

Zersplitterung – Splintering of Voices

In *Zersplitterung* (*pusöjin chogak*, Splintering) for baritone, piano, and glass percussion, I tried to approach the tension between contemporary and traditional Korean culture as I had experienced it both during my short visit to South Korea in 2001 and during my study of contemporary and traditional Korean music since 1998 (→ III.4, III.5).²⁷ After researching music in the Korean context for a few years, I had written *together//apart* in 2001 for the Contemporary Music Ensemble Korea (CMEK). As explained above, this work emerged from the Korean court music piece *Sangnyöngsan* from the suite *Yöngsan hoesang* and from Isang Yun's *Together* (1989) for violin and double bass. My compositional method in this piece was based on detailed analyses of both works, and developed a “stratified” structure, in which these two materials coincided and were substantially transformed and contextualized (→ VI.2). This approach resulted, among other factors, from my research on Isang Yun's music and my criticism of simplified tendencies in his Asia-West dualism (→ III.4), but more importantly from a detailed study of Yüji Takahashi's non-essentialist reinvention of Asian instrumental practices (→ III.4) as well as conversations with Korean composers of a younger generation, mainly Bonu Koo (→ III.5). In our conversation, Koo referred to Takahashi's concepts, a connection that Koo documented in his own works by quoting the Korean children's song *Saeya, saeya, pahrang saeya* (Bird, bird, blue bird), also mentioning the role of this melody in Takahashi's piano work *Kwangju*, May 1980 (1980):

Supporters of the late nineteenth-century Tonghak movement used this song as a key melody. Since the Tonghak movement was brutally suppressed, it soon became very dangerous to sing this song. Only children were allowed to sing it without repercussions. Meanwhile, it became a symbol of hope. The way Takahashi quoted this song was very moving and I felt that he had a deep understanding of Korean politics, for he connected the Tonghak movement and the Kwangju protests.²⁸

As a tribute to Takahashi and Koo and a reference to politically charged Korean music and art discourses, a quotation from this song also appears in *Zersplitterung*, in the first interlude, whistled by the pianist (Ex. 6.13).

In *Zersplitterung*, Takahashi's tendency toward “radical traditionalism”²⁹ is reflected above all in the musical elaboration of the vocal part, which follows the principle of the traditional Korean vocal genre *sijo* and is closely modeled on the speech melody and rhythm of the spoken text. As in *together//apart*, the approach was rather “philological” in the beginning, guided by the idea that only a close understanding of and compositional intervention into the micro-structure of a model would make it possible to bring its incommensurability to light during the compositional process. Furthermore, it was exactly such a method that I missed in a famous

27 *Zersplitterung* was commissioned by the *Rice & Bread* music festival in 2002, whose focus was Korean-European musical cross-relations, organized by earPORT Duisburg/Germany (Gerhard Stäbler, Kunsu Shim). It was first performed by Martin Lindsay (baritone), Jong-Ah Yoon (piano), and Dirk Rothbrust (glass percussion) in Essen and Duisburg (two performances) on 22 June 2002. A more recent performance took place at the Salihara Festival in Jakarta, Indonesia on 14 July 2009 with Martin Lindsay (baritone), Hsin-Huei Huang (piano), and Berndt Thurner (glass-percussion). A recording of the 2009 performance can be accessed online: https://soundcloud.com/chr_utz/zersplitterung-2002.

28 Koo, “Beyond ‘Cheap Imitations,’” 133–134.

29 See Miller, “Radical Traditionalism.”

Example 6.13: Christian Utz, *Zersplitterung*, first interlude (p. 5),
reference of *Saeya, saeya* (whistled by the pianist)

The musical score for Example 6.13 consists of three staves: Baritone, Piano, and Glas-Perussion. The Baritone staff has handwritten lyrics in German. The Piano staff includes performance instructions such as [Stimmführer], [Whistle], [Schütteln], and [Stille]. The Glas-Perussion staff includes instructions like 'Kieselsteine auf Plastikbehälter', 'Wasser aus großer Kanne in die', and 'Mit beiden Händen die Kieselsteine im Wasser überschütten'. The score is marked with dynamics like *p*, *f*, and *ppp*.

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appropriation of *sijo*, Isang Yun's Fourth Symphony "*Im Dunkeln singen*" (1986),³⁰ to which I was seeking a kind of countermodel. My main sources for the study of *sijo* were a transcription³¹ (Ex. 6.14) and a recording of a *pyōng sijo* song.³² In preparation for the premiere, I played this recording to the vocal performer, Martin Lindsay, and together we developed vocal timbres and techniques in *Zersplitterung* based on a rather intuitive graphic vocal notation (Ex. 6.15).

Although the basic orientation of the vocal line around central pitches is derived from a similar structure in *sijo*, where only three main pitches, constantly inflected and varied, form a drone-like pitch space, the highly expressive and contemplative *sijo* vocal style is not imitated, but rather expanded into extreme registers and experimental timbres that transcend stylistic limitations. This vocal line merges with irregular repetitive structures in the (extended) piano and glass percussion into "hybrid" sonic constellations (see Ex. 6.15). The tension created by the vocal-instrumental interaction and the dense structure set up by the superimposition of three interrelated ostinato cycles (in a much simpler way than in *the wasteland of minds*, → VI.1) is released in two interludes and a postlude that are written in unmetered time and include "spectacular" gestures, most prominently the breaking of a glass plate in the second interlude that marks the climax of the piece (Ex. 6.16). I had already developed this type of simple *ritornello*-like large-scale form plan in my earliest pieces with intercultural content, such as *sheng – yue – lü* (1997) for vocal quartet and, more importantly, in *Abstract Voyage* (2000) for soprano and string quartet. These simple formal models enhance the ritualistic character of the music and guide the listener through altered and ambiguous musico-lingual territories while ensuring a basic orientation in the formal architecture.

