pre-determined, and pre-scribed—and thereby foreclosed—by a language that organizes its meanings and sense?<sup>34</sup> Is it possible to do justice to the spirituality of music, a “description” that stands midway between describing (repetition) and showing the musical phenomenon in itself (singularity)? Is it possible to find a way that combines the explanatory repetition of music with the heterological respect for its uniqueness, singularity, and discernibility?

Where is this space between words—these words that frame and name (and maim?) music? As music, for example. Where? Where can I find it? How to bridge the gap between the “Here” and the “There”? Martin Buber responds that, by searching for the encounter, one will not find it (1958, 13). What is he talking about? Serendipity? Minorities? Surrender?<sup>35</sup> Something between activity and passivity?

“Does the Angel of Death lead us from the ‘Here’ toward the ‘There’? Previously, the sacred filled the grave for us the way Jesus Christ, for Christians, overcame death through resurrection. Today we have no such sacred and no such angel to lead us from the ‘Here’ to the ‘There’” (Taylor 2000, 116). And according to Bataille . . .

### 2.3 *Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura*

. . . the angel is “a movement of worlds, and I cannot just love him as if he were a being like other beings. He is the wound and hidden flow that turns me into shattering crystal.” In the ecstatic vision Bataille is describing, the angel appears as “just a shimmering spot, having the depth and darkness of night and beauty of inner light. But quivering—almost imperceptibly—this angel raises his crystal sword and it breaks” (Bataille 1988, 23).

This brief image of an angel that suddenly interrupts the text as an unexpected visitor, a traversing voice, gives Bataille the desire to die, to stop existing. *A sarabande de la Muerte Oscura?*

Why suddenly a Spanish title? “*Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura*.” To honor the Spanish American victims in the Vietnam War? To globalize and generalize the world problems that incited Crumb to compose *Black Angels*? (The words in the score to be uttered—mostly numbers—are in French, German, Russian, Swahili, Hungarian, and Japanese.) Or to mystify the dead? (“Today, it is not normal to be dead,” Jean Baudrillard writes [1993, 126].) A refusal to bring the “there-ness” of death to the “here-ness” of life? Why? Don’t we urgently need a new familiarity with the dead (especially “in tempore belli”)?

And isn’t music one of the most powerful practices to bring death to consciousness—that is, to life? Precisely through a sarabande, through

*this sarabande*—which should be played “grave, solemn, like a consort of viols”—death becomes less obscure, almost less infinite. This sarabande behaves like a kind of reversed Charon, a site where death is brought back into life. The music sounds between the living and the dead; it is meant for both of them. So, the “here” and the “there” meet at this (non)site, this transitional space. It is a (non)place of memory, sorrow, and mourning, where the dead are less dead and the living less living. This sarabande makes death more bearable, though it is suddenly interrupted by . . .

#### 2.4 *Lost Bells (Echo)*

(Either to be whispered like an incantation or made to sound like tiny bells)

*“The chimes! The chimes!” the old man cried,  
“I hear their tones at last”;  
A sudden rapture filled his heart,  
And all his cares were past.*

*Yes, peace had come with death’s sweet calm,  
His journeying was o’er,  
The weary, restless wanderer  
Had reached the restful shore.<sup>36</sup>*

### 3. RETURN

( . . . )

*Spirituality in music. Maybe we were searching in the wrong places. Maybe we were looking for a controllable (and thereby reductive) dimension of music through rationalizing interpretations. The category “Spirituality.” To identify music. This is spiritual music and this is the reason why it is so . . . This is not spiritual music because . . . The space I try to open is to see spirituality in music as a trace outside categories and beyond all intentionalities, beyond all phenomenological constitutions*

and music-religious constructions. Spirituality as that which resists any logocentric interpretation in terms of logic, discursivity, conceptuality.<sup>37</sup> No reformulating of the spiritual but reproblematicizing the relationship with it. “Thou that cannot be measured” (Buber 1958, 47).

