

SEMIOTICS AND MUSIC: AN END-OF-CENTURY OVERVIEW

The title of a popular recent book published in the United States makes no secret of its scorn for psychotherapy: *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy--and the World Is Getting Worse* (Ventura and Hillman 1993). Having weighed the Freudian and post-Freudian project of psychotherapy in the balance of the social good that they see it as having accomplished, the authors find it wanting; they deem us no better off for its having been around for a hundred years. Charles Sanford Peirce's *semiotics* and Ferdinand de Saussure's *semiology* were both born of exactly the same modernist impulse, around the turn of the twentieth century, that spawned psychoanalysis and a host of other intellectual and artistic movements. So we might ask the same question of semiotics that the recent book asks of psychotherapy: is the world a better place for being able to interpret itself semiotically? Has scholarship produced understanding and insights that would not have been produced without semiotics? More specifically, what have we, as musicians and musical scholars, gained from the semiotic approach to music? What are its accomplishments? What issues has it raised, and what is current thought on those issues? The present paper provides a brief overview of the discipline of musical semiotics, with a focus at the end on important recent contributions by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, Kofi Agawu, and Robert Hatten.

Of course, semiotics is not a hundred years old in the same way that psychotherapy and psychoanalysis are. Freud, it goes without saying, did a better job of putting his work into final form and getting it into print than did either Peirce or Saussure, both of whom had to wait for their successors and students to compile and edit their ideas. What is more, psychotherapy became immediately popular, and it has been developing steadily as the century has progressed. In contrast, the semiotics of Peirce and the semiology of Saussure had to lie dormant until the 1960's, when the intellectual climate was ripe for them; the seeds had been planted fifty years before, but the full plant had not sprung into view.

There were, of course, many proto-semiotic thinkers before the seminal work of Peirce and Saussure, the generally acknowledged theoretical founders of the discipline--Peirce from the philosophical side, Saussure from the linguistic side. Historians of semiotics cite, among others, Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, medieval scholastic philosophers, Leibniz, Locke, Condillac, Wolff, Lambert (the first writer to entitle a treatise *Semiotik*), and Hegel as theorists of the sign. But it was only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Peirce developed a complex philosophical

theory of signs and signification, and that Saussure, completely independently of Peirce, developed a theory of language, a central feature of which was the famous dyadic relation *signifier/signified*. And it was another fifty years or more before a viable new discipline of semiotics, forged from strands of Peirce and Saussure, as well as influences from the American behaviorist Charles Morris, from Russian formalism, the Prague school of linguistics, French structuralism, Roman Jakobson's theory of communication, and the linguistics of Louis Hjelmslev, could be successfully launched. And not until the 1960's and 1970's did the new discipline come into its own: only then did it become the basis for scholarly societies (e.g., the International Society for Semiotic Studies in 1969, the Semiotic Society of America in 1976), new journals (*Semiotica* [1966], the *Canadian Journal of Research in Semiotics* [1973], *Semiosis* [1976], and the *Zeitschrift für Semiotik* [1979]), and academic conferences (e.g., the First International Congress of Semiotics in Belgrade in 1963, and the first congress of the International Society for Semiotic Studies in 1974). Only then did it take on all the trappings of a vital scholarly discipline.

As the discipline has matured, it has gradually become clear that Peirce's influence has been more lasting than Saussure's. At the most mundane level, Peirce's *semiotics* has for the most part supplanted Saussure's *semiology*.¹ More substantively, Peirce's exhaustively worked out, if also convoluted and often contradictory, philosophical theory has proven to provide a more stable and usable theoretical basis for the discipline than has Saussure's work. For, much as some of Saussure's concepts are indispensable to semiotics--the distinctions synchronic/diachronic, syntagmatic/paradigmatic, and *langue/parole*, and the notion of language as an arbitrary relational system "without positive terms"--his work really does no more than predict the eventual establishment of a "science of signs," and some authorities now consider that his historical role as a founder of semiotics has been overstated (Jakobson 1980: 12, Noth 1990: 63). Saussure's static dyad *signifier/signified* in effect bypasses the human perceiver and makes of the sign a closed binary relation. In contrast, Peirce's dynamic trichotomy *sign-object-interpretant* both includes the human perceiver in the signifying chain and allows for the multiplication of meaning. In Peirce's view, a *sign* and the object for which it stands create in the mind of the observer an *interpretant*, which is itself another sign capable of signifying yet another object and thus creating another interpretant, and so forth through an indeterminate number of stages to a final interpretant.