The fragility of glass material as a sound source has been further explored in many of my subsequent works such as *specula* (2005) and *vier epigramme* (2005–06) for percussion solo and live electronics. The symbolic connection between this fragility and the conflict-laden atmosphere of particular cultural-political contexts established in *Zersplitterung* is further explored in *Glaskakkord*, where spectral analyses of glass sounds serve as one of the main materials in a stratified structure with a strong tendency toward collapse (→ VI.2).

30 See Stephan, Isang Yun: *Die fünf Symphonien*, 95–128 and Choi, *Einheit und Mannigfaltigkeit*, 175–207.

31 Reese, "Gattungen des Kunstliedes," 105–107.

32 Korean Traditional Music Vol. 1 (Court Music Highlights), The National Classical Music Institute, SKC Limited, 1987, Track 8.

Example 6.14: Transcription of *pyŏng sijo* by Chang Sa-hun, "Art Song." In *Survey of Korean Arts – Traditional Music*, Seoul 1973, 194 (quoted in Reese, "Gattungen des Kunstliedes," 106)

[1]

Tongch'a - - - ng - i (hi) - - - pal-ga - - - t nũ - - - (hũ) - nya - - -

no - go - - - (ho)-ji - - - li - - - u - ji - - - ji (hi) - in -

- da. - - -

[2]

So - - - ch'i- nũn - - - a- hũ - i - no - - - m un - - -

sang - gũ - i - - - (i) a - ni - hi - - - ir - ō - t - nũ (hũ) -

- nya - - -

[3]

Cha - i (hi) - - - nō - m - ō (hō) - - - sa-re - i - ki - in pat' - ũ - l - - -

ōn - jō - - - i - - - (hi) - - - kal - - - lyō. - - -

In the center of the text arrangement of *Zersplitterung* is the poem *Ch'immuge taehayō* (Silence) by Ko Ŭn (b. 1933), set in the original Korean (Table 6.1). The structure of this poem is juxtaposed with two further Korean poems, *Kū nalŭn* [This Day] by Sangbyōng Ch'ŏn (1930–1993) in the two interludes and a traditional *sijo* short poem by Kim Inhu (1510–1560) in the postlude. The “splintering,” the fragmentation of traditional and modern culture in Korea, is analogous to the gap between silence and speech, political commitment and interiorization, as documented in the two contemporary poems. They make the suffering and suppression of Korean intellectuals (both in South and North Korea) another facet of this piece.

In addition to dealing with the *sijo* vocal style, dealing with the sound and rhythm of the Korean language and the poetic style of the poems played a key part in the compositional process. The Koreanist Marion Eggert sent me the original Korean versions of the poems that I had found in

Example 6.15: Christian Utz, *Zersplitterung*, beginning of the second part (p. 6)

II. $\text{♩} = 60 \text{ (max)}$

Baritone

Piano

Glasses 1-5

Glas-Percussion

Bass Bottles

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Example 6.16: Christian Utz, *Zersplitterung*, second interlude; breakage of the glass plate (p. 11)

softer tempo

Baritone

Piano

Glasses-Percussion

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her compilation *Wind und Gras*,³³ and the pianist at the premiere, Jong-Ah Yoon, recited the poems for me in the original Korean. The rhythm and design of the vocal part are derived directly from the speech rhythm and intonation of this reading; again, I was not aiming for an imitation, but in some places, blatant exaggerations of, or “counter-designs” to, Yoon’s reading were included.

33 Eggert, *Wind und Gras*, 95 and 96–97. The original poem by Kim Inhu and the English translation were taken from the collection Kim, *Classical Korean Poetry*, 55 (no. 2055).

Table 6.1: Christian Utz, **Zersplitterung**, (2002), Libretto, based on poems by Ko Ŭn (b. 1933), **Ch'immuge taehayō** (Silence); Sangbyōng Ch'ōn (1930–1993), **Kū nalūn** (This Day); Inhu Kim (1510–1560), **Ch'ōngsanto** (The Blue Hills) (words or verses in **italics** are not sung/spoken)

baritone

modūn ch'immuktūra
hanpantoe hüt'ōchin ch'immuktūra
toraora
oksusūstae sakyōinūn paramsori sairo
kangmuri hūrūn kosūl kōsūllōsō
ōcheoa talli irūk'inūn mulkyōlsairo
ssōgūn tuiōm soke pakheinūn kich'i sori sairo
toraora
{Ko Ŭn, *Ch'immuge taehayō*}

*How long ago might it have been
since that day when it hit me
like the shirt under the iron ...*

