The Radical Violinist:

Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad and the Liberation of the Violin

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Abstract

Recognising that an environment of revolution can breed a culture outside of the mainstream - and that said culture can breed unique forms of expression – this thesis aims to answer questions hitherto undiscussed in violin performance practice discourse, and furthermore aims to propose a new direction in violin performance practice that is unique in current discourse. The research question represents a divergence from the 'normalised' perspective of the violin as an instrument traditionally associated with 'classical' or 'museum-piece' music, music that is relegated to consumption in state and corporate-sponsored orchestras and concert halls. The latter is a music that adheres to a set of rules and practices, whereas this thesis aims to bring attention to an alternative to modern norms in violin performance practices by asking the question: in what ways do the performance practices of underground violinists during the 1960s in New York City reflect the revolutionary ideals and philosophies of their creators, and do these practices thereby liberate the violin from these traditions and norms? These questions will be approached through three core methods: musical analysis, critical theory, and discourse analysis. The musical analysis describes the performance practices of underground violinists and in particular those of Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt, in detail. Their practices will be discussed via the discourse generated through conducting one-on-one interviews with, and analysing the writings of, Conrad and Flynt. This then leads to the pinnacle of this triangulation, the critical theory. Drawn from socialist thinkers and the "hauntology" theory of Jacques Derrida – as well as the specific philosophies of underground violinists and their comrades – the thesis culminates in the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist, ultimately proposing a new radicalised, socially and environmentally conscious violin practice.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)

Adam Cadell

Acknowledgements

I would like to firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this thesis was created.

I would also like to acknowledge: the invaluable guidance and support of my principal supervisor Dr Donna Weston; the love, support and immense tolerance of my partner, Ms Renee Montgomery; the love and support of my family and friends; Mr Tony Conrad for his kind participation; Mr Ryan Potter and the Brisbane underground for so much inspiration and music.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis in part to the memory of my Associate Supervisor Prof. William Duckworth who sadly passed away before the completion of this work.

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Chapter 1: Heterogeneous Beginnings: An Introduction to Underground Violin

The decade of the 1960s was a monumental time in the development of Western music and art as a whole. It saw the birth of a true underground culture, a movement that strove towards a utopian worldview. This culture existed in the underground of post-war, predominantly Western, society and was, by its very nature, an extreme and often confrontational expression of the anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian views espoused by the wider alternative culture of the time. This underground society had its own press, poets, writers, musicians, artists, and revolutionaries, all with an international reach. In Germany *Kosmische* Rock (what is now commonly referred to as "Krautrock") musicians rubbed shoulders and shared squats with Red Army Faction commando group the Baader-Meinhof gang; in Japan bands were involved in revolutionary acts, such as the infamous Red Army Faction Japan Airlines hijacking featuring a member of rock group Les Rallizés Dénudés.[1] It is, however, the Bohemian lower East Side of New York City which forms the backdrop for the protagonists of this thesis. The Greenwich Village 'heterotopia'[2], as Foucault dubbed it, became a crucible for the nascent avant-garde scene due to the availability of low rent loft apartments in the context of a rich avant-garde and radical heritage. Underground, downtown New York was a centre for beat poetry, queer sexuality, avant-garde music and leftist politics. Like much of the culture of the time, drugs, particularly marijuana, hashish, heroin and amphetamines such as Dexamyl, were an important part of life in downtown New York City, and they indelibly left their mark on the music. The downtown scene in the 1960s was fertile ground for the creation of new and original music, and the violin, along with other bowed-string instruments, was crucial to many

[1] These events and more are expanded on in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Julian Cope's *Krautrocksampler* (Head Heritage, 1995) and *Japrocksampler* (Bloomsbury, 2007) are the definitive works on the underground scenes of Germany and Japan in the 1960s and 70s. Both of these works refer to these radical events on several occasions, and both of these works serve as valuable sources throughout this thesis.

[2] Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963* (New York: Duke University Press, 1993)., 14.

of the new sounds. The violin featured prominently in psychedelic folk bands and began to feature in free jazz ensembles performing in unconventional spaces such as abandoned lofts and factory floors. In the circles of the avant-garde the violin was deconstructed by the physical act of destruction, or the alteration and modification of its parts. Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt recorded and performed works for solo violin as well as ensembles such as The Theatre of Eternal Music and Flynt's protest band The Insurrections. The Velvet Underground came to prominence after their 1965, Andy Warhol-produced debut album in which John Cale's viola brought the sound of New York's avant-garde underground to the ears of rock music fans for the first time. Underground culture, and in particular the music that was born from it, is central to the contextual make-up of this thesis.

This underground environment of revolution bred a culture outside of the mainstream, a culture that bred unique forms of expression. Violinists had an important role in creating many of these unique expressions, and ultimately created their own world of radical underground violin performance that continues to evolve today. This thesis aims to answer questions hitherto undiscussed in violin performance practice discourse, and furthermore aims to propose a new direction in violin performance practice that is unique in current discourse. The research question represents a divergence from the 'normalised' perspective of the violin as an instrument traditionally associated with 'classical' or 'museum-piece' music, music that is relegated to consumption in state and corporate-sponsored orchestras and concert halls. The latter is part of a music culture that adheres to a set of rules and practices, whereas this thesis aims to bring attention to an alternative to modern norms in violin performance practices by asking the question: in what ways do the performance practices of underground violinists during the 1960s in New York City reflect the revolutionary ideals and philosophies of their creators, and do these practices thereby liberate the violin from these traditions and norms?

This thesis will approach these questions through three core methods: musical analysis, critical theory, and discourse analysis. The musical analysis describes in detail the performance practices of underground violinists and in particular those of Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt.

Their practices will be discussed via the discourse generated through conducting and surveying one-on-one interviews with, and analysing the writings of, Conrad and Flynt. This then leads to the pinnacle of this triangulation, the critical theory. Drawn from socialist thinkers and the 'hauntology' theory of Jacques Derrida – as well as the specific philosophies of underground violinists and their comrades – the thesis culminates in the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist, ultimately proposing a new radicalised, socially and environmentally conscious violin practice. What follows here is the background required to understand this thesis, and in order to tap the rich veins of underground violin performance practice we must first drag through the mud of history and try to understand the clandestine world of the underground itself.

Dragging through the Underground

Specific literature on underground culture as a definitive subject is hard to come by, and seemingly too broad to be covered in any one study. Underground culture by its very nature is mercurial and bucks against an over-arching consensus of its place in any one geographical situation or community. There are myriad forms and subgenres of underground music that would be overwhelmingly difficult to cover in one single book, however, throughout the literature relevant to the era in focus, the term 'underground' held a simpler meaning. Underground music was made by those who took culture into their own hands with DIY album releases, poetry books, festivals and performances, and strong oppositional politics based largely in the far-left of the spectrum (there were, of course, exceptions to this rule as the 1960s also marked the resurgence of militant right-wing groups that existed even further on the fringes of mainstream society – the Manson family for instance). There are many works of literature which confirm this definition of 1960s and 70s underground culture, but one compilation of essays in particular has been of particular use and that is Robert Adlington's *Sound Commitments: Avant-garde Music and the Sixties* (2009, Oxford University Press). Duncan Reekie's work on the underground film scene is also of importance in this regard. Titled

Subversion, this volume covers the work of Tony Conrad and other filmmakers in the New York underground during the 1960s in some detail. Furthermore, Reekie's definition for the term 'underground' is used in the next chapter and referred to throughout the thesis. Julian Cope's comprehensive books on the underground rock scenes of Germany and Japan in the 1960s and 70s, *Krautrocksampler* (Head Heritage, 1994) and *Japrocksampler* (Bloomsbury, 2007) have also been useful both as direct sources of information on certain underground violinists, and as expert examples of writing, on the wider phenomenon of underground music and culture during the period in question, from the perspective of a practising musician.

Literary sources pertaining to the main protagonists of this thesis were equally difficult to acquire, and largely obscure. One work in particular proved relevant to the study, a book released after the commencement of this project titled *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage, a Minor History*, by Branden W. Joseph. This work presents itself as a somewhat biographical account of Tony Conrad and covers his life's work up until the time of publication. It is framed in the context of the broader 'Minor History' of the arts in New York City and related areas after John Cage's revelations became currency amongst the avant-garde. Joseph paints a vivid picture of the underground art scene in New York City and his detailed accounts of Conrad's life and work serve as a substantial source for many sections of this thesis. Joseph's study also looks at the work of Henry Flynt and his influence on Conrad and other contemporaries, as well as examining in some depth the work of the highly influential La Monte Young. Indeed, the framework of *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* is not dissimilar to this thesis in contextualising the New York underground scene as something which gravitated around Young, his loft, and his various ensembles during the 1960s and 70s. While reluctant to describe the scene specifically as 'underground', Joseph frames the work of Conrad as part of a wider response to the challenges posed by Cage. This response is observed as having been largely oppositional, born from a desire for 'newness' spearheaded by the likes of Young and other young composers fed-up with the institutionalisation of the older avant-garde. Another biographical source is John Cale's autobiography *What's Welsh for Zen?* Cale covers, in

strikingly frank detail, his life in the New York City underground during the 1960s, including his time in the Theatre of Eternal Music and his time in the Velvet Underground. It is a significant source for describing the basic circumstances of the scene and the day-to-day experiences of its protagonists. Further, it sheds light on the use of drugs and the social scene which surrounded the music, including intimate details of his friendship with Tony Conrad and the importance their collaboration with Young had. *What's Welsh for Zen?* is quoted and referenced throughout the thesis, and in particular in the following chapter.