Not that semiotics in any sense proceeds from a consistent or unified theory. Whatever the seminal contributions of Peirce and Saussure--or, for that matter, of Hjelmslev, Jakobson, Eco, or many others--a semiotic study by no means specifically

presupposes a rigorous theoretical grounding in the work of any of these thinkers, at least not in the same way that psychoanalytical studies rely inevitably on Freud, Marxist studies on Marx, or deconstructionist approaches on Derrida. What ties semiological studies together is less a consistent theoretical foundation and programme than a point of view and a praxis: the foregrounding of sign and signification, a faith in the notion of semiosis as an interdisciplinary and even universal path to insight and knowledge, and the appropriation of some theory or methodology of the central figures of semiotics--even though radically different and indeed contradictory theories are invoked in its name. Practitioners of semiotics do not even agree whether it is a *science*, as imagined by Saussure ("semiology" as a science of signs "that does not yet exist" [Saussure 1966: 16]) and as founded by Peirce and Charles Morris, a *discipline*, a *method*, or merely a *point of view*.

Uncertainties about its theoretical allegiances or its disciplinary definition have hardly stifled its exuberance, however. The generality of the notion of the sign, and the claim of the theory of the sign to universality--to explaining all aspects of human culture and even of animal signification--promoted the attitude that semiotics could uncover the secret codes of all communication, human and otherwise. For example, Thomas A. Sebeok, a central figure in American semiotics, has written that "... the scope of semiotics encompasses the whole of the *oikoumene*, the entirety of our planetary biosphere" (Sebeok 1977: 181-2). Like other modernist projects, it asserted its ability everywhere to read the truth below the surface, to discern underlying patterns, motives, and conventions not apparent in the signs themselves. Thus Marshall Blonsky, writing in 1985 and looking back over twenty years of semiotic activity, could write of a "semiotic 'head' or eye, [that] sees the world as an immense message, replete with signs that can and do deceive us and lie about the world's condition" (Blonsky 1985: vii). Sharing with 1960's structuralism a sudden sense of empowerment at the ability to read truth underneath the deceptive surface of the world, and an excitement about applying the methods of structural linguistics and poetics--e.g. Saussure's various binary oppositions; Jakobson's theories of distinctive features and markedness; Propp's structuralist methods of analyzing fairy tales; and Greimas's structuralist semantics--semiotics seemed to offer a new method of analysis and interpretation to individual disciplines, yet at the same time to transcend these disciplines and serve as a universal science. Here was a science, or at least an approach, that could deal with both high art and popular culture, with both Western and non-Western culture, with both text and image, sound and semblance. Hence the missionary zeal, the thrill of "semiotic omnipotence" (Sebeok, Foreward to Tarasti 1994: ix), with which semiotics popularized the studies of countless areas of

culture beginning in the 1960's: Roland Barthes's studies of fashion, advertising mythology, and much else; Julia Kristeva's notion of intertextuality; Umberto Eco's general theory of semiotics; and Kaja Silverman's studies of film.