*How long ago might it have been
since that day when in the house of horror
a summer insect offered me a handshake ...*

amu kōtto ssūchi mothanūn hūin chongi wie
pamūi pyōrang
kū pyōrangūi pawī t'ūme namūn ppurie
kant'ōnghānūn amk'ōttūrūi sal soke
anī soriran sorirūl ta ijōbōrin saramtūrūi
cham soke inūn ch'immuktūra
toraora
toraoasō k'ōdaran ch'immugūro
ch'immugūi ausōngūl tūllyōdao
ōttōn ausōngpodado musōpke
modūn ch'immuktūra toraora
{Ko Ŭn, *Ch'immuge taehayō*}

Mein Fleisch und meine Knochen wissen es:
Wahrhaftigkeit und Schmerz
welches stärker ist ...
An einem Rand
des Himmels in mir
reitet ein Vogel in jähem Schrecken die Flügel*

*All you silences,
Silences scattered on this island,
come back.
To the crackling of the wind in the blade of corn.
Among those waves rebelling against the river,
erected today differently from yesterday,
to the cough that got stuck in the dung heap,
come back.*

i jen myō nyōn i ō nūn ga,
a i ron mi wa i sya ū gat'i
tang han kū nar ūn ...

i jen myō nyōn i ō nūn ga,
mu sō un chip ti ch'ang sa e yō rūm kon ch'ung han ma ri
ttam hul li nūn na e ge ak su rūl ch'ong han kū nar ūn ...
{Sangbyōng Ch'ōn, *Kū nalūn*}

*Over white paper refusing the writing
the cliff of the night –
with roots left in the rocks,
fornicating females and in their flesh
the silences in the sleep of people who forgot
the voiceless voice,
come back.
Returned to a tremendous silence
let the cry of silence be heard
more terrible than any other outcry.
All you silences, come back,*

pianist (whispered)

nae sal gwa ppyō nūn al go i ta.
chin sil gwa ko t'ong
kū ō nū tchog i kang cha in ga rūl ...
nae ma ūm ha nūl
han p'yōn sa e sō
sae nūn so sū ra chi ge nal gae p'yōn ta.
{Sangbyōng Ch'ōn, *Kū nalūn*}

* My flesh and my bones know: / Truthfulness and pain / which is stronger ... / On one edge / of heaven in me / a bird spreads its wings in sudden terror

kūrihayō hanpandoūi ch'immogŭl modŭn
 padaekkachi p'akŭphara.
 modŭn ch'immoktŭra ttōnachi mal'la.
 toraora han kaeūi ch'immukŭm ch'immuki anida.
 han kaeūi sorinŭn soriina
 modŭn ch'immuk sogē
 kŭ sorinŭn saraita.
 naesōragŭi namuisaedŭra
 tathin mun tathin iptŭra
 saramtŭrui hanahanaui noyechōk aesutŭra
 toraoasō
 ch'immugŭro mannago
 ch'immugŭro ittangŭi modŭn
 ppyōdŭleke chesarŭl chinaedao.
 toraora toraora aenŭn kaŭrida.
 {Ko Ŭn, *Ch'immuge taehayō*}

and carry the silence of Korea to
 the ends of the seas.
 All of you, don't go
 turn back. A single silence is not a silence.
 A single sound is a sound,
 in every silence
 lives this sound.
 You leaves of the mountain forest,
 locked doors, locked mouths you,
 slavish melancholy from person to person,
 come back
 and meet as silence.
 In silence, bow to every skeleton
 in this country.
 Come back, it is autumn.

pianist (spoken)

ch'ōngsanto chōllo chōllo noksudo chōllo chōllo
 san chōllo su chōllo sansukane
 nado chōllo
 kŭ chungē chōllo charan momini
 nulgkido chōllo harira.
 {Inhu Kim, *Ch'ōngsanto*}

The blue hills go the way they go, so do the green waters.
 Hills and waters go the way they go;
 and I follow between them.
 As I have grown up with both of them so will I grow old,
 following wherever they go.

The instrumental writing acknowledges the tensions inherent in the vocal part's "orality" by aiming at a balance between the unstable, sensitive fragility of sounds that are hard to control (overtones produced by bowing glasses or piano strings) and explosive violence charged with maximum energy (booming and piercing effects produced by bottles in the piano, breaking of the glass plate, crushing glass splinters with a mortar, etc.). These sound events, however, are not used as naïve illustrations of the poetic meanings. Instead, they can be understood as a consequence of the music's structural tendency toward fragments or "splinters." A tension between concentration, self-control, and the eruption of withheld energies is a key aspect in the interaction of words and music in *Zersplitterung*.

Exploration of Tone Spaces and Political Narrativity in *telinga - mulut*

Zersplitterung is possibly the last work in which I pursued an explicitly "philological" approach aimed at an intensification of cultural and structural incompatibilities. In a series of ensemble works written between 2001 and 2006, I combined Asian and Western instruments, often with the addition of live electronics,³⁴ in varying forms and situations. In these works, I replaced the

34 In addition to the works dealt with in Chapters VI.1 and VI.2 (*Interference, together/apart, the wasteland of minds, and Glasakkord*) this series of works includes *Kreise – Yuan* (1998–2001) for soprano, *shakuhachi*, flute, string trio, and live electronics and *repercussion.camouflage.report* (2003) for flute, trombone, *sheng/xun*, percussion, and live electronics. In 1999, I composed my first work for East Asian instruments, *Koinzidenzen (ouran yizhi)* for six Chinese instruments (*xiao, sheng, erhu, pipa, zhongruan, zheng*).

evocation and transformation of traditional pieces or genres with a more structuralist contextualization in which pitch and timbre constellations were, for instance, derived from the organology, the fingerings, or the string layouts of instruments, common registers, peak pitches, or hybrid timbres. A key aspect of *Zersplitterung*, the idea of a musical structure that is highly loaded with sometimes narrative, sometimes vaguely metaphorical, but usually ambiguous meaning, however, has been pursued further in my subsequent work, as already demonstrated in *Glasakkord*, and has become an important link between the structural design and the exploration of cultural conflict and encounter in subsequent works of mine (→ VI.4).