The central theoretical sources fall into two categories: those sources that are applicable to the musical analysis, and those sources which make up the backbone of the manifesto. The primary source utilised for musical analysis is Ekkerhard Jost's *Free Jazz*, and in particular his socially-informed 'Style Portrait' method, discussed in further detail in the Methodology section of this thesis. Crucial to the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist is Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* from which his theory of 'hauntology', derived from Marx's opening paragraph in *The Communist Manifesto*[3], is used to describe the spectral anti-hegemonic nature of the underground violinist's practice. Other significant sources were derived from Henry Flynt's *Marxist Art Roster* (as found on his *Philosophy* website) in an attempt to stay true to the kind of works that inspired the political and philosophical ideas of underground violinists, thus working as a strong and undiluted soil from which my theory of 'radical violin performance practice' could grow. The most important of these sources were Lee Baxandall's collection of revolutionary left writings *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* and the *Situationist International Anthology*. The writings of the Situationist International in particular, served as a strong firmament for the development of the manifesto style found herein.[4] Other crucial theoretical sources include the writings of Leon Trotsky – and in particular a compendium called *The Basic Writings of Leon Trotsky* – and to a lesser extent the writings of Soviet documentary film-maker

[3] "A spectre is haunting Europe -- the spectre of communism." Marx Karl; Engels Marx, Frederick, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (New York: International, 1983)., 1.

[4] Ken Knabb, ed. *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: The Bureau of Public Secrets,1989).

Dziga Vertov as presented in a work entitled *Kino-Eye.* The life-story and poetry of Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, as found in Herbert Marshall's translated compendium *Mayakovsky,* is central to the theoretical section of this thesis, and furthermore to the theory and style of Henry Flynt. Lastly the great modernist art manifestos from groups such as the futurists served as a blueprint for my own manifesto, alongside more unconventional manifesto-style sources such as *Black Mask* as written by the 1960s anarchist art action group of the same name.

Unconventional sources

Finding reliable peer-reviewed sources on the artists in question was a difficult task. As is the nature of much underground music, these performers have largely avoided any large-scale interest from academics. Furthermore, the journalistic sources that cover their work are few and far between, the most obvious major independent magazine being the London-based *Wire: Adventures in Modern Music*. This publication has frequently covered several of the artists in focus throughout this thesis, including in a recent (*The Wire* 206, April 2001) 'Primer' feature – a regular feature that aims to 'prime' the reader to explore a certain genre or style of music, or a particular artist's canon – titled 'Early Minimalism'. In it they provide valuable background information on the history of minimalist music, replete with a listening guide listing important recordings by Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad and contemporaries.[5] This feature was an important stepping stone for me with regards to discovering appropriate listening material early on in the project.

Internet resources have also been a seemingly endless source of information on the key subjects and their colleagues. For instance, academic and Henry Flynt enthusiast, Benjamin Piekut, compiled a series of YouTube videos in 2010 featuring Mr. Flynt recalling his various experiences in New York City from relevant sites throughout the city. This series, titled *Henry Flynt in New York,* has been a useful primary source, especially in light of Flynt's non-

[5] Brian Duguid, "The Primer: Early Minimalism," *The Wire,* April 2001 2001.

participation in the project. These films, however, largely deal with anecdotes of Flynt's time in downtown Manhattan and do not delve into his musical practice on an analytical scale. Flynt's website[6] is a different story altogether. Due to a distinct lack of interest from publishers throughout his career, Flynt has compiled almost all of his writings on a variety of topics on his website for all to view free of charge. The site includes all of his most important essays on philosophy, politics and musical practice and has been one of the major sources that I have drawn from for information on Flynt, his contemporaries, predecessors and inspirations. Other crucial internet sources have included blogs dedicated to Fluxus and other New York City based arts organisations featuring scans of various leaflets, gig flyers, and other ephemera relevant to the scene at the time and to the protagonists of this thesis. Julian Cope's *Head Heritage*[7] website, and in particular his 'Unsung – Album of the Month' section also proved to be of some use, particularly since it includes in-depth reviews of Flynt and Conrad-related albums from the era in focus.

The Concept of Underground

Before delving into the murky depths of Manhattan's 1960s underground culture in Chapter Two, it is necessary to briefly introduce the concept of 'underground'. 'Underground', as a symbol of insubordination, radicalism and non-conformity, and as a physical, distinctly urban space, is crucial to this thesis and to the theoretical core of the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist presented in Chapter Six. The radical violinist, as this thesis will assert, is born from the underground, and in many ways still exists in an underground culture that is far more complex and difficult to define than that of the 1960s and 70s. What follows is a summarised explanation of the basic tenets of underground culture, a topic that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two. Some of these ideas and concepts are born of my own experience as a

[6] Henry Flynt, "Philosophy," http://www.henryflynt.org.

[7] Julian Cope, "Head Heritage," http://www.headheritage.co.uk.

musician performing in Australia's sprawling underground music scene, and as can be expected of an underground musician, my ideas on what it means to be 'underground' are deeply personal, while being informed by what has come before. The use of the term 'underground' first came to prominence during the Second World War to describe the resistance groups that materialised throughout the fascist occupied zones of Europe. After the war the term was born again as a name to describe the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s. This 'underground' resistance was concerned not always with the eradication of an occupying force or a dominating political ideal, but with the eradication of the invisible barriers that oppress us all on an everyday basis. The blurring of cultural lines, of genres, forms, sexual norms, race and political ideologies was at its core, and born of a utopian desire for personal freedom and wholesale social change. At the dawn of the 1960s there existed an unprecedented outburst of anti-establishment culture that still existed in the underground, beneath the far-reaching grasp of the mainstream media, and the oppressive hammer of conservative politics, and therefore truly outside the experience of your average workaday person. It was this early stage of mid-twentieth-century underground culture that forms the backdrop for this thesis and the beginnings of the protagonist's musical awakenings, something that would leave an indelible mark on their work.

Defining a particular culture as 'underground' poses serious fundamental questions about the nature of culture itself and of people's perception of their own culture. In the case of this thesis one of the major participants of the case studies, Henry Flynt, contested that the use of the term 'underground' showed a lack of understanding of his output. Furthermore, while this decision was largely unexplained, Flynt subsequently withdrew his participation entirely as the result of a perceived 'agenda' transmitted through my use of phrases such as 'underground music' and 'revolutionary music'. His perception of his own output is highly at odds with most observers, undoubtedly leading to the negligent coverage in the media and the academy of his work. This sort of reaction from artists of all kinds is not uncommon. Many of those artists that we as academics, students or journalists have lumped into the 'isms' and other definitional

terms of arts discourse disagree with the scene in which they are situated. The artificial nature of definitions has been a problem for me, and one that I have sought to overcome through surveying literature and drawing on some sort of consensus based on other observers' use of the term 'underground'. Almost all literature, including that of the artists in question, makes use of the term 'underground' to define the counter-cultural movement of the 1960s. Furthermore the term 'underground' works well to situate these artists in the overarching chronology of post World War Two culture and the undercurrents that continue to run against mainstream enculturation, apathy and unbridled capitalism.

It is, however, incorrect to suggest that the underground was in any way a movement or unified organisation of any sort. The underground was, and is, at its very heart based in a desire for personal freedoms and represents a community as far removed from anything monocultural as one could imagine. The underground represents a broad range of ideological viewpoints, philosophical revelations and aesthetic considerations that are all poised in opposition to the mainstream, either by design or by chance. To be underground does not necessarily suggest that an artist has not tried to communicate with the mainstream – as for instance Henry Flynt valiantly attempted throughout the 1960s and 70s – but rather that their work is misunderstood or simply too alien to mainstream sensibilities. Flynt's work is perhaps less alien to the average listener than that of Conrad, however the context of his work is. Flynt's politics and place within a political milieu considered the antithesis to a mainstream idea of American society immediately placed him within a long lineage of American outsiders – the radical composers Conlon Nacarrow and Harry Partch come to mind as prominent examples – who would ultimately challenge the status quo on their own. On the other side of the coin, Conrad, creating often abrasive and confrontational music, has enjoyed comparative success, with invitations to major international music festivals such as the Melbourne International Jazz Festival being the norm in recent years. Such success brings into question the validity of lumping an artist such as Conrad into the category of underground; however, his unwavering integrity and disinterest in engaging the machinations of the music industry are a simple and effective answer. Here is an

artist who at times has remained blissfully unaware of releases of his own music and not too concerned about receiving accolades for it either. In many ways the underground is also defined by such attitudes towards the means of production and the means of consumption. Underground artists create work whether people want to hear it or not, standing directly in opposition to the ever-present capitalist rule of supply and demand. Because of this attitude, underground musicians embraced, and continue to embrace, Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approaches to production and presentation, producing their own recordings on their own labels, and performing in unconventional and sometimes illegal spaces. For the underground violinists that inhabit the pages of this thesis, their anti-establishment ideology and personal philosophies were heavily ingrained in their performance practices, giving birth to distinctively underground and decidedly radical approaches to violin performance practice.

Underground Violin Performance Practice

This thesis essentially presents an alternative history of violin performance practice that culminates in what I am terming radical violin performance practice. This radical practice is rooted in a legacy of underdog musicians, from Heinrich Biber's forward-thinking *scordatura* polyphonic works for the Austrian courts in the seventeenth century, through the court music of Hindustan and the rebellious spiritualism of Pandit Pran Nath, from the oppressed African American bluesmen of the early twentieth century, and their poor working-class white neighbours, to the black power music of free jazz musicians and the revolutionary psychedelia of the international underground of the 1960s. This alternative history is heterogeneous and is in many ways the polar opposite of mainstream 'classical' violin performance, on the other hand it is also, and defiantly so, not a history of popular or folk music practices either. Indeed, put simply, this is a history of unpopular violin performance practices and their presence amongst a long lineage of unpopular, complex and heterogeneous artistic undercurrents. Because of this

heterogeneity, it is imperative to outline the unique strains that constitute the concept of underground violin performance.