The semiotic project in music began in the 1960's, gained strength in the 1970's and 1980's, and has become a familiar feature on the music-scholarly map in the 1990's. Semiotics has had a significant impact on the ways in which we think about music. It has produced an impressive body of scholarship--countless conference papers, essays, and monographs--and it is well worth a retrospective evaluation here at the turn of the century. I will organize my overview of musical semiotics in two broad gestures: 1) a brief synchronic view of the current status of semiotics in musical research, especially its relation to more mainstream branches of musical scholarship; 2) a more detailed diachronic view of the historical development of musical semiotics from the 1960's to the present, with a focus on how both the scholarly aims and the theoretical underpinnings of the semiotic enterprise in music have gradually shifted over the course of thirty years.

1. Semiotics and Music after Thirty Years:

A View from 1998

In the 1960's and 1970's "the theory of signs" held out the same hope for musical scholarship that structuralism had a decade earlier. Its appeal was interdisciplinary, both in the sense of its being transportable into music from linguistics and literary criticism, and in the sense of its transcending the boundaries that separate the purely musical disciplines (music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology). Like structuralism, it promised to move freely between Western and non-Western cultures, written and oral traditions, and high-art and popular musical styles. And, also like structuralism, it bore an impressive international cachet: unlike our nationally focussed efforts in the individual disciplines of music, semiotics could legitimately claim to be a genuinely international endeavor. All in all, since music was nothing if not a riot of signs, semiotics seemed a good bet to colonize the disciplines of the analysis, criticism, and interpretation of music.

That this colonization never really happened says much both about semiotics and about the already established disciplines of musical scholarship. What it says about semiotics is, at least in part, that the new discipline, in its musical incarnation as well as in general, was not and is not a monolithic theoretical programme. Rather, as noted above, it is a loosely configured means of approaching signs and signification from a

vaguely definable but not rigorously delimited point of view. Eero Tarasti, the eminent Finnish musical semiotician, has called musical semiotics a "discipline in flux, a science under construction" (Tarasti 1994: 5). Elsewhere he has written that "A study may qualify as musical semiotics if any problem related to music, musical concepts, or musical behavior is examined in the spirit of semiotics"--if it is conducted in a spirit that leads one to say, "Indeed, this is semiotics!" (Tarasti 1996: xi-xii). Like the American Supreme Court justice who quipped that he could not define pornography, but could recognize it when he saw it, we are left to judge for ourselves what is and what is not musical semiotics.

This theoretical elusiveness is surely a factor that has kept semiotics from establishing a secure and lasting place in the mainstream of the disciplines of music. Another factor is that, even when the theoretical foundations of semiotic musical studies are explicit, the underlying theories are often either problematic themselves, or of sufficient opacity to keep musical scholars at bay. For example, despite the fame and familiarity of Saussure's distinction *signifier/signified*, this straightforward binary distinction is far too simple to bear much interpretive or critical sophistication. Recently it has given way to the more complex formulations of Peirce and other theorists in semiotic studies in general; musical studies that evoke the Saussurian dyad are easy targets for harsh criticism (see Robert Hatten's reviews [Hatten 1980 and 1992] of Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* [Nattiez 1975a] and Kofi Agawu's *Playing With Signs* [Agawu 1991]). But other semiotic theories that have been appropriated for musical studies--Peirce's classifications of signs and A. J. Greimas's structural semantics--are turgid and daunting to the degree that few musical scholars have been willing to invest the time necessary to gain fluency with the theories. The semiotic (or linguistic, proto-semiotic) theories that have been the most useful and productive in musical scholarship have been Roman Jakobson's notions of introversive and extroversive semiosis (aptly used in Agawu 1991), his linguistic theory of markedness (brilliantly used in Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* [1994]), and Peirce's relatively simple distinction *icon/index/symbol* (put to productive use in the musical aesthetics of Wilson Coker (1972), and ethnomusicological studies by Steven Feld (1988 and 1990) and Greg Urban (1985 and 1991)--although many European scholars have put Greimas's structural semantics to good use as well.