This principle of structural semantics (or semanticized structure) was taken to a new level in *telinga – mulut* [ears – mouths] for baritone, recorded female speaker, and four instruments (flute/bass flute, clarinet/bass clarinet, violin, violoncello) (2009), a work exploring the boundaries between concert and stage music. Commissioned by the Salihara Festival in Jakarta, *telinga – mulut* approaches the poem *Suatu Cerita dari Negeri Angin* [A Story from the Country of Hot Air, 1998] by the Indonesian poet Agus R. Sarjono.³⁵ Sarjono's poem develops highly disturbing images of a village society dominated by suspicion, spying, and open violence, all triggered by the breaking of a dam (presumably linked to corruption among local officials). This is a dimension to which the title of the piece – *ears – mouths* – refers (Table 6.2): the villagers were once “required to become *ears*” (76³⁶) – which I read as a metaphor for spying and mistrust –, but after they had unlearned listening “they are delighted to have become *mouths*” (78–79) – and they repeat the same, “long-winded and repetitive” story (92–93), possibly propaganda slogans of an authoritarian political regime. *Telinga – mulut* is thus loosely connected to *Zersplitterung*, as both pieces focus on highly political questions arising from cultural and social conflicts evident in the selected poetry, and these also leave their marks on the musical settings. Furthermore, both works pursue a multilingual conception in which Indonesian/Korean, English, and German textual elements are crossrelated.

The setting of *telinga – mulut*, however, confronts this political impact of the words with a strict, conceptual musical organization that contrasts with the more explicitly expressive writing of the main vocal part in *Zersplitterung*. In *telinga – mulut*, music and words remain far more isolated, each leaving the other largely “without comment.” No attempt was made to “musicalize” the text according to general musical principles or to shape musical gestures according to the language structure. This stems from my intention to give Sarjono's words, which are fraught with collective traumas from more recent Indonesian history, their own space. They are interspersed with enigmatic prose fragments by Franz Kafka which tell of a bridge equipped with human sensitivity that eventually collapses. Despite the obvious analogy between a breaking dam and a collapsing bridge, this insertion might be understood as a polyvalent comment on the musical structure, rather than Sarjono's words: it is not following the pitch organization in most other sections, which is based on two non-chromatic equidistant

35 *Telinga – mulut* was premiered in Jakarta at Teater Salihara on 15 July 2009 by Martin Lindsay and ensemble on_line (now PHACE), conducted by Simeon Pironkoff. An edited recording of this performance can be accessed online: https://soundcloud.com/chr_utz/telinga-mulut-2009. I first encountered Sarjono's poems through a collection in German translation (Agus R. Sarjono. *Frische Knochen aus Banyuwangi*. Berlin: Edition Galrev, 2002), that is opened by *Suatu Cerita dari Negeri Angin* (“Eine Geschichte aus dem Land der heißen Luft,” pp. 5–7). With the kind assistance of the translator Berthold Damshäuser, I contacted Sarjono personally and he provided me with the Indonesian original and an English translation by Toenggoel Siagian, which was slightly adapted for my setting.

36 Numbers refer to the lines in the libretto provided in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut* (ears – mouth) (2009), Libretto, based on texts by Agus R. Sarjono (b. 1962), *Suatu Cerita dari Negeri Angin* (A Story From the Land of Hot Air, 1998; English version after Toenggoel Siagian – slightly modified by the composer) and Franz Kafka (1883–1924), *Die Brücke* (1917, fragments from a short prose sketch) (words or verses in *italics* are not sung/spoken)

baritone

Airmata yang berpuh

*One morning the dam in my village
built by a thousand hours of indoctrinations,
a hundred ceremonies and ten bayonets
started to rumble and collapsed.*

- 1 One morning the dam in my village
- 2 built by a thousand hours of indoctrinations,
- 3 a hundred ceremonies and ten bayonets
- 4 started to rumble and collapsed. Tears
- 5 held back for decades
- 6 burst out sweeping the street clean
- 7 and changed into a pool of blood.
- 8 People hurried to ritually wash their hair
- 9 and their memories in it.
- 10 they wandered around
- 11 with heads looking like cool melons
- 12 slinking through all corners of the village
- 13 some were even disguised
- 14 as assassins for hire.

- 15 My uncle and my cousins pounced on them
- 16 and then they went berserk. They bashed
- 17 those heads with rocks and cutlasses,
- 18 maybe there was a sliver of memories
- 19 hidden, they said, a kind
- 20 of mysterious data useful as topic of conversation
- 21 while doing the night rounds.