The violin is an instrument long associated with traditional notions of beauty and 'culture' in the West. It is an instrument rarely thought of as existing in the margins of our society. It is a popular instrument for parents to seek out tuition in for their children and it often accompanies day-to-day communal events such as weddings and work functions. For most in the West, the violin experience is had in childhood and then relegated to the separate specialist field of 'culture' to be consumed in a similar fashion to sport or fine champagne, in essence, another commodity marketed to a specific class of people. On the other side of the violin coin we have the perception of the instrument as a rough and ready expression of folksong, the fiddling of Irish, British and American folk music and the wild caterwauling of the over-Romanticised gypsy fiddler. Existing between these two worlds is the crossover of the violin into popular mediums, most prominently jazz, such as that performed by Stephane Grapelli and his Hot Club de France. This is a music that represents a pleasant but kitschy amalgamation of 'classical' violin, gypsy folk fire and an Europeanised adoption of African-American idiosyncrasies such as swing and the blues.[8]

The history of violin performance as we know it today is defined by the dominant figures – in terms of popularity and pedagogical institutionalisation – of the last 400 years, starting with the proliferation of the Italian school of thought spearheaded by Arcangelo Corelli (1653 – 1713).[9] The dominance of the Corelli school still permeates throughout violin performance today, with his numerous compositions remaining part of the standard repertoire.[10] Nevertheless, much like any field of art today, there were figures who gained a similar level of notoriety but whose works never reached the wider European consciousness. Their work was perceived as being of no lesser quality, but their contacts, nationality and pedagogic legacy

[8] Django Reinhardt, *Djangology* (France: RCA Victor, 1963), Vinyl LP.

[9] Peter Walls, "Performing Corelli's Violin Sonatas, Op. 5," *Early Music* 24, no. 1 (1996)., 133.

[10] Ibid., 133.

perhaps were. One figure highly pertinent to this investigation is the Bohemian composer Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Bibern (1644 – 1704), a violinist of great repute during his time, but whose work could not compete with the popularity of contemporaries such as the ever-dominant Corelli.[11] Indeed Biber's work fell largely into obscurity until recent years, where his works have received a revival amongst performers of historically accurate period music, and even more recently by internationally renowned ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra. While Corelli was the darling of the court of Cardinal Ottoboni (a future pope), Biber was upsetting his then benefactor Karl II of Bohemia by skipping town and working for the Archbishop of Salzburg.[12] While Corelli was rumoured to have been unable to play much above a D fourth finger, third position on the E string, Biber was restringing the violin so that he could play nothing but octaves and reaching the comparatively stratospheric regions of sixth and seventh position.[13] Biber is a suitable figurehead for an alternative to mainstream violin performance, the genesis of underground violin performance practice.

From Biber we travel forward to 1960, and to a young Harvard graduate student and budding composer by the name of Tony Conrad. Conrad had been backpacking his way around Europe, absorbing countless scores stored in the great libraries of Germany. In Berlin he discovered a collection of scores that changed his musical world completely: the *scordatura* violin works of Biber. At this stage there were very few available recordings of Biber's work but the writing was on the wall: sharps and flats together in the same key signature (upon playing it Conrad would have discovered that this still amounted to conventional tonalities when combined with the *scordatura,* but as an image on a score it must have struck him as revolutionary), strings tuned to different pitches (*scordatura),* crossed over each other, or

[11] Ibid., 133

[12] Peter Holman, "Mystery Man: Peter Holman Celebrates the 350th Anniversary of the Birth of Heinrich Biber," *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1817 (1994)., 437

[13] One need only play Biber's *Rosenkranz Sonaten* to experience the left-hand acrobatics required. Likewise one need only play any of Corelli's major works for violin to experience the comparatively limited range of left hand technique required to perform them.

muffled by papier-mâché. Here Conrad saw polyphony, improvisation, and the dominance of a steady, droning *basso continuo* that gave the music a rawness not found in the 'poppy' counterpoint of Corelli and his progeny. This was a music that embraced noise and opened up the violin's acoustic properties through alternative tuning systems and micro-tonal ornamentation. It was an almost forgotten page in the history of Western music that suggested a world of possibilities that could have opened for the development of the instrument and Western music as a whole.

This world of possibilities seemed to die out for many years after Biber's death (and indeed even well before). The eighteenth century saw the birth, via Johan Sebastian Bach, of the well-tempered scale and a system of tuning that continues to dominate Western music today. There were glimmers of the spirit of Biber during the Nineteenth Century in the *scordatura* tunings of some of Nicolo Paganini's works[14], but largely, standard tunings (the G-D-A-E most violinists have tuned to since Corelli's time) and forms of tuning which would eventually become equal temperament prevailed. Furthermore, prior to the Industrial Revolution and the resultant invention of the printing press, soloists were generally composers as well. The nineteenth century saw the increasing compartmentalisation of the arts in the West, with the great heroic composer now towering over the performers who must bow to his every whim. While most concert violinists continued to compose their own concert pieces into the first decade or two of the twentieth century, it slowly died out as concert violinists became interpreters of past works, eventually leading to the norms we see today. In the twenty-first century there are very few concert violinists who publicly perform or publish their own works, with the exception of the occasional signature *cadenza* added as an appendix to popular concert pieces such as the Brahms, Beethoven or Mozart concerti.

[14] Roland Jackson, "Performance Practice: A Dictionary-Guide for Musicians." (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2005), http://books.google.com.au/books?id=_w32_CqDNWkC&lpg=PA355&ots=6Cmh2Y1-wf&dq=paganini%20scordatura&pg=PA355#v=onepage&q=paganini%20scordatura&f=false., 355.

The underground violinists of this thesis, however, are known only for performances of their own works. In the DIY spirit that so defines underground culture, these violinists created works on their own using tape recorders, and in a post-jazz America embraced the possibilities of instant composition – of improvisation. Indeed, through the possibilities opened by recording technology, the rebellious lure of anti-elitist politics, and the mind-expanding world of non-Western thought, underground violinists began to shed the concept of composition altogether. This is another defining element of underground violin performance practice, the expression of distinct philosophies, political ideals, and the rejection of tradition through improvisation.

We return to Biber here, a performer who hundreds of years before Conrad and Flynt came on the scene, embraced, like most performers of his era, the thrilling expressive possibilities inherent in improvisation. In fact, improvisation was a highly important element in Western performance practice up until the Industrial Revolution and the birth of the sanctity of the score through new forms of publishing. In Biber's time, the Baroque period, a performer who couldn't improvise was not worth his salt to anyone.[15] For Twentieth Century musicians, the inspiration to improvise, however, largely came from the southern ghettos of the United States where African slaves brought thousands of years of improvisatory expression to the West, and from developing nations such as India.

The importance of African-American music cannot be underestimated when discussing underground violin performance practices. String instruments were an important part of cultural life for African America and the violin was amongst these. In the United States the slaves probably came across the violin when hearing the music of their white masters, and it can be heard prominently in the recordings of African-American musicians made during the 1920s. [16] Certainly in these early days of the recording industry, the violin was still a prominent element in African-American blues music before the more popular guitar gained prominence and the era

[15] Sarah Freiberg, "Baroque Performance Basics," *Strings* 16, no. 1 (2001)., 27

[16] Various Artists, *Folks, He Sure Do Pull Some Bow! Vintage Fiddle Music 1927-1935 - Blues, Jazz, Stomps, Shuffles & Rags* (Raleigh: Old Hat Records, 2001), Compact Disc.

of the great blues guitarists took hold. African-American influence also spilled over into the fiddle music of the white farmers who owned, and then employed black workers. It can be heard prominently in Appalachian folk fiddling and later in the blues infused licks of Bluegrass. The African-American approach to the violin was as much a rhythmic one as it was melodic. Here precision was second to timbre and that 'feel' so integral to really, truly playing the blues – the feeling that comes hand in hand with being black, poor, uneducated, different, other; with oppression, depression and unimaginable hardship. Furthermore, improvisation reigned supreme and song structure was often unpredictable and unique to the individual writer. From this melting pot of southern white and black culture the blues was evolved and revolved, playing an integral part in the birth of the performance practices of the protagonists of this thesis. From the inspiration Flynt and Conrad found in the high-lonesome Country and Bluegrass sounds of Bill Munroe and Hank Williams, the insistent rhythms of Bo Diddley (who incidentally began his musical life, as did many great blues guitarists, as a violinist), the screeching sax of Ornette Coleman to the very acoustic fibre of the blues Seventh, African-American music helped shape underground violin performance practice.

The music of Africa and India is another source of musical inspiration for these underground violinists. For many improvising musicians in the United States during the 1950s and 60s, the music of the Middle East, India and Africa was appealing. For great improvisers like John Coltrane the music of Morocco, and in particular the trance-inducing Gnawa music of the Master Musicians of Joujouka, was a crucial source of musical and spiritual ideas. Indeed, the music of Africa began to see a renaissance in the 60s as Black Nationalist musicians began to seek out their cultural heritage and identify themselves as African, rather than Negro. Henry Flynt, whose ethnicity was white Caucasian, discovered field recordings of African bush music in the Harvard libraries in the late 1950s and was blown away, leading somewhat to his interest in and sympathies with the Black Nationalist movement. It is possible that during Flynt's listening sessions he heard compositions using the *gonjé* (also known in different languages and regions as *gogé, riti, gonjey etc.*) a one-stringed bowed fiddle common to West Africa, the

region where so many slaves were taken and shipped to the Americas. Performers of the *gonjé* fiddle employ driving rhythms and harmonic-laden timbres reminiscent of the blues, and not unlike the riffing of Henry Flynt's solo violin works.[17]

Certainly the violin itself appears in folk and 'classical' music all over the world, but it is the music of India that appealed to the protagonists of this thesis the most. It is not so much the violin music of India that inspired them, but the vocal and other string music of the Hindustani tradition in particular. For the 60s counter-cultural movement, Hindustani music became one of the greatest inspirations, and soon prominent Indian musicians such as sitar player Pandit Ravi Shankar shared the same bills as the Grateful Dead and Mahavishnu Orchestra, and served as musical and spiritual envoys to counter-cultural titans The Beatles. For the underground in Manhattan, as is characteristic of this scene, a more subterranean character became their primary influence: Pandit Pran Nath. Pandit Pran Nath was a Hindustani singer whose work, by being heavily rooted in its spiritual traditions, was highly rebellious in the eyes of the ever-modernising All India Radio and the increasingly commodified world of post-colonial Indian music. His voice, mystical persona and his immense integrity were of great significance, both directly and indirectly, to the genesis of these underground violin performance practices.