2. The Semiotics of Music: An Historical Overview

Robert Hatten has added to the familiar distinction semiology/semiotics (which, as we have seen, commonly distinguishes the Saussurian/linguistic from the Peircean/logical side of the discipline; *semiotics* is now generally used for both) the further feature that semiology invokes in general the formalism of French structuralism, while semiotics, with the more ramified Peircean trichotomy, makes room for a hermeneutic component (Hatten 1992: 88). The broad lines of the history of musical semiology/semiotics, from the 1960's to the 1990's, in fact proceed along this axis from the linguistic-formal to the interpretive-hermeneutic.

The earliest attempts at an explicit musical semiology were those of the linguist Nicolas Ruwet in the 1960's. Ruwet's studies of repetition in the works of Debussy (Ruwet 1962) and in medieval monophonic songs (Ruwet 1966) invoke not, as might be expected, the linguistics of Saussure and the Prague School, but distributionalism of the American linguists Leonard Bloomfield and Zellig Harris. Ruwet's "paradigmatic method," a purely mechanical means of segmentation intended to reveal the patterning of melodic repetitions, aggressively rejects any consideration of meaning. Rather, it seeks to provide a formal discovery procedure that can produce, merely by the application of a series of segmentation rules, melodic segmentations that would match the immediate intuitive responses of a musician. Ruwet's analyses, and the more musically sophisticated melodic analyses of David Lidov (1979), are characteristic of the earliest stage of musical semiotics, both in their unrelenting formalism and in their ultimately having little impact on the discipline of musical analysis.

Jean-Jacques Nattiez, who by any account should be acknowledged as one of the founders and principal figures of musical semiotics, emerged from the same structuralist tradition as did Ruwet and Lidov. His first major work, *Fondements d'une Sémiologie de la musique* (Nattiez 1975a), takes up and extends the paradigmatic methods of Ruwet. Again, the distributional analyses eschew the issue of musical meaning, and focus on unaccompanied melodies (here is where we find Nattiez's famous analyses of Debussy's *Syrinx*; in the same year he also published an analysis of Varèse's *Density 21.5* (Nattiez 1975b)--harmonic and contrapuntal music still seeming too complex for the structuralist discovery procedures that prevailed at the time. It is also in *Fondements* that Nattiez, following Jean Molino, introduces the *tripartition*, or the conceptualization of the artwork on three levels: the poietic (relating to the creation or composition of the work), the neutral level (the immanent material trace, such as a score or recording, on which

Nattiez's analyses focus), and the esthetic (the level of perception and reception). It is the tripartition, more than his distributional analyses, on which Nattiez's reputation rests, and on which his work after 1975 explicitly depends.

It was in the late 1970's and early 1980's that musical semiotics began to transform itself from linguistic-formal enterprise to a interpretive-hermeneutic one. As early as 1977, Nattiez himself was proclaiming that semiotics must split off from its linguistic roots: "Today the divorce between linguistics and semiotics is consummated" (Nattiez 1977: 131). The shift of focus is evident, for example, in Eero Tarasti's first major work, *Myth and Music* (Tarasti 1979). Here the motivating impulse is expressly structuralist and linguistic (Tarasti's point of departure is Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology of myth), but the result bespeaks a new direction. Now the goal is not just the revealing of segmentation and pattern, but also interpretation and the discovery of *meaning*. Significantly, as the book progresses, its theoretical support shifts from Lévi-Strauss to the structuralist semantics of Greimas--still structuralist, but now with a concern for interpretation. And with the expanded analytic intent comes a concomitant broadening of focus: now the analytical objects are not just unaccompanied melodies, but major works--Wagner's *Ring*, Sibelius's *Kullervo* Symphony, and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Tarasti's swerve toward interpretation and meaning, and toward the consideration of more complex musical works, was soon followed by other semioticians.

