

Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973 and 1997) outlines a theory of modern poetry in Romantic, Anglo-American traditions. Bloom argues that all poets in these traditions find their greatest inspiration and their greatest source of anxiety in John Milton and his followers. For Bloom, Milton inaugurates a fateful narrative in which each follower, latecomer, or "weak" poet must come to terms with his "strong" father-like precursor. For Bloom this coming to terms takes the form of influence—a paradoxical vortex of attraction and repulsion, of absorption and distance. For Bloom this attraction to / repulsion against the works of a master takes the form of a latecomer's "mis" reading. For Bloom a poet seeking to be strong necessarily "mis"reads his precursors by using one or more of his 6 revisionary ratios as shown in Example 1. In the example, Bloom's own terms are introduced after the Arabic numbers in both italics and roman script. The paraphrases after triple stars in italics are my mine.

Example 1. Harold Bloom's Six Revisionary Ratios in the *Anxiety of Influence*

1. *Clinamen* or Poetic Misprison

***a swerve in the continuum against which great objects fade

2. *Tessera* or Completion and Antithesis

***a completion of the precursor's work

3. *Kenosis* or Repetition and Discontinuity

***the repetition into which a poet is thrown must be at once affirmed and undone

4. *Daemonization* or the Counter-Sublime

***a yielding up of the poet's humanity to his precursor

5. *Askesis* or Purgation and Solipsism

***a narrowing of the soul that produces the illusion that the center will hold more securely as a result

6. Apophrades or The Return of the Dead

***a struggle with the dead that makes it look as if the living latecomer influenced his precursor.

Retaining these six revisionary ratios requires detailed and repeated readings of Bloom's work. We ask that you consider two things from this brief introduction: 1) that Bloom's poets simultaneously approach and distance themselves from the works of their strong masters, and 2) that this approach / distance binary takes the practical form of a range of quotation practices—ranging from wholesale, literal quotation at one end of an imaginary continuum to the subtlest of style imitations on the other.

An overview of the cultural forces that underwrote the composition of the *Anxiety of Influence* in the 60s / 70s must await another occasion as must a critique of the work's thinly disguised patriarchal, phallogocentric, Freudian assumptions.

We must be very careful crossing the divide between Literary History and Music History. Literature and the critical approaches to literature, for one thing, are made of the same kinds of signifiers—those of the language of this paper, marks on a page with signifiers and the concepts of signifieds triggered by them in the mind of a reader in social space. While music signifies in a wide variety of ways in a wide variety of contexts, there is a “new” structure of difference in the musical sign—the signifier on a page points to a signified in the ear and mind of a listening subject in social space.

Applications of Bloom to music work well as theories of (romantic) modernism writ-large. Bloom implicitly reads western culture building to its pre-Enlightenment apex, to decline spectacularly in the Nineteenth Century and to come to rest in the Twentieth Century. If one understands music history in a similar way, an application of Bloom to such a history might sound like this: canonical western music history builds to its apex in

the late 18th Century to decline in anxious romanticism in the 19th Century and come to rest in the 20th Century; while Bloom's master poet is John Milton; music's master composer is Beethoven. We approach applications of Bloom to music studies by examining the theoretical, historical, and analytical choices made in three particularly successful studies.

In Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony*, Bonds argues, for example, that Berlioz' *Harold in Italy* "mis"reads Beethoven's Ninth Symphony by having the former simultaneously refer to and distance itself from the latter masterwork. Bonds is cautiously distant to the precision of Bloom's six revisionary ratios. On the other hand, In his "Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence" Kevin Korsyn applies all six of Bloom's revisionary ratios to show how Brahms' Romanze Opus 118, no. 5 "mis"reads Chopin's Berceuse, Opus 57. In his book, *Remaking the Past*, Joseph N. Straus offers an expansive reading of both "progressive" and "classicist" early twentieth-century music as a response to an anxiety of influence in high modern music. Straus offers 8 "musical revisionary ratios" that are structurally fascinating, though void of any trace of a necessary Bloomian anxiety.

In the remainder of this panel, we draw a generation closer to the present as Prof. Graham Phipps discusses questions of influence in Webern and Prof. Heidlberger discusses questions of influence in Hindemith.