Alongside Pandit Pran Nath, the sarod playing of Ali Akbar Khan is also of immense importance, with his first Western recorded release influencing every corner of the Manhattan music scene and beyond. The eternal drone of the tamboura became the base upon which Conrad built much of his playing, while the aching *glissandi* and extended improvisations of Pandit Pran Nath would become a well-mined site for Henry Flynt. Beyond these musicians, the violin-like Sarangi is another influence on underground violin performance practice. The powerful performances of Sarangi masters such as Khalifa Ustad Hafizullah Khan and Pandit Ram Narayan are seemingly more in line with their approach to the instrument than the violin

[17] Gerhard Kubik, *Africa and the Blues* (Jackson: University Press of Mississipi, 1999)., 63

playing of L. Subramaniam or the highly influential – in terms of bringing Indian Classical music to the West – Yehudi Menuhin. On the whole there was a strongly ideological undercurrent to the underground violinists' approach to their instrument, which led them to a unique interpretation of all of these influences – perhaps adding to their preference for more obscure examples of these influences – and gave birth to a revolution in violin performance practice.

Revolting Violins

Tony Conrad, of his approach to violin performance practice, said,

> I felt that I had launched a kind of revolution if you will, revolutionary practice but revolution really isn't the right word there, because it's not a revolution unless it revolves something and this wasn't revolving anything. What it was doing was just, as it were, establishing a cultural reference site. A locus, a performance locus on a map of different practices, which was extremely distinctive within violin performance activity...[18]

The underground's approach to the commercial aspects of art production led to a revolution in the way musicians and artists produce and distribute work. In terms of violin performance practice it led to a shift away from traditional approaches to the instrument and into a new world of extended techniques, modifications and technical innovations. In the most absurd extremities of this new practice violins would simply be polished in front of a live audience, or more extremely, destroyed. For the protagonists of this study, the violin took on a new shape when it was stripped of the constraints and heavy baggage that come with five hundred years of Western tradition, and was instead plugged in, looped and modified beyond recognition. For both Flynt and Conrad the new technologies afforded by portable amplification, cheap and easily obtainable contact microphones and home-recording equipment helped to transform their

[18] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 13.

approach to violin performance. Contact microphones helped to put a magnifying glass up to the tonal qualities of the instrument, bringing out a kind of rawness and honesty usually only found in the folk music of Europe and the Americas. It made the instrument as capable of exhilarating volume and noise as it is at creating courtly beauty and poise. The violin could now compete with the backbeat and cut above the intense sounds of Manhattan's streets. Every scrape, bump, scratch, slide and wail could now be heard and incorporated into a violinist's technique to great effect. Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad and other Manhattan musicians were at the forefront of this revolution in performance practice and there was a finely-tuned method to the madness.

For Flynt in particular the revolution was not just one of sonic proportions, but also something that must be acted out in the streets through protest and political action. Flynt's practice is so intensely linked to his philosophy and ideology that, as the reader will hopefully discover in this thesis, even the most minute technical aspects of a performance can be seen as a gesture of protest or utopian yearning. This brings to mind the kind of evocative gesturing at the core of works by a composer such as Heinrich Biber: images of battle, work and ethnic groups living out their daily lives evoked through *scordatura*, instrument modification, heterophony and hints of polytonality. Heterophony – the simultaneous performance of variations of a melody by multiple musicians - has often been the realm of outsiders and musical revolutionaries, from the seventeenth-century works of Biber to the cacophony of Charles Ives' uniquely American works,[19] and the collective improvisations of New Orleans marching bands. Heterophony is a useful metaphor for the overarching values present behind revolutionary violin performance practice representing a break from the hegemony of homophony and the power-structures that gave birth to it.

For Conrad the revolution is both literal and figurative. He too took part in Flynt's actions against cultural imperialism, but he also insists that for a revolution to occur it must revolve something, thus bringing the word to its most literal meaning. I would argue that the

[19] Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism Volume One* (United States: Table of the Elements, 1997), Compact Disc., Booklet, 11-12.

performance practices and ideals of Conrad and Flynt have indeed revolved, in that they have consistently reappeared in the works of underground musicians throughout the last four decades, and in particular the last two. From the droning sounds of early 1980s college rock groups such as The Dream Syndicate (so named after Conrad's nickname for the legendary Theatre of Eternal Music), the industrial nightmares of Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, to the metallic drone-scapes of Sunn 0))) and their ilk, the sounds of 1960s New York City underground violinists have revolved around the mercurial centre of the underground music scene. The practices of Flynt and Conrad have traced a full-circle through history, beginning in the fertile soils of 1960s experimentalism, accidentally aiding in the birth of numerous scenes in the 1970s, crawling further underground in the 80s before completing a full revolution and returning to the fertile soils of Twenty-First Century experimentalism. On a political level, their revolution represents the liberation of the violin from the shackles of tradition, out of the consumerist corporations and the state-sponsored museums of orchestras and concert repertoire, and into the world of DIY production and unconventional performance spaces. Their music represents a revolution in style and thought, a musical picket line calling for the death of Western hegemony and the birth of a heterotopia built on the endless possibilities of a culture where sound, art and science are no longer separate.

Sci-Fi Fiddling: The Importance of Technological Innovation

While these various strains of musical inspiration add important elements to the proliferation of underground violin performance in the 1960s, one cannot discount the basic importance of technology. The 1960s marked an era of innovation in the recording industry, with tape recorders and microphones becoming available to the wider public on a larger scale than ever before. While cumbersome, and undoubtedly difficult to carry through the subway back to one's apartment, reel-to-reel recording devices made the evolution of an underground

approach to violin performance practice possible. Underground violinists like Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt were consequently able to put their musical ideas to tape in their homes whenever they pleased. This led to a prolific output of recorded compositions, many of which arguably sit unreleased in various cupboards and basements. While the low-fidelity nature of many of these recordings hardly represents the true effect that this music must have had in the acoustic environment in which they were recorded, they serve as excellent artefacts of the time and are analysed and referenced throughout this thesis. Furthermore, tape recorders could be used to create loops, a technique employed by the underground violinists discussed in this thesis, and indeed by the wider underground scene in various corners of the globe. Tony Conrad, Henry Flynt and many of the New York experimentalists used loops as an integral part of their practice and composers such as Terry Riley and Steve Reich would later make these practices famous contributing, it could be argued, to the trends of looping and sampling so prominent in much music today.

The new ease with which musicians could obtain amplifiers, pick-ups and contact microphones also had a profound impact on the underground. Simple but effective Piezo pick-ups were used by underground violinists to plug in and take the violin into new realms of sound. The 1960s marked a time where electricity took the music world by storm. Popular artists such as Bob Dylan and Miles Davis shocked their well-established audiences by plugging in and tapping into the raucous sounds that Rock 'N' Roll and R&B musicians had used to overcome rowdy bar crowds and screaming teenage girls during the latter 1950s. The underground saw different possibilities in amplification and took advantage of the new-found glee brought about by manipulating feedback and exploiting high-volume as a way to uncover new frequencies and hitherto unheard sounds. Amplification is an essential ingredient to much underground music, and underground violinists were no exception to the rule. It is this emphasis on amplification and looping that first attracted me to these underground violinists, via their immense influence on prominent underground genres such as post punk and drone metal. They have since become a massive influence on the radical violinists of today, and my own practice as a self-confessed

radical violinist, something that will be discussed in further detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Auto-ethnographic influence: Confessions of a Radical Violinist

Today the violin rarely breaks the chains of the strictures of any one style or tradition, however artists such as Conrad continue to record and perform music increasingly recognised as an important influence on a generation of musicians. In Australia, the influence of the work of Conrad and Flynt, as well as Warren Ellis, Victorian born violinist and member of instrumental trio the Dirty Three, has permeated my own practice. Ellis's performance practice remains technically rooted in the classical traditions that are arguably the first experience of many violinists, however, his style is wild (in terms of timbre, intonation and showmanship) and intuitive in nature, existing outside of notions of genre or tradition. His group the Dirty Three continues to produce albums consisting almost entirely of instrumental pieces based around the trio of violin, guitar and drums. Both improvised and pre-ordained, Ellis and his cohorts perform music that is both reminiscent of the above-mentioned artists and entirely unique. In many ways it conjures the same inspired blend of Coltrane, avant-garde classical and hard rock that so inspired Henry Flynt. Brisbane-based duo The Scrapes – in which I perform the violin – combine many influences including the harsh drones and loops of Conrad and the desire to become a 'folk creature' as proposed by Flynt in his writings. I am also involved in an improvisatory collective, Brend, so named after Flynt's philosophical concept of the same name. Brend is essentially based in free improvisation, the musicians performing simply as they wish to, reflecting the theoretical basis of *brend*. Brend is now in many ways a tribute to the work of Flynt without adhering strictly to his ideals of music, rather flavouring our own extemporisations with the idiosyncrasies of Hillbilly fiddling and the intense, eternal drones of

Flynt's New York. My experiences as a radical violinist inform much of this thesis however, they are discussed, along with other contemporary radical violinists, in finer detail in the concluding chapter.

Before we reach the final chapter, however, you will be taken through the streets of Manhattan during the 1960s and 70s, a place where the fertile soil of the underground nourishes the roots of radical violin performance. This will be followed by an overview of the methodologies applied while researching and writing this thesis, providing a look into the machinations behind my unique research outcomes. The methodology then leads into two distinct case studies, the 'style portraits' of underground violinists Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt. These 'style portraits' are brought to a suitable zenith in the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist, where the key theoretical elements of the work of these underground violinists are presented as a platform for a new approach to violin performance practice in the twenty first century. In conclusion I will introduce you to the radical violinist, drawing a lineage from the 1990s to my own current practice, and the continuing hard work of underground violinists such as Conrad.