By the mid-to late 1980's and the 1990's the "paradigmatic method" in musical semiotics seemed as though it was in the distant past, and the concern for the interpretation of musical meaning dominated semiotic work on both sides of the Atlantic. Tarasti edited three collections of essays (Tarasti 1987, 1995, 1996), and published numerous essays of his own, as well as an interpretively oriented Peircean/Greimasian *Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Tarasti 1994). At the same time a number of central European scholars adopted a semiotic approach to musical meaning--again, frequently based on the Peircean notion of icon/index/symbol and on Greimasian structural semantics. In 1986 the young Hungarian scholar Marta Grabòcz published her Greimas-based *Morphologie des oeuvres pour piano de Liszt* (Grabòcz 1986; see also her work on electroacoustic music in Grabòcz 1995 and 1996). Other important interpretive contributions have come from János Jiraneck (1985) in Prague and Vladimir Karbusicky in Hamburg (Karbusicky 1986, 1987a, 1987b). In English-speaking countries, an early semiotically oriented attempt at a theory of musical meaning--one that invoked the Peircean theory of the sign--was Wilson Coker's *Music and Meaning* (Coker 1972). A decade later, David Lidov (1981) turned from his earlier distributionalist work to consider the semantics of the Allegretto of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony. The

Edinburgh theorist Raymond Monelle published a series of insightful essays on musical semantics and semiotics (Monelle 1991a, 1991b, 1991c), as well as a useful monograph, *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Monelle 1992). In the United States the American theorist Robert Hatten began a series of sensitive essays using a semiotic approach to musical meaning and expression (Hatten 1987a, 1987b, and 1991), culminating in his widely read monograph *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Hatten 1994; see below).

An understanding of the status of musical semiotics in the United States requires an appreciation of American traditions and institutions of musical scholarship. Since the founding of the Society for Music Theory in 1977, American musical scholarship has been divided into three principal societies--the Society for Music Theory (SMT), the American Musicological Society (AMS), and the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM)--each of which has its own scholarly conferences (though the SMT and AMS meet together frequently). Although no generalization is entirely accurate, it was fundamentally the case that until the late 1980's both the SMT and AMS were strongly committed to more or less positivist agendas--formalist analysis (Schenkerian theory and pitch-class set theory especially) for the theorists, documentary studies of various sorts for the musicologists--while the SEM in the same period turned gradually from linguistics- and transcription-based studies to ethnography and social anthropology. A watershed in American music theory and historical musicology began to take place in the 1980's, in response to the call of Joseph Kerman (Kerman 1980 and 1985) for a more humanistically and critically oriented American musical scholarship. In the late 1980's, partially in response to Kerman, a new generation of musicologists, armed with a variety of critical theories (from Adorno to Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, de Man, and Eagleton), took aim at the entrenched positivism on both sides of the theory/musicology divide. The so-called New Musicology that emerged from this movement, and that is now much closer to the center of American musicology, is fiercely anti-formalist and post-structuralist, socially more than analytically engaged, and postmodern rather than modern in philosophical orientation.

How musical semiotics fits into this picture is as follows. Before 1990, despite the inroads that semiotics had made into American literary criticism and other academic disciplines, only a few American musical scholars had adopted an explicitly semiotic approach, and most of those were ethnomusicologists (see, for example, the studies of iconicity by Becker and Becker 1981, and Feld 1988; and the discourse-centered Peircean perspective of Urban 1985)--the principal exceptions being some of the early essays of Robert Hatten. It might be expected that such a combination of semiotic vacuum and

disciplinary flux would provide the perfect opportunity for musical semiotics to stake a strong claim for a place in American musical scholarship. But at the same time, one would hardly expect a music-scholarly world headed in the direction of postmodernism to adopt semiotics, the quintessential offspring of structuralism.

What happened was that semiotics did indeed break dramatically into American music theory and musicology in the late 1980's and early 1990's, but in a way that placed it in an idiosyncratic position with respect to the structuralist/post-structuralist divide, and in a way that has yet, thus far at least, to bring semiotics successfully into the mainstream of these disciplines. Three influential, though utterly different books based on semiotic theory appeared in the United States at this time: the English translation of Nattiez 1987 as *Music and Discourse* (1990), Agawu's *Playing with Signs* (1991), and Hatten's *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* (1994). The three books differ radically in both their theoretical foundations and in their objects of study.