*Spirituality: not reducible to an objectifiable musical structure nor to a conceptual interpretation of music. Not reducible to. But not fully detached from, either!*

*But not fully detached from, either. Let us return to the beginning of this essay. There I tried to open a space for the spiritual dimension in music without referring to some otherworldliness and without locking it up into a new category. I was searching for a prethematic space; searching for relationships in excess of categories, beyond and between classifications and preestablished identities; searching for the contingencies, complexities, and mysteries that are always already at work within the material world, within music.<sup>38</sup> Contingent, complex, and mysterious because the categories, theories, concepts, and classifications we (have to) use are always already inadequate. The indefinite fertile and creative space between reality and representation. I thereby tried to avoid considering spirituality as an attribute, a possible characteristic of (some) music or as a mere act of interpretation by a listener. “Neither . . . nor” . . . and simultaneously “both . . . and” . . .*

*Let me be clear once more: the spiritual is, for me, no archaic foundation, no authentic existence, no transcendental category that has been lost or forgotten during a long process of secularization, culminating in a thoroughly (post)modern Western world. The spiritual does not exist outside its representations, outside its substitutions, outside signs that are always inadequate, incomplete, and inaccurate, but also necessary and inevitable (Taylor 2000, 15).<sup>39</sup> With Derrida, I cast doubt here on the authority of presence. According to classical semiology, a sign represents a meaning or a referent; therefore, this meaning or referent can be considered a deferred presence. The substitution of a sign for “the thing itself” is thus both secondary and provisional. Derrida radically puts into question these secondary and provisional characteristics of the sign. Following Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, he makes clear that any sign (both signifier and signified) only derives meaning due to a network of oppositions that distinguishes them and then relates them to one another. This means, first of all, that a signified concept is never present in and of itself, as a sufficient presence that*

would refer only to itself: “Every concept is inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of differences” (Derrida 1982, 11). Presence is always already permeated with absence, with what is not present(ed). More important, however, is the observation that there is no presence before and outside this semiological difference: the (f)act of speech always comes first! It is only in and through a sign system that “things” come into existence. This does not imply that everything can be expressed in language, that there is nothing beyond language. However, it does mean that “every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace, and that one cannot refer to this ‘real’ except in an interpretive experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of differential referring” (Derrida 1988, 148). We are always caught in this system of marks, traces, referrals. But, again, to distance oneself from the habitual structure of reference does not amount to saying that there is nothing beyond language—on the contrary. Much of Derrida’s work is precisely aimed towards an undermining of what he calls logocentrism, the claim that signs refer to some *e(x)*ternal and fixed origin and truth (a metaphysics of presence), the claim that the meaning of a word has its origin in a structure of reality that exists independent of language. The critique of logocentrism is, above all else, the search for “the other of language,” “the other which is beyond language and which summons language” (Derrida in Kearney 1984, 124). “The other” (maybe I can follow Crumb here and replace it with the nonsynonymous substitute “the spiritual dimension of music”) always already exceeds language, but also requires it. That is the paradox.

With Derrida, another trace is found to think the space between reality and representation. Another argument is made to search for music’s spiritual space beyond or between linguistic categories—one, however, that must simultaneously be invoked by language. A paradox. To talk about “something” (spirituality in music) that always already escapes words, concepts, and terms. Which has to escape them to save its nonidentifiable identity, its nonsite. Between representation and reality. Beyond, between, and before signs and sign systems. Perhaps it belongs to the logic of paralogy—beside, aside from, beyond logos, beyond words, beyond reason. If everything starts with the representation; if representation is needed to call something into presence; if this means an eternal deferral of the presence of a thing; if, in other words, spirituality must be substituted

for, a substitution that is always inadequate and necessary; if spirituality is always postponed both in time and in space, then it might be better to speak of a paraspirituality. Paraspirituality. Neither a word nor a concept (after Derrida). It simultaneously makes possible and defers. The prefix “para” defies the rules of identification; it defers the possibility of becoming a concept or a category and suspends the instantiation of the spiritual “itself.” It suspends the act of measuring, of determination, and attends to that unstable anterior moment of any event before it is linked to a grand narrative. “Like the post [in postmodernism, MC] it comes before the word to designate the after and, at the same time, it uncovers the darker and more threatening anteriorities of the word brought forth” (Taylor 2000, 17).<sup>40</sup> *Indeterminacy. Excess. Fascination.*

### 3.1 God-Music

“God-Music”: soft, thin sounds . . . Crystal glasses, tenderly touched by the hairs of the bow . . . Crystal glasses and the “vox dei” of the electric cello that seldom raises its voice above a whisper. Towards the end, the sounds enter the edge of audibility and become permeated with silences.

Why? Why such a weak God who almost completely withdraws towards the end? Leaving behind an empty space. Presence in absence?