Concluding: Welcome to the Underground

This thesis is an important discussion of performance practices that have remained largely obscure. A great deal of literature exists chronicling the practices and lives of the great violinists of the Western classical tradition, but the practices of those who attempt to break free of this tradition, in a unique and personal way, have remained as footnotes in this history. Underground violinists are important because they are examples of non-conformity within a musical tradition that represents the height of European artistic achievement. Their work represented a revolution in the way a violinist could approach the instrument, turning it into a vehicle of philosophical expression and a vehicle for sound and *noise*. This presented an opportunity for liberation from the violin's position as an expression of discipline and

established notions of beauty born from centuries of aristocratic cultural monopoly. For this reason in particular this thesis may serve as a tool for fostering change in attitudes towards approaching violin performance practice, opening the potentials of the instrument for future generations of violinists. By placing these underground artists in the context primarily of their violin performance practices, this thesis will ultimately shine a light on a side of their artistic outputs that has thus far only received a cursory glance, hidden in the shadows of their more heavily documented achievements. Like the literal meaning of the word 'revolution', the practices of underground violinists have come full circle, influencing a new generation of forward-looking musicians and, in particular, radical violinists. The following chapters will introduce the fertile ground – and the methods used to find it – in which this revolution was sown, and will aim to reap the harvest of a vast polyglot underground that held New York City as its epicentre.

Chapter Two: Subterranean Blues - World Revolution & the Manhattan Underground

The locality, in time and in physical space, of this thesis is Manhattan during the 1960s and 1970s. Contextually it revolves around a specific milieu within Manhattan's underground art scene, that of La Monte Young and his Theatre of Eternal Music. This composer and his ensemble serve as a point of reference to all of the goings on within the scene and as a firmament from which underground violin performance practices sprang. Young's work tied in with many of the developments in cutting-edge new music at the time, including minimalism, Free Jazz, New Age, and eventually the avant-garde rock of John Cale.[20] This therefore places Young and the musicians he worked – and continues to work – with, such as Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad and John Cale, in a unique place within underground music history that few sources have yet to observe. Therefore, this chapter has been drawn together from a wide range of sources, including magazine interviews; the intriguing and highly useful autobiography of John Cale, *What's Welsh For Zen?*; internet-based sources such as blogs (both those of private citizens and those attached to trendy underground publications such as Vice and Wire magazine, and the blogs of the subjects themselves) and YouTube; and the vast wealth of recollections found in the web archives of Henry Flynt, trumpeter John Hassell, composer Rhys Chatham and La Monte Young. This chapter serves as a map to follow the various tendrils of Manhattan's underground music scene, and the way in which these tendrils intertwine, controlled by a common source of Eastern mysticism, drugs, non-conformist politics, ethnic musics and the slums of Greenwich Village.

[20] Mark Prendergast, *The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Trance - the Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000)., 95.

Subverting the Squares: Underground New York

In his book, *Subversion: The Definitive History of Underground Cinema*, Duncan Reekie describes the artistic birth of the term 'Underground':

> The term 'Underground' was first deployed by beat and early counter-cultural agents to designate their subculture of resistance beneath the square world: it was a metaphoric invocation of the resistance groups of World War Two who secretly sabotaged the Fascist occupation of Europe. Crucially the Underground understood itself to be a culture; to be not only a community and a way of life but a sensibility that could realise the secret subtext of utopian liberation in popular culture.[21]

Subversion and resistance are key themes in the work of the characters who once dwelt in New York City's underground. For some it was a pre-punk insistence on creating art despite technical limitation, in effect subverting the traditional emphasis placed on skill and hard work, and for others it was the very real revolutionary struggle against the rising power of the bourgeoisie and the overbearing societal embracing of capitalism. Those who dwelt in the underground lived lifestyles that were seen as appalling by mainstream society. This bohemian lifestyle of drugs and the wholesale avoidance and rejection of work or traditional career-paths defined the New York underground of the early 1960s. The idealised role of a street hustler prowling the pavement searching for excitement and just enough money to get by was brought to prominence in the writings of William S. Burroughs and the beats. This desire for experience outside the mainstream world was another defining factor of the early underground scenes. Through living a life that existed beneath the goings on of 'square' society, underground artists hoped to liberate both themselves and art itself from the shackles of historical responsibility and tradition. With this came the subversion of class, race and sexual norms and the birth of the

[21] Duncan Reekie, *Subversion: The Definitive History of Underground Cinema* (London: Wallflower Press, 2007)., 139-140.

counter-cultural movement which would emerge in the mainstream youth culture of the late 1960s.

The protagonists of this thesis were at the forefront of the early developments in underground counter-culture, psychedelia, revolutionary politics, popular music, and Pop art and experienced what many describe as the pinnacle of the twentieth century avant-garde. Despite being a part of all of this activity – which would bring many an artist to international stardom – and even in some ways greatly influencing much of it, being a part of its roots, the protagonists of this thesis remain creatures of the underground, their work only being recognised by those who care to search beneath the hype and the historical exaggeration. After all, it is always the victor – in this case those who emerged most commercially successful from the underground counter-culture and into the mainstream – who define the contents of our history books.

The protagonists of this thesis are the underdogs of American avant-garde history, and perhaps the underground is defined by its constituents being best described as ‘underdog’, a term which suggests persistence and integrity in the face of a distinct lack of suitable recognition. For the period in focus, the word underground had a distinct meaning: a network of artists, writers and all manner of people working beneath the status-quo to subvert traditional values and transform their society. Being underground meant taking things into your own hands, creating your own media; your own art; a distinct and unique culture. For this reason underground culture was, and remains manifested in different forms dependent on the host culture and environment of its protagonists. The underground culture of 1960s and 70s New York City was not a monoculture and it ran in express opposition to the notion of monoculture. This scene in many ways reflected its environment, the heterophony of many different languages being spoken all at once, a vast melting pot of sounds and cultures. Homogeneity had no place in this culture, it was heterogeneous in sound and vision, but in no way hetero-normative in its outward appearance and sexual orientation.

The underground of New York City was both a product of and a direct opposition to its host society, and perhaps this is what best defines the nebulous term ‘underground’: underground culture exists beneath the mainstream of its host culture, but it is still made up of products of this mainstream culture and it runs in the same direction through the inevitability of time. The underground of New York City, like its vast underground network of railways, was built by New York and the people who populate it and migrate to it, and while it often went unnoticed beneath the population’s feet, it brought them to new places if they cared to descend and buy the ticket. It is my intention with this thesis to shed light on the underdog, a very Australian way of viewing American cultural history, by ignoring the tall poppies and admiring the weeds. The backdrop of this thesis is Manhattan, and in particular the sprawling downtown ghettos of the Lower East Side during the 1960s, a place where much of the radical underground first spread its roots.

Radical Manhattan

Manhattan’s radical heritage stretches as far back as the eighteenth century, and perhaps came to prominence most openly in the 1920s when union groups, suffragettes, anarchists, Communists and all other manner of political groups began to take to the streets, rising with the giddy rush of the roaring 20s. This was the early era of Jazz and the world of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Great Gatsby.* It was a time where the great Anarchist Emma Goldman had made Greenwich Village her stomping ground and swathes of African-Americans left the south and brought the blues to the city in search of work in its many factories. The ensuing decades of the 1930s and 40s all but crushed these early dissident movements before a rebirth, after World War Two, occurred in the gleaming brass of bebop and the bad boy pin-cushion antics of Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. From the hard linear rhythms of bebop formed the Beat poets, and other white artists found a new voice in the folk music of their forefathers via the musicological wanderings of Alan Lomax, Samuel Charters, or Harry Smith and his American Folkways

compendium. Innovations in technology during the War also brought about a new approach to composition utilising newly available synthesisers and vast computer-like machines dedicated solely to the creation of new sounds.[22] Manhattan, and in particular the work of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Centre (in operation from 1951), would quickly become a centre for this new music with composers such as Richard Maxfield, Morton Feldman, Frederic Rzewski, John Cage and others reinventing themselves with new found joy at the possibilities these machines could open for composition. Manhattan has always been a centre for innovation and creativity, and the vast melting pot downtown of the grid flourished throughout the 1950s and into the 60s.

The downtown scene in the 1960s was fertile ground for the creation of new and original music, and the violin, along with other bowed-string instruments, was crucial to many of the new sounds. It featured prominently in psychedelic folk bands such as The Holy Modal Rounders and The Fugs, being used primarily as a tool for satirizing the idiosyncratic folk fiddling of the south to aid in their cynical commentary of American society.[23] The Holy Modal Rounders and the Fugs were essentially interchangeable groups, sharing members and performing at the same gigs alongside other provocatively named psychedelic groups such as The Falling Spikes and the Theatre of Eternal Music or 'Dream Syndicate'. The Fugs were formed by Tuli Kupferberg and Ed Sanders in 1964. Sanders was the owner of a popular 'head' shop in Greenwich Village (Peace Eye Bookstore), and published poet who, inspired by the success of Bob Dylan, decided to put together a group with other likeminded beatniks and hippies who, like him, had no idea how to play musical instruments. The Holy Modal Rounders had a similar birth, with both members also being members of the Fugs and vice-versa. These bands were a heady mixture of political satire, folk music, and hard driving garage rock, a kind of proto-punk music not dissimilar to other bands that would appear throughout the United

[22] Prendergast, *The Ambient Century*., 83.

[23] Refer to the Discography section of this thesis for recommendations of Fugs and Holy Modal Rounders recordings.

States during the 1960s. This music was one of many strong roots that surfaced from the Lower East Side's underground scene in the early-mid 1960s. For a short period the heterogeneous nature of the underground brought The Fugs, Falling Spikes and 'free-form groups' together on the same bill at various performances including the 'New York Underground 8-Hour Spectacle' curated by poet and Falling Spikes/Theatre of Eternal Music collaborator, Angus MacLise.[24] 'Happenings' such as this paired bands and other musical combos with visual artists and filmmakers in what are now seen as the early incarnations of multi-media events. Multimedia events soon became a major part of the pop art movement in New York, spearheaded by Andy Warhol and his Factory of freaks and underground characters.