Nattiez's book is by far the most eclectic and wide ranging. In it he offers, twelve years after *Fondements*, a rethought and reconstituted general semiology (unlike most writers, he continues to prefer *semiology* to *semiotics*) of music. The present volume only establishes the theory of the new semiology, which future volumes will then flesh out with actual analyses. Nattiez remains the strongest representative of the old structuralism among the three authors. A new and explicit Peircean orientation (the trichotomy of signs and the centrality of the interpretant), completely absent from *Fondements*, might at first glance suggest a loosening of the structuralist hold on Nattiez's work. His emphasis on the multiplicity of interpretants (a sign-object relation produces an interpretant which is itself a sign, which can produce yet another sign, and so forth) might even hint at a semiotic perspective that is compatible with the profusion of meaning characteristic of poststructuralism. (However, as Hatten [1992: 94] points out in his review, Nattiez fails to mention the Peircean concept of the *final* interpretant; meaning is not infinitely deferable.) But we should not be deceived: Molino's tripartition is still present--indeed, it is the central concept that drives the book--and Nattiez is much exercised to defend the neutral level as a stable, immanent focus of analysis. This commitment to the neutral level coexists uncomfortably with the explicit philosophical opening up of meaning that interests him so in Peirce.² Furthermore, the only analyses that he promises for future volumes are *paradigmatic* analyses (Nattiez 1990: 87); despite a whole chapter entitled "Musical Meaning: The Symbolic Web," the question of addressing real meaning in real music seems strangely absent--particularly from the book's one extended analysis, which is yet another rethinking of the Tristan chord. Yet

he promises a method that can deal with all the world's music, and we can only wait expectantly to see what shape the analytical volumes will take.

Agawu's volume, in contrast, deals exclusively with the music of a single style of Western art music: the Classic style of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. And, unlike Nattiez's book, Agawu's is primarily analytical: a minimum of theory supports a maximum of analysis, rather than vice versa. Agawu, following Allan Keiler (Keiler 1981), invokes the same distinction that I have made here regarding the two streams of music-semiotic thought--what I have referred to as linguistic-formal and interpretive-hermeneutic, respectively, he calls *taxonomic-empirical* and *semantic*--and he places himself firmly on the side of the latter. The theory that supports his analyses rests fundamentally on the following, in order of importance: 1) Jakobson's distinction of introversive and extroversive meaning (later adapted by Coker [1972] as *congeneric* and *extragenetic* meaning); 2) Leonard Ratner's classification of "topics" in late eighteenth-century music; 3) a binary, Saussurian, more than a Peircean, concept of the sign, along with Saussure's *langue/parole*, diachronic/synchronic, and syntagmatic/paradigmatic distinctions; 4) the simple beginning-middle-end paradigm from Johann Mattheson's eighteenth-century concept of musical rhetoric; and 5) Schenkerian tonal theory. These strands of theory Agawu forges together in a way that homes in on musical meaning by investigating the "play" (hence the title) between tonal structure and topic, and between introversive and extroversive semiosis, in an illuminating series of examples that includes Mozart's String Quintets in C Major and D Major, K. 515 and 593, Haydn's String Quartet in D Minor, Op. 76, No. 2, and Beethoven's String Quartet in A Minor, Op. 132.