Let me be clear: I am not talking here about an ontological or metaphysical position; I am talking about cultural history. How does the spiritual affect our present-day culture? How does this culture relate to the spiritual, even though (and maybe precisely because) it marginalized the spiritual, tried to make it unemployed, powerless? Talking about a cultural event. Perhaps I have Crumb on my side. He denies any personal obsession with the supernatural and merely regards the symbolism he uses in *Black Angels* as an indelible part of our cultural inheritance (Gillespie 1986, 25).

A cultural inheritance, a story from which God gradually withdrew, disappeared. First etherealized, becoming an abstract representation of the Good. Then his death (see Nietzsche), an action performed by the emancipating Man, the ultimate triumph of liberation by reason—Man replaced God. The question is, however, whether Man did not, in this process, actually offer his representations of God instead of God Himself.

Let us return to Bataille. Bataille's *a*-theology explores the empty space God left behind after His disappearance, an empty space in which it is impossible to relate to and to communicate with God. Here, nothing is left but an "a-logy," a no logos, a not-being-able-to-speak that disturbs the analogies of age-old religious traditions, which takes their place without substituting them. Precisely on the fringes of this empty space, Bataille seeks to encounter the spiritual—the spiritual no longer coinciding with God's presence, but with his absence (ten Kate 1994, 414).

The consequence of this thought is that the spiritual cannot be presented as one pole in a dual system: the spiritual is not opposed to the profane (Bataille speaks of "the sacred," but I prefer to speak about "the spiritual" as it seems to me a broader, more "open" word). The spiritual constantly traverses the profane world.<sup>41</sup> If some special image fits the spiritual, it is not that of a world or territory, but a boundary or limit. In the same way, the spiritual is not an object that can be explored from the site of the profane.

For Bataille, God does not coincide with the spiritual boundary, although the spiritual boundary is certainly divine. However, it leads us to the least holy of places, wandering around to approach the unapproachable: the war, the Dark Land, black angels, the "muerte oscura." In extreme experiences (at the spiritual boundary), one does not encounter God, but an unknown void, beyond every categorization, impossible to reduce to an ontological category through some dialectical move and past every possible appropriation. The limit of instrumentalization can in no way be instrumentalized.<sup>42</sup> Bataille regards spirituality as the relationship to this void, an absence—the experience of the limit of the known, controllable world. Not reducible to any category. This also means: not reducible to the Unknown, the Unsayable, the Absolute Other, Transcendence. Let's say it is between the known and the unknown, between the sayable and the unsayable. "Between," that is, without a proper place, without a place of its own. An *a-topos*. This boundary, this limit, is no longer the place or position where a glimpse can be caught of a divine world, of God. No longer the medium that introduces Man to some otherworldliness, to that which transcends the boundary. It is an empty space. And if God can no longer function as a necessary complement to the instrumental life (if, in other words, the relation between

spirituality and rationality is disrupted and eventually discontinued), then this boundary experience, stripped of any representations of God and the harmony they engender, can only be an experience generating fear.<sup>43</sup>

“God-Music” is no consoling music. It is no promise that everything will be all right in the end. Like the images 1, 7, and 13, it is a threnody, a lamentation “on our troubled contemporary world” where the old representations of God have disappeared and the new ones leave us in fear. The disharmonies and atonality within “God-Music”—bittersweet, soft, but unmistakably present—testify to this, as do the silences at the end, the musical marks of an empty, uncontrollable space.

### 3.2 *Ancient Voices*

Analyzing *Black Angels*. Analysis. Coming from Greek *ανα-λυω* or *ανα-λυειν*, meaning to enquire (the music), to interrogate (the composer and the performers), to classify (the music), to explain it, to contextualize it, to circumscribe it, to unfold it into its various parts. So, one loosens the music, sets it free, releases it from concealment; one (re)solves the music. Ancient voices.

### 3.3 *Ancient Voices (Echo)*

Analyzing *Black Angels*. By analyzing it, one resolves it—that is, one dissolves it. It evaporates. That is actually the first meaning of Greek *ανα-λυω*. In and through the analysis, one kills the music and thus loses it. One looses it, one loses it.

In other words, *ανα-λυειν* always has two related connotations: to disentangle what was entangled and obscure, and to disperse and to destroy that which belongs together.