- 22 *But there was nothing in those heads*
- 23 *except for soapsuds, remnants of a laundry*
- 24 *too carefully rinsed. Some immediately*
- 25 *went to parade the severed heads around*
- 26 *as if they were parading tattered memories*
- 27 *about a time about a season*
- 28 *in an overcrowded country*
- 29 *filled with hot air.*

tape (female speaker)

Tears held back for decades

Bendungan di kampungku yang dibangun
oleh seribu jam penataran, seratus upacara
dan sepuluh sangkur, pada sebuah subuh
berderak-derak dan runtuh.

*Bendungan di kampungku yang dibangun
oleh seribu jam penataran, seratus upacara
dan sepuluh sangkur, pada sebuah subuh
berderak-derak dan runtuh. Airmata
yang berpuh tahun tertahan
pecah menderas menyapu jalanan
lalu berobah menjadi genangan darah.
Orang-orang bergegas mengeramasi rambut
dan ingatannya di sana. Mereka pun berkeliaran
dengan kepala serupa labu dingin
menyusuri pelosok-pelosok pedesaan
sebagian bahkan menyamar
sebagai pembunuh bayaran.*

*Paman dan sepupuku yang memergokinya
jadi penasaran. Mereka pecahkan
kepala-kepala itu dengan batu
atau parang, siapa tahu ada sebersit saja ingatan
atau kenangan, ucapnya, semacam data misterius
sebagai bahan gunjingan dikala ronda malam.*

Tapi tak ada apa-apa dalam kepala-kepala itu
kecuali gelembung sabun, seperti sisa pencucian
yang tak dibilas dengan teliti. Sebagian mereka
segera mengarak potongan kepala itu
seperti mengarak ingatan yang compang-camping
tentang sebuah saat sebuah musim
di sebuah negeri yang padat
berisi angin.

30 My neighbor who loves to tell stories
 31 once caught a magician who
 32 was slinking stealthily through the bedrooms
 33 of his village. When he was strangled
 34 and his head cut off, not one story
 35 flowed from his throat. His slashed veins
 36 just spouted gas accompanied by the shrieking
 37 of a siren, a kind of emergency alarm
 38 from a sinking ship.

*Tetanggaku yang gemar cerita, pernah menangkap
 seorang pesulap yang entah mengapa sibuk
 mengendap-endap di ruang tidur kampongnya.
 Setelah dicekik dan ditebas lehernya,
 ternyata tak sebuah ceritapun mengalir
 dari kerongkongannya. Dari potongan
 urat lehernya, hanya gas yang memancar keluar
 diiringi denging sirine, semacam isyarat darurat
 dari sebuah kapal yang tengah karam.*

Ich war steif und kalt, ich war eine Brücke, über einem
 Abgrund lag ich. Diesseits waren die Fußspitzen, jen-
 seits die Hände eingebohrt, in bröckelndem Lehm habe
 ich mich festgebissen. [...] Gegen Abend im Sommer,
 dunkler rauschte der Bach, da hörte ich einen Mannes-
 schritt! [...]

Er kam, [...] In mein buschiges Haar fuhr er mit der Spitze
 und ließ sie [...] lange drin liegen. Dann aber [...] sprang
 er mit beiden Füßen mir mitten auf den Leib. Ich er-
 schauerte in wildem Schmerz, [...] da stürzte ich schon,
 ich stürzte, und schon war ich zerrissen und aufgespießt
 von den zugespitzten Kieseln, die mich immer so fried-
 lich aus dem rasenden Wasser angestarrt hatten.

Since then

39 *all the people of my village detached*
 40 *their heads and exchanged them*
 41 *with coconuts: they are hard and contain water.*
 42 *A precaution, they said, for if the whole*
 43 *village is obliterated by fire, our heads*
 44 *will remain moist and save the memories*
 45 *of our beloved children who went to the city*
 46 *in order to learn or to do menial jobs*
 47 *scratching for a better future. One evening*
 48 *their children suddenly all appeared*
 49 *from behind a cloud of smoke and tear gas*
 50 *the back of their neck full of bullets*
 51 *than fathers to wince and mothers to wail.*
 52 *Finally, after the harvest had failed due to vermins*
 53 *and bad weather, they patiently replanted*
 54 *their children in the middle of their rice fields*
 55 *and gardens.*

Sejak itu

penduduk kampungku ramai-ramai melepas
 kepala mereka dan menggantinya
 dengan buah kelapa: keras dan berair.
 Buat persiapan, ucap mereka, jika seluruh
 kampung hangus terbakar, kepala kami
 masih bisa basah menyimpan ingatan
 tentang anak-anak tersayang yang mengembara
 ke kota-kota, bersekolah atau bergelandangan
 mengais hari depan. Tiba-tiba
 di suatu malam anak-anak mereka bermunculan
 dari balik gumpalan asap dan gas airmata
 dengan tengkuk penuh peluru hingga semua bapak
 tersedak dan ibu tersedu. Akhirnya, selepas musim panen
 yang gagal karena hama dan cuaca busuk
 dengan sabar mereka tanam kembali
 anak-anak mereka di tengah sawah dan ladang.

56 One morning, I do not know in what month,
 57 what year, our village
 58 was forced to rebuild the dam.

*Di sebuah pagi, entah bulan apa
 entah tahun berapa, seluruh kampung kami
 diwajibkan bergotong-royong membangun*

59 And there they immediately poured out
60 all their tears in the hope
61 that just maybe one day they would be able
62 to detach the coconuts, melons or pumpkins
63 from their necks.