Andy Warhol, publicly, had very little to do with music over most of his career, but he did dabble in music during the 1960s. His first forays into pop music occurred in 1962 when he attempted to assemble a band consisting of his local artist friends. The band consisted of artists Claes and Patti Oldenburg, Warhol and Lucas Samaras on vocals; op-artist Larry Poons on guitar; sculptor and later Henry Flynt collaborator Walter De Maria on drums; La Monte Young on saxophone and writer Jasper Johns as in-house lyricist.[25] This attempt to form a band failed (although it is extraordinary to imagine what this combination must have sounded like together) due to Young's insistence on not being involved in the commercial realms of pop music presentation, however, Warhol worked once again with Young in 1964 on an installation for the Second Annual New York Film Festival. This installation involved several of Warhol's films cut down to manageable sizes and looped endlessly at the same time on various surfaces. Young responded to this by making music to accompany it as a realisation of his *Composition 1960 #9* which, through a score consisting only of a horizontal line drawn on a white paper card, prompts the performer to create something as a reaction to the visual stimulus. In this case Young and Zazeela, "performed a single sustained tone on a bowed brass mortar. Then, dubbing

[24]Johan and Will Cameron Kugelberg, *Angus Maclise: Dreamweapon* (New York: Boo-Hooray, 2011).,16.

[25] Branden Joseph, ""My Mind Split Open": Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room*, no. 8 (2002)., 84.

a separate but identical recording to accompany each of Warhol's films, Young had all four tapes broadcast simultaneously and at an earsplitting volume."[26]

Warhol's musical collaborations did not come to the fore, however, until he took on the management of a group called the Velvet Underground (formerly known as the Falling Spikes). By the mid 1960s Warhol was already being heralded as one of the greatest living artists in the United States, and indeed the Western world. Despite his relative fame, or perhaps because of it, he surrounded himself with characters from the underground. In particular, he employed Theatre of Eternal Music member Billy Linich (now known as Billy Name) as one of his assistants, and kept close association with Fluxus impresario George Maciunas. For a time it seemed that the orbit around Warhol consisted of many shadowy underground figures who later made it to mainstream approval and even celebrity such as Lou Reed and John Cale of the Velvet Underground, but for the most part the protagonists of this thesis had little or nothing to do with Warhol other than a very cursory involvement in certain events. For instance, during a spell of hepatitis brought on by his increasing drug dependency John Cale was forced to call on old friend, the violinist, activist and philosopher Henry Flynt, to replace him for a series of performances at the Dom.[27] Flynt's involvement did not last long, however, with Reed eventually attacking Flynt for adding in one-too-many country fiddle licks during one particular gig. Perhaps Warhol's most important contribution to the underground in Manhattan was his financing of the Velvet Underground's first album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (Verve, 1967)[28], fatefully pairing them with German-born starlet, and junky, Nico. While this debut failed commercially, it became an immense influence on generations of musicians, and its melding of garage pop with the droning sounds of New York's minimalist composers proved to be the most indelible impression made by the Manhattan underground. The Velvet

[26] Joseph, '"My Mind Split Open,"' 85-86.

[27] John and Victor Bockris Cale, *What's Welsh for Zen?: The Autobiography of John Cale* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2000)., 60.

[28] The Velvet Underground, *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Polygram Records, 1996), Compact Disc.

Underground's influence during their time is not to be underestimated in regards to the various underground scenes of the 1960s and it is worth briefly discussing the spread of similar virulent strains in other corners of the globe.

The Tendrils of the Underground

On the west coast of the United States the underground had developed in a slightly different way to New York City. From the beatniks flourished a strong scene of social misfits in the Los Angeles area called 'freaks' who saw their most prominent musical expression in the avant-garde antics of Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. These freaks moved north to San Francisco and spawned the most famous strains of hippiedom, however, before this happened the music was harsh and atonal, inspired by the achievements of the first Velvet Underground record and the cacophony of composers such as Edgard Varèse and Charles Ives. Frank Zappa's childhood friend Don Van Vliet, aka Captain Beefheart, also formed a band melding similar influences, but to less universal approval. Another University of California composition graduate and former New York avant-gardiste, Joseph Byrd, formed a group titled The United States of America, who specialised in a Beatles-inspired epic psychedelia that blended post-Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band rock with the polytonality of Charles Ives and the cacophony of Stockhausen's *Hymnen*. The United States of America also prominently featured the violin of Gordon Marron who made good use of ring modulators and other new technologies in his practice.[29] Not surprisingly, Zappa and the Velvet Underground were signed to the same record label for their debut releases, Verve Records, and in a further twist of underground serendipity Nico allegedly even attempted to join the United States of America at one stage in 1968.

[29] The United States of America, *The United States of America* (United States: Columbia, 1968), Vinyl LP.

In Japan the Velvet Underground's darker, more dissonant resonances would inspire the work of revolutionary groups such as Les Rallizés Dénudés, whose plodding feedback soaked noise rock sounds contemporary and no less revolutionary today.[30] And before Les Rallizés Dénudés struck their first dark chord, Japanese Fluxus-inspired performance groups such as Group Ongaku and Hi-Red Centre would bring New York's avant-garde anarchy to the streets of Tokyo, and feature prominently the violin of Takehisa Kosugi.[31] Perhaps most famously Japan's underground is forever linked to the Manhattan underground, and even directly to early underground violin performance – Henry Flynt's first performances were made at concerts in Yoko Ono's Church Street loft – by one of her most famous children, Yoko Ono.

By the late 1960s Germany too began to fly the freak flag high with the birth of *Krautrock* out of various student communes, revolutionary organisations and conservatories throughout the country. One group in particular, Faust, were intensely influenced by the first Velvet Underground record and later collaborated with the young violinist who gave the Velvet Underground their name, Tony Conrad. The militant Amon Düül commune in Munich gave birth to two ensembles, Amon Düül and Amon Düül II, the latter featuring the wild violin of founding member Chris Karrer. The violin appeared as a prominent feature, often altered beyond recognition, in many Krautrock groups during this period. This is but a scratch on the surface of the underground cultures that developed in direct response to that of New York City and its older cousin across the Atlantic, London.

In London, the underground grew in tandem with New York as British youth became fascinated with American blues records, the delay-soaked ska music and pulsing sound systems of recently-arrived Jamaican immigrants, Indian classical music and, like the Americans, they too found inspiration in the consciousness-freeing effects of narcotics and the rebellious call to arms of revolutionary politics. The Ladbroke Grove underground gave birth to various highly

[30] Hadaka No Rallizes/Les Rallizes Denudes, *Yodo-Go-a-Go-Go/Oboreru Tobenai Tori Wa Mizutani Ga Hitsuyo/Flightless Bird Needs Water Wings* (Unknown: 10th Avenue Freeze Out, 2007), Compact Disc.

[31] Julian Cope, "Experimental Japan (1961-69)," in *Japrocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'N' Roll* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007)., 41-72.

radicalised groups such as Hawkwind and High Tide, both of which featured the inimitable violin of Simon House. Free jazz would also make its mark across the Atlantic, with British musicians such as guitarists Keith Rowe and Derek Bailey, taking inspiration from the likes of Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler. Blending this decidedly African-American influence with the radical politics and free-form improvisations of their own avant-garde luminaries, such as Cornelius Cardew, these British musicians took free improvisation out of jazz and into something entirely other. Perhaps the most prominent British free improvisation group was AMM, which often featured saxophonist Lou Gare's creaking violin.[32]

Black and ethnic musics were never far from the thoughts of the 1960s underground, and its more extreme elements inspired most prominently another region of the United States: Detroit. Free jazz music and the Afro-futurist world of Sun Ra galvanised the Detroit underground, like no other music at the time, and is largely responsible for the birth of incendiary groups such as the MC5 (Motor City Five) and the Stooges. The Stooges also recorded John Cale's droning viola in the late 1960s with their debut album, once again indelibly imbedding the sound of the New York underground into the history of counter-cultural music. Like these Detroit groups, black music is at the root of New York City's underground culture in the 1960s, and the violin played a small part in this.

Eternal Blues: La Monte Young, Henry Flynt, Free Jazz & Afro-Nationalism

While Cale, House and Karrer later took the violin and viola into all new sonic territories, it began with an influential figure who played a large part in bringing the violin to the forefront of Manhattan's underground: La Monte Young. During the 1950s Young studied saxophone, musicology and composition at the University of California Los Angeles. Here he met, and performed with, some of the future greats of jazz music and developed a name for

[32] AMM, *Ammmusic* (United Kingdom: Elektra, 1967), Vinyl LP.

himself as a gifted Alto and Soprano player within the growing, more Eurocentric, 'cool jazz' scene. For a time Young showed promise as an up-and-coming star amongst an increasingly multi-racial milieu, however, upon hearing the drone of the tambura in a recording of sarod master Ali Akbar Khan, Young's musical direction would begin to change drastically. The drone of Indian classical music influenced a large number of jazz musicians toward the end of the 1950s, including the modal jazz of John Coltrane, Miles Davis and early Ornette Coleman recordings.[33] Young and Coleman – along with other future free jazz originators Don Cherry and Eric Dolphy – performed together on various occasions before Young moved to New York City in 1960. In that same year Coleman released a recording that would change the trajectory of American music, and particularly underground music, *Free Jazz*.[34] Previous albums such as *The Shape of Jazz to Come*[35] proved far too brutal for the ears of West Coast jazz club bookers and critics, and Coleman, like so many black artists before him, had made the move to New York. The jazz scene in New York had grown to be more hard-edged than that of its West Coast cousin. The ferocity of hard-bop, the modal jazz of John Coltrane, free jazz of Coleman, and the harmonically complex works of Cecil Taylor, Charles Mingus and Sun Ra had brought jazz to a crossroad in the 1960s, and innovation became the aim of many of its most prominent performers. From the release of *Free Jazz* the new black music was given a name and a whole new scene of loft gigs and self-released recordings began to spring up in New York. Various small musician-run labels were created in order to bring out small runs of cutting edge music to be purchased at loft performances and in the occasional local record shop. Some of these obscure labels, such as LeRoi Jones' (as Imamu Amiri Baraka was known at the time) *Jihad* and drummer Rashied Ali's *Survival* portrayed conspicuous musical, spiritual and political meanings in their names and outputs.