Listening to, reading, and interpreting *Black Angels* cannot be reduced to performing and applying a method. *Black Angels* is no dead matter ready for analysis. I am speaking of a tripartite loss here: (1) by regarding the music as analyzable material, the listener kills it and loses it; (2) the music conceals “something” that it can never express, that withdraws from its subjection

(the “il y a,” the “it happens” without a “who,” a “what,” or a “why”); (3) by returning to the music—relistening to it, reanalyzing it, rediscussing it—the listener loses himself or herself (in the music) (ten Kate 1994, 309).

Listening as a fall in the unknown.

### 3.4 *Threnody III: Night of the Electric Insects*

Let’s return to the buzzing, chirring, and shrieking of the electric insects, to this audible techno-biology, to the becoming insect of music, to the becoming music of insects. “Threnody III” confronts us again with swarms that suddenly shift to the offensive. Because it is dark (the impenetrable darkness of a nocturnal rainforest) the attacks are unanticipatable, and an enormous tension thus fills the more quiet passages in the music. Be careful! They can return any moment!

This is not only a composition with tones; here, the tones and their inner selves are the scene of composing. The sounds extricate themselves from definitions in terms of vibrations, specified by pitch, duration, and frequency. What withdraws from these kinds of determinations is timbre.<sup>44</sup> Timbre is the difference between sounds that are otherwise identical in terms of the determination of their physical parameters. It is what differs and defers, what makes the difference between a note on the violin and the same note on tuned percussion, and thus what also defers the identification of that note. Timbre opens up the play of—the running to and fro of—identity and difference, that is, the space between representation (identification) and reality (the very impossibility of any adequate representation). Timbre, according to Lyotard, introduces “a sort of infinity, the indeterminacy of the harmonics within the frame determined by this identity” (Lyotard 1991, 140).

If I am allowed to call timbre one of the places through which the musical-spiritual can be experienced, it is interesting to see how Lyotard situates it not in an ideality, but in the material itself—“immaterial matter,” as he calls it. “Immaterial,” because it escapes the regime of being intelligible to the understanding, because it does not fit within the faculties or capacities of the mind, because it works outside of the active powers of the mind. And

“matter,” because there *is* something—something that requires a “mindless state of mind” to be at all. Matter designates that there is. It exists (Lyotard 1991, 140–41).<sup>45</sup> Through this passibility for which the mind cannot prepare itself, timbre emerges as a singular, incomparable quality. A nonanticipatable, nonnotable, nonrecallable unicity of what sounds in the actuality (a nonrecurring performance or listening experience); a trace of the “I don’t know what” that connects the listener to a radical alterity. So, on the one hand, the singularity of timbre withdraws from every inscription; on the other hand, however, it is “condemned” to *resonate*, to be able to sound in one’s ear, thereby entering the possibility of *repetition* and *representation*. This is the paradox: timbre escapes representation and cannot exist without it or outside of it.

Crumb respects timbre. Like so many other composers, his attention has been turned towards this passibility for timbre. With *Black Angels*, he lets himself into the infinite continuum of sound nuances. And he lets us experience a trace of a space-between representation and reality, the trace of a space where one might experience the musical-spiritual. A trace, because we can never enter this space, never occupy it, never grasp it, never (re)present it.

*Black Angels* bespeaks not a (re)turn to “spiritual” values supposedly antithetical to and repudiated and abandoned by “materialist” philosophies, but the openness of the space between or beyond categories, institutions, methods, theories, classifications, etc.

“ . . . and I think that when one allows the person of God to disappear in that place, something remains all the same, an empty place. It is of this empty place that I wished to speak” (Bataille in Chapsal 1963, 19, translation mine).

. . . Ah, be quiet! . . . I hear whispering . . . Is it a friend or an intruder?  
 . . .

The echo of the “Sarabanda de la Muerte Oscura” leaves one to fear the worst . . . (as does the ending on number 13). Losing oneself in a world of sound . . .