*bendungan itu kembali. Segera mereka curahkan
habis-habisan seluruh airmata mereka di sana
sambil berharap-harap barangkali saja
suatu hari kelak bisa mereka lepaskan
kelapa, semangka atau labu dari atas leher mereka.*

64 In the drizzle of an afternoon, in some
65 month of some year, the people of that village
66 crowded the banks of the dam to fish
67 and search for their heads.

*Di bawah gerimis di sebuah sore entah bulan apa
entah tahun berapa, penduduk kampung itu
ramai-ramai memenuhi tepian bendungan untuk mengail
dan mencari kembali kepala mereka.*

For quite some time

68 *they had been longing for their regular heads*
69 *complete with memories and remembrances*
70 *of course they have collectively arranged*
71 *a user's permit from the head of the village*
72 *who for some reason now seemed uneasy*
73 *and a bit embarrassed by the crocodile head*
74 *which until then had so magnificently sat on his neck.*

Sungguh

lama mereka rindukan kepala yang biasa saja
lengkap dengan ingatan atau kenangan
tentu izin untuk memakainya kembali
sudah mereka urus bersama di kantor kepala desa
yang entah mengapa kini tampak tersipu
dan agak malu dengan kepala buaya
yang selama ini terpasang elok
di atas lehernya.

75 Once all people in our village
76 were required to become ears.
They had become used
77 to accept soap bubbles from the slick mouths
78 of the village administrators.

Dulu, di kampung kami seluruh penduduk
diwajibkan menjadi telinga.

Now they are delighted
79 to have become mouths.

Mereka terbiasa
menerima gelembung-gelembung sabun dari mulut
licin para pengurus desa.

Kini mereka bersukaria
bisa menjadi mulut.

When they began

80 to be able to construct stories,
81 they were disappointed, for no one
82 was willing anymore to be ears
83 including members of the village board.
84 So all the new stories that they had composed
85 no longer had an audience.

Tatkala mereka mulai pandai

membikin cerita, merekapun kecewa
tak ada lagi yang bersedia menjadi telinga
juga segala aparat desa hingga segala cerita baru
yang mereka susun itu tak lagi ada yang mendengarnya.

Patienly, they took

86 all the stories they had created and planted
87 them quietly in the rice fields and gardens
88 imagining that during the coming harvest time
89 the grown trees would bear fruit to
90 thousands of stories. But one of the trees
91 grew too fast and bore as fruit
92 the same story: long-winded
93 and repetitive.

Dengan sabar, segala cerita yang mereka susun
mereka tanam diam-diam di sawah dan ladang
sambil membayangkan-bayangkan tibanya musim panen
ketika semua pohon tumbuh dan berbuah ribuan kisah.
Tapi salah satunya tumbuh kelewat cepat
dan berbuah cerita-cerita yang sama: panjang
dan berulang.

scale systems (Ex. 6.17). In system A the octave is divided into ten equal steps (i.e., 120-cent steps), and in system B the minor ninth is divided into seven equal steps (i.e., c. 186-cent steps). The confines of these rigid pitch structures are challenged by inflections in sections where pitches are consistently destabilized, creating fields of varying noise content, especially during the insertion of the Kafka fragment in Section C (see Table 6.3). The rigidity of the pitch structure exhibits a tendency to “collapse” at a very sudden, unpredictable moment toward the end of the piece in part B4 (see Table 6.3).

Neither pitch system makes any reference to the lower parts of the harmonic series or its proportions, and they are therefore not intended (in contrast to some proponents of spectral approaches in contemporary music) to imply “pure” intervals as an implicit criticism of the equidistant chromatic system. Instead, they are representative (just like the chromatic scale commonly used) of a highly artificial rationalization of note relationships and might be understood as tongue-in-cheek musings on the phenomenon of tempered pitch systems (– why could history not also have produced systems with ten, instead of twelve, notes per octave?). The performers are, however, encouraged to stretch and narrow the intervals intuitively, though without resorting to the habitual twelve-tone scale. Thus, I give each system an individual sound space (in a similar way, intonation is always adjusted in more conventional pitch systems according to style, composer, or work). This idea of a deliberate stretching and narrowing of intervals also refers to the practice in some Indonesian *gamelan* ensembles of consciously detuning identical paired instruments in relation to each other in order to create beating and interference patterns.

Again, the overall formal design of *telinga – mulut* follows a very simple alternating scheme with slight “interruptions” (Table 6.3). In all A sections, Sarjono’s poem is rendered by the baritone in English translation, while in the B sections it is heard from tape recited by the female Indonesian speaker Palupi Warananingtyas.³⁷ In the beginning and toward the end, English and Indonesian layers overlap.

In the A sections, the baritone is conceived as part of a basic five-part structure in which the voice and instruments act on the same hierarchical level, molded into “homophonic fields” that gradually explore the scale and intervals of system A. These fields are interrupted by three recitative-like vocal narratives in Section A1 in which the baritone takes the role of a storyteller – a function that is further explored in dramatic scenes in Sections C and A3 and taken to surreal and ecstatic levels. In A2 and A4, the homophonic fields tend to disperse into fragmented and, especially in A4, into heterophonic structures. All A sections have been developed from the same basic model introduced at the beginning of A1, resulting in a large-scale variation structure. Example 6.18 gives a sense of the transformation process taking place during these four “variations” by comparing a few measures from the beginning of each A section.