Hatten's monograph narrows the object of study even further. From Nattiez's encompassing of the whole world of music, to Agawu's consideration of the Classical style, Hatten moves to a detailed study of expressive meaning in the music of Beethoven--especially the late piano sonatas. His semiotic theory is the most focused and most closely reasoned in the three books. Taking as his point of departure the Jakobsonian theory of markedness, especially as interpreted by the American semiotician and linguist Michael Shapiro, and the notion of expressive topics and genres in the Classic style, Hatten develops a hermeneutics of Beethoven's music that proceeds fundamentally from a recognition of the asymmetry of unmarked and marked elements in the style. Thus, as Charles Rosen has pointed out, the major mode and the comic style are the default or unmarked category for the music of the late eighteenth century, while the minor mode and tragic style are marked. By refining this simple relation with other distinctions, such as high and low style, and historical or current style, Hatten gradually constructs a theory of expressive genres for the period. Then, elaborating these

distinctions with others derived from Ratner's topics, and with further distinctions from semiotic and literary theory (Peirce's type/token dyad, concepts of irony and metaphor, and Hatten's own reading of troping, which he sees as a kind of "creative growth" of topical references beyond their conventional or typical usage, to the point where they may begin to represent a certain expressive emplotment), he builds a theoretical edifice capable of handling the complex expressivity of Beethoven's works with impressive sophistication and sensitivity.

For better or worse, even though these three formidable publications have brought musical semiotics into the limelight of American scholarship and have had considerable influence (both Agawu's and Hatten's books have won awards from the Society for Music Theory), they have done little to bring semiotics into the music-scholarly mainstream. Perhaps it was too late for either a "science" or an interpretive tool, for "taxonomic empiricism" or "semanticism," to take over disciplines already firmly grounded in their own strong traditions. Perhaps also it is ultimately the structuralist connections of semiotics that have prevented it from being a major player in the new, poststructuralist disciplinary paradigms that have emerged in the past decade. These new paradigms arose precisely because the formalism and positivism of Anglo-American music theory and musicology had not opened themselves up to the search for musical and expressive meaning--to the goals of Kerman's "criticism" or to hermeneutics and interpretation. The greatest irony of the success of Agawu's and Hatten's books is surely that, despite their structuralist theoretical supports (Jakobson, Saussure, and Schenker for Agawu; Jakobson, Peirce, and Shapiro for Hatten), they now can be seen as central statements in the flood of publications in the years 1984-1995 (for example, Newcomb 1984 and 1987, L. Kramer 1984 and 1990, and Abbate 1991), that broke the chains of formalism and that made it once again respectable to write about expressive meaning, and desirable to write about social and political meaning, in musical scholarship. Perhaps then, these semiotic works, with whatever structuralist trappings they carry with them, have performed for American music theory and musicology the same thing that Steven Feld and Aaron Fox have claimed that structuralism did for ethnomusicology: "Ironically, when all is said and sung, it was the structuralist tradition that made anthropology and linguistics pay attention to the social immanence of music's supreme mystery, the grooving redundancy of elegant structuring that affectively connects the singularity of form to the multiplicity of sense" (Feld and Fox 1994: 43-44).

Ultimately, then, when we look back over the past hundred years of semiotic theory and activity, and the past thirty years of musical semiotics, what have the world in general, and the musical world in particular, gained that they did not have before the

development of semiotics? Like psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, semiotics arose from a totalizing modernist instinct to understand and theorize human existence, behavior, and signification. Whatever we think of psychotherapy, and whatever we think of semiotics, they both have stimulated us to theorize signification and meaning for a century, and semiotics has, over the past half century, provided a vital model of how structuralist and hermeneutic thinking can interact. And musical semiotics has served us both as a stimulus and as a conduit for our thinking about the fundamental questions of how music is organized, and how it takes on meaning.

NOTES

¹At the founding conference of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in 1969, it was decided to abandon the term *semiology* altogether in favor of *semiotics* (see Monelle 1992: 26). Despite this decision, a number of writers, particularly those who, like Jean-Jacques Nattiez, write in French, continue to use *semiology*.

²Nattiez's preference for fixed, as opposed to infinitely deferrable meaning appears even more strongly in his *Wagner Androgyne* (Nattiez 1993), the last third of which constitutes an attack on a variety of intellectual and musical theories and approaches that do not rigorously delimit allowable interpretations of meaning.

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