## NOTES

1. “Insofar as we *are* at all, we are already in a relatedness to what gives food for thought,” Martin Heidegger writes in *What is Called Thinking* (Heidegger 1968, 36).
2. In discussing Velasquez’s painting *Las Meninas*, Michel Foucault is very explicit about the relation of language and (nonlinguistic) art forms. This relation is infinite, Foucault writes. It is not that words are imperfect or that they prove insuperably inadequate. No, it is just that neither can be reduced to the other’s terms. To name and frame art works is merely an artifice; it gives us a finger to point with. Foucault pleads for an open relation of language to art, one that takes their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided (Foucault 1970, 9–10).
3. “A new form of redundancy. AND . . . AND . . . AND . . . There has always been a struggle in language between the verb *être* (to be) and the conjunction *et* (and) between *est* and *et* (is and and [which in French are identical in pronunciation–Trans.]). It is only in appearance that these two terms are in accord and combine, for the first acts in language as a constant and forms the diatonic scale of language, while the second places everything in variation, constituting the lines of a generalized chromatism. From one to the other, everything shifts . . . AND is less a conjunction than the atypical expression of all of the possible conjunctions it places in continuous variation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 98–99).
4. In some sense, John Zorn’s composition *Hermeticum Sacrum* can be regarded as the counterpart of *Black Angels*, as it is built around that other “holy” number, the six. Perhaps *Hermeticum Sacrum* can claim more rightfully the sobriquet “Devil-Music.”
5. Even Crumb denies having any deep interests in the supernatural. For him, references to the occult and other symbolism are just a part of our culture and history (Gillespie 1986, 25).
6. In *The Differend*, Jean-François Lyotard warns: “don’t confuse necessity with obligation. If there is a *must* (*Il faut*), it is not a *You ought to* (*Vous devez*)” (1988, 80).
7. This is one of the two inscriptions the score bears, meaning “in times of war.”
8. Becoming is the externality and exteriorization of relations, the accident that destructures the essential form and decenters the substantial subject. “If the sound block has a becoming-animal as its content, then the animal simultaneously becomes, in sonority, something else, something absolute, night, day, joy—certainly not a generality or a simplification, but a haecicity, this death, that night. Music takes as its content a becoming-animal; but in that becoming-animal the horse, for example, takes as its expression soft kettledrum beats, winged like hooves from heaven or hell; and the birds find expression in *gruppetti*, *appoggiaturas*, *staccato* notes that transform them into so many souls” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 304).
9. “Music is a deterritorialization of the voice, which becomes less and less tied to language . . . Voice and instrument are carried on the same plane in a relation that is sometimes one of confrontation, sometimes one of compensation, sometimes one of exchange and complementarity . . . a becoming-molecular in which the voice itself is

- instrumentalized—where the instruments speak no less than the voice, and the voice plays no less than the instrument” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 96, 302–7).
10. Stanzas six and seven from the poem “The Lost Bells” by Frances E. W. Harper.
  11. If I would like to bring this interpretation to a head, I could point at the fact that the 7 is mentioned first in “Devil-Music,” while the 13 is in front in “God-Music.” In the Sufi tradition it is sometimes suggested that it is in fact Iblis (Satan) who is most faithful to Allah. When Allah summons the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam because he “knows the names,” Iblis refuses, worshipping Adam (the image of the divine) rather than the divine itself. Iblis acts out of pure love and can be considered the guardian of the divine throne, the creature most intimate with the creator. One approaches the *coincidentia oppositorum*, either a simultaneous presence of contradictions or a violent oscillation between them (Idel and McGinn 1999, 98–99).
  12. Starting from numerological connotations, the chanting of the numerals 1 through 7 (in Hungarian) in “Devil-Music” imply a certain connection with the Good.
  13. In this respect, the introduction of the Dies Irae theme in *Black Angels* differs from the quotations Hector Berlioz uses in the fifth and final part of his *Symphonie Fantastique*, entitled “Dream of a Sabbath’s Night.” In the latter, the Dies Irae gradually turns into the “Ronde du Sabbat,” the circle dance of the witches, whereas Crumb seems to oppose the Latin sequence to an uncontrolled and whirling dance.
  14. The Dies Irae is an integral part of the requiem, the Latin death mass. It can be questioned, however, whether the Dies Irae is befitting of the intention of the requiem, which starts as follows: “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis” (“May eternal peace be upon them, Lord, and may the eternal light shine upon them”). This is in rather sharp contrast with the purport of the Dies Irae. Perhaps this is why the last lines of the Dies Irae were later added by another author. Offended by the use of the first person singular in the composition, this unknown writer added the prayer, “Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem,” in order to commemorate all the souls that have died and to nonetheless wish them eternal rest.
  15. The thoughts expressed in this paragraph are based primarily on Georges Bataille’s works. However, much inspiration was also derived from a book by Laurens ten Kate, *De lege plaats* [*The Empty Space*].
  16. Thus, for Bataille, evil is not the breach of the rules or the norms; that would imply that evil is only a derivative of them, that the rule would be preexistent with regard to the infringement. No, with the rule the infringement is given.
  17. Heidegger doesn’t completely reject the technological view on beings, but he refuses to consider it as the only possible relation towards things. Besides, technology knows its own “nearness” to things. One could for instance say that through the role coincidence, art, and play have within ICT, pure control is broken.
  18. In *What is Called Thinking*, Heidegger writes: “pure thanks is rather that we simply think—think what is really and solely given, what is there to be thought” (Heidegger 1968, 143).
  19. Heidegger calls preconceptions that indeed refer to a phenomenon but simultaneously keep a distance and stay extraneous “formal indications” [formale Anzeigen].