The B sections take the speech rhythm of the prerecorded Indonesian text as a structural model for six complementary duos (including, as two variants, a solo in B3 and a *tutti* in B4). “Complementary” here means that the live instruments punctuate the speech rhythm heard from tape. Similarly to the A sections, the pitch constellations are derived from a cautious exploration of pitch system B in its scale and intervals (Ex. 6.19).

37 Palupi Warananingtyas is a singer and academic teaching at the Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta/Java; her recitation of Sarjono’s poem was recorded in at the University of Music in Graz, Austria on 6 May 2009, where Ms. Warananingtyas presented a guest lecture on vocal music genres in Indonesia.

Example 6.17: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut*, tone systems: scale A divides the octave into ten equal steps (one step = 120 cent) from B $\flat$ 1 (the lowest instrumental pitch used in this piece); scale B divides the minor ninth into seven equal steps (one step = 185.71 cent) from C2

The musical score consists of two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system's bass staff has notes numbered 1 through 10. Below the notes are interval markings: +20c, -40c, +40c, -20c, etc. The second system's bass staff has notes numbered 1 through 7. Below the notes are interval markings: -14c, -29c, -43c, -57c, +29c, +14c, etc. The treble staves contain complex melodic lines with many accidentals and interval markings.

The multiplicity of perspectives involved in the compositional process (pitch systems, scalar, intervallic, and timbral principles, phonetic, semantic, and rhythmic dimensions of the text, and text-music interaction) mirrors the confusing effect of the multilingual setting. The deformation and destabilization of all layers is considerably enhanced after the sudden collapse in the ephemeral Section B4: the final crisis is reached in the breathless alternation between heterophonic fragments between baritone and instrumental ensemble and isolated snatches of the prerecorded Indonesian recitation in Section A4.2 (Ex. 6.20). The rigid musical structure is turned completely on its head by these ruptures and develops into a strange figural field, with the high bass clarinet taking up the falsetto timbre of the baritone, who in turn whistles a melodic fragment that has emerged over the course of the piece as a fixed idea within pitch system A (mm. 289–294). The atmosphere has turned into a field of memory, a remembrance that gets stuck toward the end in a sequence of abruptly rhythmicized, pressed bow impulses (mm. 294–296). In the end, the singer appears to have lost his ability to articulate (soundless movements of the mouth in the baritone part mark the end of the piece).

Toward a Polyphony of Meanings

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter (→ VI.1), the compositional approaches I have described should not be seen as exemplifications of a theory of interculturality. My music, however, definitely aims to encompass concepts of composed alterity – musical processes which are rigorously separated from one another, and hypolepsis – musical processes that connect to one another both by negation and transformation. However, the music never really “succeeds” in keeping the layers or sections “pure” and separate; rather, processes of convergence or dissolution remind the listener that these layers constantly refer to one another and have a common destiny. There is no harmonious reconciliation of the realms and dimensions of the music, but neither is there any insistence on negativity as the only way.

In *Zersplitterung* and *telinga – mulut*, the highly versatile nature of the human voice as a messenger between musical structure and meaning, in conjunction with the multilingual text settings and the specific qualities of the languages involved, is of particular significance for the

Table 6.3: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut*, synopsis. Line numbers for the poem refer to the English translation (see Table 6.2), although the verse structure differs from that of the Indonesian original in some instances.

section	measures	formal function	tempo/character	text (S = Sarjono; K = Kafka)	tone system
A1.1	1	echo		--	A
	2-13	introduction (homophonic field 1)	$\text{♩} = 30$, tentative and fragile	S.1-4 Indonesian (tape) S.4-5 Indonesian (baritone)	
A1.2	14-16	vocal narrative 1	slow, in time	S.1-4 English (bar.)	
	17-28	homophonic field 2	$\text{♩} = 40$, pressing forward imperceptibly	S.4.2-8.1 English (bar.)	
	29-35	vocal narrative 2		S.8.2-14 English (bar.)	
	36-47	homophonic field 3	$\text{♩} = 50$, restless	S.15-18.1 English (bar.)	
	48-51	vocal narrative 3	slower, but in steady time	S.18.2-21 English (bar.)	
	52-54	echoes	$\text{♩} = 40$	--	
B1 (vl. + vc.)	55-64	duo: introduction	$\text{♩} = 40$; $\text{♩} = 40$	--	B
	65-71	complementary duo 1	$\text{♩} = 60$	S.22-29 Indonesian (tape)	
A2	72-83	homophonic field 4 (dispersed)	$\text{♩} = 40$, continuously pressing forward, but not actually accelerating	S.30-31 English (bar.)	A
	84-97			S.32-35.1 English (bar.)	
	98-111			S.35.2-38 English (bar.)	
C	112	noise field + dramatic scene	senza tempo		--
	113-126		$\text{♩} = 132$	K	
	127-133				B
	134-157				--
B2 (bcl. + vc.)	158-161	complementary duo 2	$\text{♩} = 40 - \text{♩} = 60$	S.39-41 Indonesian (tape)	B
	162-166	duo: interlude			
	167-172	complementary duo 3		S.42-47.1 Indonesian (tape)	
	173-176	duo: interlude	$\text{♩} = 40$		
	177-185	complementary duo 4	$\text{♩} = 60$	S.47.2-55 Indonesian (tape)	