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[33] Allison Welch, "Meethings Along the Edge," *American Music* 17, no. 2 (1999)., 180.

[34] Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz* (United States: Atlantic 1971), Compact Disc.

[35] Ornette Coleman, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (United States: Atlantic, 1959), Compact Disc.

The underground jazz scene, much like the wider artistic underground in New York, consisted of a group of musicians and artists well ahead of their time. It was a place for the development of new ideas that had often remained unrecognized by the wider public for many years, but incubated in the many specific neighbourhoods of Manhattan's Lower East Side.[36] This neighbourhood specificity – another quality very distinct to New York's cultural make-up – further contributed to the anti-hegemonic nature of Manhattan's underground culture. The free jazz loft scene was a fierce example of this, and while it consisted of many musicians who would go on to greater prominence such as Archie Shepp, Rashied Ali and Coleman himself, it also consisted of more obscure outsiders such as Albert Ayler and his Quintet, which featured violinist Michael Sampson performing sawing folk-like passages. The violin often seems to appear in the margins of New York City's underground during this period. Perhaps the use of such a traditional instrument so far outside its recognised boundaries further added to the obscurity of those who employed it.

Another prominent black violinist performing in this scene was Billy Bang, who, until his recent death (11 April, 2011), continued to perform cutting edge improvisatory music in New York City and abroad. Another was Leroy Jenkins, a violinist whose playing reached out from the jazz community and into the wider avant-garde as a distinct hybrid of classical technique, folk timbre and a deep sense of swing. Ornette Coleman was also inspired to write works for violin in the 1970s after hearing the extended techniques of Judson Dance Theatre and Tone Roads Ensemble violinist Malcolm Goldstein. A strong sense of African American identity and an element of Afro-nationalist politics began to emerge throughout this milieu. The underground, like the avant-garde, has its nomenclature based in military terms, with the underground referring to the anti-Nazi resistance groups of World War Two.[37] Such connotations seem fitting in reference to the black underground in New York City during the

[36] Bernard Gendron, "After the October Revolution," in *Sound Commitments*, ed. Robert Adlington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009)., 214

[37] Bernard Gendron, "After the October Revolution," 214

1960s and 70s, with militant groups rising in resistance towards racism and persecution from the white majority all over the United States.

During the latter half of the 1960s, a cluster of black revolutionary groups were making themselves heard in the streets, and on the radios and televisions of a still largely racially segregated – even if in a less obvious manner in the north – America. These groups came together to form the Black Panther Party and other similar organisations, which began to take the issue of civil rights into their own hands with organised community services and – to the horror of white America – their own army. An important artist and writer linked to the Black Panther movement and to the new black arts was Amiri Baraka (at that time known as LeRoi Jones).[38] Baraka's writings, such as the highly influential *Blues People* (1963)[39], influenced many musicians throughout New York City's underground, including white musicians like Henry Flynt. Indeed Flynt played a minor part in the early struggles of the Afro-Nationalist movement as a columnist for the Worker's World Party's newsletter, *Worker's World.* The Communist Worker's World Party (WWP) took the line of the Comintern which declared, in 1928, the oppressed "Negro" of the south – or "black belt" as the Comintern described it – as a state within a state which must fight for independence against American ruling-class imperialism.[40] The WWP is purported to have been in open support of the militarisation of the Afro-American struggle that the Panthers and other revolutionary groups espoused.[41] Flynt first came to the attention of the WWP by sending them an article about a civil rights demonstration in his hometown of Greensboro, North Carolina. From there Flynt came to prominence in the organisation as a writer on the struggles for socialist liberation in Africa, and an irritant to the organisation with his insistence that the Party recognise African-American popular musics as the most appropriate blueprint for a Communist cultural revolution. Flynt's articles were often

[38] Ibid., 226

[39] Imamu Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963).

[40] Benjamin Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture," in *Experimentalism Otherwise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)., 88

[41] Benjamin, Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture", 42

presented as highly stylised brochures designed by Fluxus (named because their work was always in a state of flux or constant change) leader George Maciunas, and were as a result often seen as another prank pulled by the group. The most famous so-called 'prank' was Flynt's picketing of the New York premiere of Stockhausen's *Originale.* As will be discussed later in the thesis Flynt intended this protest to be a serious attack on what he saw as a concert of music promoting apparent Imperialist West German culture. The protest was largely ignored, but it was witnessed from across the street by none other than Amiri Baraka[42], and those who did notice saw it – much to Flynt's disappointment – as part of the performance of *Originale* which starred many of Flynt's colleagues in the Fluxus scene.

Henry Flynt himself came to some prominence in the Fluxus milieu with his provocative lectures, pamphlets designed by Maciunas such as the infamous *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* (which was incidentally rejected by the WWP for inclusion in one of its newsletters[43]), and his various performances of 'word score' and other aleatory game pieces. Indeed Flynt made his New York loft concert debut in 1961 with a free improvised Fluxus-style performance at Yoko Ono's loft in front of an audience including John Cage – who was impressed until discovering Flynt's main inspiration for the performance was Ornette Coleman and Bo Diddley. Flynt, however, did not consider himself a member of the Fluxus movement and declared himself an exponent firstly of 'Concept Art' and then of 'Anti-Art'.[44]

Flynt was by no means the only controversial violinist to be involved in this milieu. In the circles of the Fluxus scene artists such as Nam June Paik deconstructed the concept of the violin concerto as a spectacle by performing a work in which a violin is physically destroyed rather than played. Bruce Nauman, another Fluxus member, also performed a work for detuned

[42] According to Fluxus folklore, Flynt approached Baraka and asked him to join the seemingly righteous protest, Baraka declined, declaiming "But Stockhausen is a radical!"

[43] Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture", 40.

[44] Ibid., 40

violin entitled *Violin Tuned DEAD* (1969), which involved the constant striking of the de-tuned strings at even intervals with the bow.[45] This piece was composed in response to another composer closely affiliated with Fluxus: La Monte Young. Young made his most prominent statement at this time with a piece, dedicated to his friend Henry, called *X (any integer) for Henry Flynt.* This piece consists of a simple direction to strike a cluster of sounds for a number of exact repetitions decided by the performer, lasting for a minimum of one hour. Young was initially fascinated with the twelve-tone system of the Viennese School, and eventually grew more and more interested in the comparatively (when held up against the compositional neuroses of Arnold Schoenberg and Alban Berg) concise, primitive brevity of the music of Anton Webern. At about the same time he became deeply interested in the classical music of India, particularly its droning, improvised qualities. Before, and during, his time amongst the Fluxus milieu, Young began to compose works of increasingly minimalist, improvised and droning structures.

Arguably his most influential work is *Trio for Strings* (1958), a work based in the serial techniques of the Second Viennese School but consisting only of long tones held for set durations, making it the work commonly seen as the seed of the so-called 'minimalist' movement.[46] However, for the protagonists of this study, *Trio for Strings* was perhaps not the most important work but rather La Monte Young's early experiments in noise and amplification such as *Poem for Chairs, Table, Benches etc.* and *2 Sounds.*[47] *2 Sounds* is an early experiment in the use of high amplification and tape that resounds throughout the New York underground. Consisting of two separate sounds created by moving select objects across a pane of glass, *2 Sounds* is performed by recording these sounds to tape and then playing them back at a high

[45] Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage (a "Minor" History)* (New York: Zone Books, 2008)., 147.

[46] John Schaefer, "Who Is La Monte Young," in *Sound and Light*, ed. William Duckworth (London: Associated University Press, 1996)., 29

[47] Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008)., 34

volume level to the audience. This piece had a profound effect on the later work of Tony Conrad.[48]

The La Monte Young Scene: Drugs, Downtown and Hindustani Music

The scene around La Monte Young was an exciting one for a young artist seeking out danger and excitement. Young was, by all accounts, one of the more prevalent drug dealers in the Tribeca district and his loft was always a place for musical and psychic experimentation.[49] For a period of time in the 60s Young and his colleagues had access to some of the best quality drugs and the most cutting edge music in Manhattan. However, these free times were eventually interrupted by raids and a subsequent stint in jail for Young, after which he and Zazeela moved to their current residence on Church Street.[50] At the end of the 60s Young was largely responsible for exposing the young artists of New York to the classical music of North India by helping the somewhat obscure Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath travel to North America and allowing him to teach students in his loft. Pandit Pran Nath had a massive effect on the New York underground, early minimalism – most famously Terry Riley who spent many years as one of his students – and, in particular, the violin practices of Henry Flynt.

Pandit Pran Nath was a singer of the Kirana style of North Indian classical music. The son of a wealthy Hindu family, he ran away from home to study as a disciple of the Kirana guru Abdul Wahid Khan. Khan was a Sufi 'ustaad' who was part of the ancient tradition of Gharana – music guilds which encompassed a mystic and deeply spiritual attitude towards pedagogy and performance. Once Nath completed his studies with Khan, he travelled to Delhi to teach at the University of Delhi, continuing the tradition of the Kirana Gharana and becoming known

[48] Joseph, *Beyond The Dream Syndicate*, 34.

[49] John Cale and Victor Bockris, *What's Welsh For Zen?*, 60.