- The phenomenon is granted some freedom, lest its explication is already ontically or ontologically decided beforehand and prematurely.
20. In *What is Called Thinking*, Heidegger writes: "'using' does not mean the mere utilizing, using up, exploiting. Utilization is only the degenerate and debauched form of use. When we handle a thing, for example, our hand must fit itself to the thing. Use implies fitting response. Proper use does not debase what is being used—on the contrary, use is determined and defined by leaving the used thing in its essential nature . . . 'To use' means, first, to let a thing be what it is and how it is. To let it be this way requires that the used thing be cared for in its essential nature—we do so by responding to the demands which the used thing makes manifest in the given instance" (Heidegger 1968, 187, 191).
  21. "*All art, as the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is, is, as such, essentially poetry,*" Heidegger writes (Heidegger 2002, 44). However, by this Heidegger doesn't mean that all art forms are subordinate to linguistic arts. He understands poetry as a place on the thither side of fixed meanings. In discussing the poetry of Georg Trakl, Heidegger comes to the idea that the musical always already permeates poetry.
  22. Projective language (poetry) has to be understood here as both speaking and thinking.
  23. "Writing *about* music" inclines towards an assault upon music, forcing music to say what the preestablished categories and theories want it to say. "Writing *around* music" takes into account that music is never reducible to linguistic concepts, that language should speak about music only with the greatest reserve and openness. "Writing around music" has no clear methods, is not trying to be complete, and does not deny the existence of gaps and uncertainties.
  24. Heidegger seems to be on the way to reverse the relation language-music. Language appears as a lively and polysemic texture that asks for a description in musical terms. Derrida's deconstruction of the sign, an undermining of every guarantee of sense and reference, points in the same direction.
  25. Deleuze and Guattari write, "The problem of writing: in order to designate something exactly, anexact expressions are utterly unavoidable. Not at all because it is a necessary step, or because one can only advance by approximations: anexactitude is in no way an approximation; on the contrary, it is the exact passage of that which is under way" (1987, 20).
  26. *Death and the Maiden* is probably inspired by a text by Matthias Claudius, a dialogue between Death and a girl he has come to collect. Death's response to the girl's passionate plea to spare her is, "I am a friend, and do not come to punish—you will sleep sweetly in my arms." What strikes me here is the reassurance that follows after an expression of fear to enter unknown places: Death asks the girl to just give up, to surrender, but without removing her insecurity.
  27. "By placing all its components in continuous variation, music itself becomes a super-linear system, a rhizome instead of a tree, and enters the service of a virtual cosmic continuum of which even holes, silences, ruptures, and breaks are a part" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 95).
  28. "We do not need to suppress tonality; we need to turn it loose . . . slipping through its net instead of breaking with it," Deleuze and Guattari write (1987, 350).