A3	186–203	homophonic field 5 (interrupted)	$\text{♩} = 60$, sleepwalking	S.56–61 English (bar.)	A
	204–212	breakout	$\text{♩} = 90$, precipitato	S.62–63 English (bar.)	
	213–220	madness scene	$\text{♩} = 60$, semplice	S.64–67 English (bar.)	
B3 (vl.)	221–237	complementary “duo” 5	$\text{♩} = 40$	S.68–74 Indonesian (tape)	B
A4	238–245	homophonic field 6: introduction	$\text{♩} = 60$, gentle and serene	--	
	246–263	homophonic field 6		S.75–79 English (bar.)	
B4 (tutti)	264–269	complementary “duo” 6 / dramatic scene	$\text{♩} = 60$, collapsing	S.80–85.1 English (bar.; mouth shut) + Indonesian (tape)	
A4.2	270–300	homophonic field 7 (dispersing)	$\text{♩} = 60$, sempre ritardando à $\text{♩} = 40$ (m. 296)	S.85.2–93 English (Bar.) + Indonesian (tape)	A
	301–303	echoes	$\text{♩} = 30$		
	304	silent mouth movements			

Example 6.18: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut*, beginnings of sections A1 (mm. 1–6), A2 (mm. 72–79), A3 (mm. 186–192), A4 (mm. 238–243)

A1

senza tempo $\text{♩} = 30$ tentative and fragile

baritone

flute

bass clarinet (B)

violin

violoncello

A2

Example 6.19: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut*, section B2, mm. 177–185

♩ = 60

dar. (B)

4/4

vc.

tape

Tiba-tiba di suatu malam anak-anak mereka bermunculan dari balik gumpalan asap dan gas airmata dengan tengkuluk penuh paku hingga semua bapak tersedak dan ibu tersedu.
[One evening their children suddenly all appeared from behind a cloud of smoke and tear gas the back of their neck full of batten than fathers to wince and mothers to wail.]

182

dar. (B)

vc.

tape

Akhirnya, selepas musim panen yang gagal karena hama dan cuaca busuk dengan sabar mereka tanam kembali anak-anak mereka di tengah sawah dan ladang.
[Finally, after the harvest had failed due to vermin and bad weather, they patiently replanted their children in the middle of their rice fields and gardens.]

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Example 6.20: Christian Utz, *telinga – mulut*, section A4.2, mm. 275–282

275

bar.

them qui-et - ly in the rice fields and gardens i - ma - gining that du - ring the

f.

bass cl. (B)

vi.

vc.

tape

[a] [b]

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overall effect of the music on the listener. Its chameleon-like interaction with the sound world of the instrumental layers – acting as subject, object, and an almost imperceptible element among equal voices in a global texture or structure – brings together dramatic, narrative, and purely structural dimensions.

Despite the politically loaded references and symbolism of the texts, both works refrain from making any authoritative statement about musical or political meaning. The polyphony of the compositional methods employed can be understood as an affinity for the metaphors of “polyphony” or “plurality of voices” in literary criticism as developed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Jacques Derrida, among others. Bakhtin describes the polyphonic novel as a situation in which an author or narrator no longer has control over the characters, but acts with them on the same hierarchical level.³⁸ “There is no third person to bring unity to the confrontation between the two; they do not culminate in a stable ‘I’ which would be the ‘I’ of the monologic author.”³⁹ In my compositions, however, “polyphony” is not limited to the hierarchical balance of different musical and textual layers, but might also be connected to Derrida’s idea of an inner polyphony within voices and single words:

Voice can betray the body to which it is lent, it can make it ventriloquize as if the body were no longer anything more than the actor or the double of another voice, of the voice of the other, even of an innumerable, incalculable polyphony. A voice may give birth [...] to another body.⁴⁰

Already when a word has several meanings – and this plurality is irreducible – you can hear in it, or it lets you hear even if you don’t take the initiative, several meanings and thus several voices. There are several voices already in the word. One can give this plurality of voices in the word itself its freedom, more or less freedom.⁴¹

4. Composition as Polyphony: Creating, Performing, and Perceiving Music Non-Hierarchically

When we speak of “polyphony” in the context of this book, this naturally implies the idea of an “(inter)cultural polyphony,” the idea of an “encounter” or “confrontation” between two (or more) different systems or understandings of sound and listening that may or may not have common features, common ground. Bakhtin’s and Derrida’s decentering of the subject as condensed into the metaphor of polyphony, outlined above, has profound musical implications. In contemporary music, however, the term “polyphony” has rarely been used after 1945, probably because of its close association with past musical epochs such as Renaissance or Baroque (not to mention “counterpoint,” which, owing to its image as a narrowly rule-based and outdated method, has temporarily disappeared almost entirely from compositional discourse).⁴² A “radicalized” polyphony, a simultaneous occurrence of different musical layers or personae, however, is at the core of many new music poetics, as demonstrated in preceding chapters (→ V.3, VI.1).

38 See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, 5–46.

39 Kristeva, “The Ruin of a Poetics,” 111.

40 Derrida, *Points... Interviews 1974–1994*, 161.

41 Ibid., 392–393.

42 See the detailed discussion of these terms and their applicability to new music in Kleinrath and Utz, “Harmonik / Polyphonie.”