29. I borrow this idea on the prefix *hyper* from Dutch philosopher Henk Oosterling.
30. In *Une pensée finie*, Jean-Luc Nancy distinguishes between “l’écrit” and “l’excrit.” The two are not opposed, but in the “l’écrit” (a writing, an inscription), the “l’excrit” always resonates as an unanticipatable and uncontrollable rest. “L’excrit” escapes any articulatable meaning in a text (any recognition, affirmation, understanding) but nevertheless cannot do without it. “Cri” and “l’excrit” go together (Nancy 1990, 55–64).
31. I am referring here to a metaphysics of presence as described by Jacques Derrida.
32. Program notes in CD booklet.
33. “The character of the *pharmakos* has been compared to a scapegoat. The *evil* and the *outside*, the expulsion of the evil, its exclusion out of the body (and out) of the city—these are the two major senses of the character and of the ritual” (Derrida 1981, 130). The *pharmakos* is charged with everything that is bad in a given period, that is, everything that resisted signifying signs.
34. “We hardly have logical spaces for asking if our linguistic means are genuinely at the service of the inexhaustible complexity of reality or whether, on the contrary, they are used to suppress and distort,” Gemma Corradi Fiumara writes in *The Other Side of Language* (1990, 181).
35. “What have I come to mean by surrender as of now? Seminally I mean by it cognitive love: whatever other meanings it may have flown from it. Among them are total involvement, suspension of received notions, pertinence of everything, identification, and risk of being hurt. To surrender means to take as fully, to meet as immediately as possible whatever the occasion may be. It means *not* to select, *not* to believe that one can know quickly what one’s experience means, hence what is to be understood and acted on: thus it means *not* to suppose that one can do justice to the experience with one’s received notions, with one’s received feeling and thinking, even with the received *structure* of that feeling and thinking: it means to meet, whatever it be, as much as possible in its originariness, its itself-ness” (Wolff 1976, 20).
36. Stanzas 13 and 14 from “The Lost Bells.”
37. In *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, Alan W. Watts describes the unknown as the real present in which we live, the unknown in the midst of coming into being. Therefore, the unknown cannot be avoided and nothing can be ultimately fixed: “to define is to isolate, to separate some complex of forms from the stream of life . . . Because it is the use and nature of words and thoughts to be fixed, definite, isolated, it is extremely hard to describe the most important characteristic of life—its movement and fluidity . . . Part of man’s frustration is that he has become accustomed to expect language and thought to offer explanations which they cannot give. To want life to be ‘intelligible’ in this sense is to want it to be something other than life . . . If we want to keep the old language, still using terms as ‘spiritual’ and ‘material,’ the spiritual must mean ‘the indefinable,’ that which, because it is living, must ever escape the framework of any fixed form” (Watts 1951, 46–48, 71).
38. Two remarks should be made here. First, St. Augustine already recognized some demonic power in music, experiencing that it always already escapes the frames of discursive language. Second, by pointing toward a prethematic space and preestablished

identities, I seem to be approaching Lyotard's ideas on postmodernism. The way he understands postmodernism is that instance of instability "prior" to the concretization of rules. Each event has an undirected trajectory within an infinite flux of data or a multiplicity of contexts until it is linked to a grand narrative, that is, until it is included in categories and submitted to preestablished frameworks. Much in the same way as Lyotard reaches the conclusion that an event (art) is postmodern before it is modern, I would say that music discloses a spiritual trace before it is included in musicological or music theoretical grand narratives.

39. The possibility of spirituality can only be kept through the possibility of repetition, mechanization, automation—an alliance with exactly those technologies that humiliate spirituality. Derrida's logic starts from the idea that the spiritual necessarily has to appear in the form of "something" that immediately alienates it from its spiritual dimension.
40. The idea of paraspirituality is grafted onto Taylor's reflections on the "para/sacred" and I paraphrase his thoughts to make them productive for music.
41. Bataille generally describes the profane world as the order of utility, instrumentality, or finality. For the human being who tries to make the surrounding world subservient to his use, to live means first of all to survive. In order to survive, he must submit the world to his needs. The point, however, is that by doing this, Man submits himself to the order of use and usefulness. By reducing existence to the order of utility and finality, Man indirectly submits himself to that which he tried to submit in the first place. According to Bataille, the use Man makes of his surroundings (goods as well as fellow men) doesn't do justice to this; actually, use is misuse! The spiritual refers to the borderlines of the order of utility (ten Kate 1994, 436–37).
42. The meaning of spirituality is not "a divine origin" or "founded in God's will"; here, spirituality, first of all, opposes a desire that is economically based and structured.
43. The three letters *g*, *o*, and *d* become an empty space; everybody can use them. There is no fixed owner of this "name," neither in the form of a person nor an idea (ten Kate 1994, 517).
44. According to Nancy (following Antoine Bonnet), timbre can be called "the real" of music. At the same time (and perhaps because of this) it resists, unlike other musical parameters, any notation, both in a score and in language (Nancy 2002, 76–82).
45. "That matter appears to escape determination by concepts because it is rigorously (and not exactly) singular: its quality depends perhaps on a constellation of conceivable parameters, but this constellation, the one which takes place now, cannot be anticipated, foreseen" (Lyotard 1991, 155).

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