[50] Cale, *What's Welsh For Zen?*, 64.

throughout India as the leading exponent of this style of singing. The Kirana style of singing is characterised by an emphasis on clear and expressive intonation, a preference for slow steady tempos, an avoidance of fast and intricate rhythms, and the use of the Hindustani form of solfege known as sārgām within the lyrics as a form of rhythmic expression. Pandit Pran Nath is known for bringing his own idiosyncratic style to Kirana singing which emphasises and elongates the *mīnd* (meend) – sliding or connecting between pitches, similar in some aspects to glissandi in Western music. Furthermore, Pandit Pran Nath, like all Hindustani singers, had an approach to improvisation that had a profound effect on Young and others in the New York underground: he would select only a few pitches to work with and only gradually introduced new pitches over extended periods of time.[51]

Pandit Pran Nath soon became more deeply involved in spiritual matters and moved to Tepashwari cave-temple where he lived for five years as a *sadhu*, a naked singer-saint covered only in ash and singing only for God. As told in the documentary *In Between the Notes: A Portrait of Pandit Pran Nath* (1986)[52] having no tambura at hand, he would often sing a single note for many hours with only the stream outside his window as accompaniment. In the 1960s Khan encouraged Pandit Pran Nath to settle down, marry and continue to pass on the traditions of the Kirana Gharana. Pandit Pran Nath once again returned to Delhi to marry and teach. In Delhi he quickly gained a reputation as a rebel with his highly traditional and religious approach to raga, at odds with the new developments in Indian music at the time.[53] He soon found his techniques were appealing to a new generation of Western musicians, who in the 1960s had looked to India and Asia in search of consciousness expansion and new musical ideas. Young and Zazeela became life-long disciples of Pandit Pran Nath and have continued his traditions – since his death from complications due to Parkinson's disease in 1996 – to this day through their Mela Foundation.

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[51] Welch, "Meetings Along the Edge," 182

[52] William Farley, *In-between the Notes: A Portrait of Pandit Pran Nath* (Other Minds, 1986).

[53] Ibid.

In 1962 Young formed the Theatre of Eternal Music with partner Marian Zazeela on voice, poet Angus MacLise on percussion, young Welsh émigré John Cale on viola and soprano saxophonist Terry Jennings, amongst others. Harvard mathematics graduate and violinist Tony Conrad soon joined the group in 1963, bringing his violin and his mathematical prowess to the ensemble with great effect. The Theatre of Eternal Music would perform long improvised pieces utilising high volume, drones, Indian inspired vocal work and Coltrane inspired soprano and sopranino saxophone extemporisations. A bootleg recording from 1963 entitled *B flat Dorian Blues* (discovered in an unofficial recording entitled *The Theatre of Eternal Music [1964]*)[54] displays well the droning viola of Cale and the relentless arrhythmic drumming of MacLise laying a bed upon which Young's wild sopranino saxophone lies. From this, the arrival of Conrad heralded a period in which the ensemble began to distil their compositions into monumental drones improvised on a strict set of rules based around mathematical frequency ratios devised from divisions and additions of prime numbers. The ensemble began to perform in Just Intonation, a form of tuning inspired by non-Western music; it is made possible through complex mathematics, and attempts to include all potential degrees of the octave. The Theatre of Eternal Music – or Dream Syndicate as Conrad, MacLise and Cale nicknamed it – proved to be a breeding ground of inspiration for all corners of the New York underground and its influence is still evident today. To this day Young hoards the recordings of the Dream Syndicate's performances and rehearsals in his archives, refusing to commercially release them despite requests from Conrad and Cale to do so (in Young's defence he rarely releases any recordings of his work in a commercial fashion). There is therefore little tangible evidence to display the full effect of the ensemble's experiments, however, one commercially available recording exists – released from Conrad and Cale's archives – titled *Day Of Niagara,* and dated

[54] The only version of this "ultra-rare bootleg LP" recording I could find was a downloadable .zip file found on a blog dedicated to rare avant-garde and psychedelic music called *FM Shades*. FM Shades, "Theatre of Eternal Music - (60's Nyc Drone Underground)," in *FM Shades* (2007).

to 1965, which provides an example of the enormous wall of sound that contemporary audiences described.[55]

For anyone who witnessed the Theatre of Eternal Music performing during this time it was by all accounts a confronting and semi-religious experience. The ensemble performed at volume levels in excess of 120 decibels so that their complex harmonic effects would emerge in thrilling detail. In *Beyond the Dream Syndicate* Joseph quotes Conrad about the necessity of this kind of extreme volume:

> The necessity of doing that, was...to bring the audience's hearing up to the point of possible distortion level so that it would be possible for the audience to hear some of the modulation products, the heterodyning that occurs in the nonlinear mode. You can overdrive the ears, and then you hear all of the *stuff*, the difference tones and everything much more clearly.[56]

In 1965, during the brief period in which Terry Riley was a member of the TOEM, the ensemble performed at the Expanded Cinema Festival, at the Film-makers' Cinematheque – an important site in New York City for its fertile underground film scene. The performance was described by one *Vogue* magazine reviewer as "a long, harsh drone, not bagpipes, not buzz-saws, not amplified mosquitoes; more deliberate, more unequivocal, a distant juggernaut of noise."[57] For the members of the group too, being within this 'juggernaut of noise' was indeed something akin to a religious experience and it arguably sowed the seed for all of their future musical actions. The great wall of sound created by the group reminded Conrad and Cale, not just of Young's *2 Sounds* – a piece which arguably inspired both of them to get involved with Young and his ensemble – but also their treasured Phil Spector records, which they listened to at their 56 Ludlow Street apartment. This parallel cannot be ignored, as both Cale and Conrad

[55] Cale/Conrad/MacLise/Young/Zazeela, *Inside the Dream Syndicate Volume 1: Day of Niagara* (Atlanta: Table of the Elements, 2000), Compact Disc.

[56] Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 34

[57] Ibid., 34

went on to play loud and uncompromised rock music up until the present. This wall of sound, this Niagara Falls of droning noise is unfortunately only stored publicly in one – out of press due to Young's legal insistence – CD recording, but its power, even through the static hiss of tape, is unquestionable. Theatre of Eternal Music performances, such as *Day of Niagara* are part of the larger 'eternal music' works of La Monte Young, many of which continue to evolve today from performance to performance. *Day of Niagara* is an excerpt from a larger work entitled *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys*, which Young states as beginning in 1964 and continuing to the present time.[58] Its name is derived from a calendar devised by percussionist Angus MacLise – to which Young and Zazeela still live, including its readjustment of day lengths from twenty-four to thirty-six hours and its renaming of the seven-day calendar cycle with names such as 'Day of Niagara', 'Day of the Smoking Plain', 'Dierdricsday' and so on – and in full reads as '25 IV 65 c. 8.15–8.45 PM NYC day of Niagara'.[59] It is a piece that is at once startling in its timeless nature, sounding as much like an out-there artefact of the 1960s, as it does something from a future yet to be experienced. The sound of the ensemble is immense and incredibly heavy in its own right, with thick intoxicating drones from Conrad and Cale's instruments interplaying with the vocal intonations of Zazeela and Young. The low fidelity quality of the recording unfortunately hampers the overall effect, nonetheless, at proper volume the drone creates a mirage of multiple overtones and timbrel textures that shift at a glacial pace. Tonally and harmonically the piece is static, but the texture of the sound is not, with various changes in bow pressure and bow changes creating a sound akin to shifting ice. It is at once a product of the seedy New York underground as well as the endless expanses of the plains that Young grew up on in Bern, Idaho. The Theatre of Eternal Music appears to have created pieces that were subversive in their use of extreme volume and non-Western tuning systems and highly transcendental in their employment of trance and psychedelic imagery. *Day of Niagara* was recorded in Young and Zazeela's loft at 257 Church Street in the Village, and it was in this

[58]La Monte Young, "On Table of the Elements Cd 74 "Day of Niagara" April 25, 1965," http://www.melafoundation.org/statemen.htm; ibid.

[59] Ibid.

setting, and others of a similar ilk that the Theatre of Eternal Music would rehearse and present their long drug-fuelled performances.

Young and Zazeela, along with Yoko Ono and several others – including Op Art pioneer Larry Poons and Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers anarchist Ben Morea – had a pioneering role in the use of alternative spaces, and this was one of the most important elements to the fermentation of the potent New York City underground sounds. The use of alternative spaces, perhaps inspired by the transformation of the urban landscape suggested by Guy Debord and the Situationists, proved to be an appropriate platform for the presentation of subversive arts and the underground thrived amongst the lofts, galleries and cafes of downtown Manhattan. Much like the loft scene nurturing the music of underground black artists, other artists also embraced this use of space. Disused factory spaces were being marketed throughout the late 1950s and early 60s as 'loft' apartments, the perfect space for an artist or dance studio. While it was often illegal to reside in these spaces as they often lacked running water, heating, gas or reliable electricity, artists and musicians began to occupy them, using them both as performance and living spaces. Yoko Ono became well known for hosting performances in her loft on Chambers Street, including groundbreaking performances by John Cage, La Monte Young and Fluxus. As stated earlier, Young and Zazeela's loft on Church Street proved to be of considerable importance to the protagonists of this thesis. For this couple it was important that they had the freedom to perform their sound and light pieces for long durations, and conventional performance spaces were simply not amenable to this. In their own space they could host performances that lasted for several hours without the restrictions of opening and closing times, licensing and employee costs. Young and Zazeela also began to present events in other alternative spaces such as galleries. The 10-4 Gallery on 4th Avenue hosted performances of the Theatre of Eternal Music on Thursdays and Sundays where the group and their audience were free to sit on the floor and enjoy the unique lighting and long-

form music in an appropriate level of comfort.[60] It was at one of these performances that a young musician by the name of John Cale experienced Young's music in the flesh for the first time.

John Cale: Finds His New Home in a Warm Drone

The Welsh violist, pianist and composer John Cale first travelled to America in 1961 on a Leonard Bernstein Scholarship to study composition with Aaron Copland at the Berkshire Music Centre in Tanglewood, Massachusetts. Cale soon became restless in the stifling academic environment there and travelled to New York City to immerse himself in the avant-garde. His New York debut was his participation in a 28-hour performance of Erik Satie's *Vexations,* which included notable musicians such as David Tudor taking turns at the piano. Through his involvement in the Fluxus movement he met La Monte Young and soon met another young university dropout, Lou Reed, with whom he formed the Velvet Underground. Cale's experiments in the 1960s both inside and outside of the Theatre of Eternal Music echo those of Conrad. Using the high volume amplification and contact microphones he had used in the Theatre of Eternal Music, Cale – under the influence of Conrad – also began to experiment with the physical viola itself, eventually filing down his bridge and stringing the instrument with guitar strings so that it would sound like a "jet-engine".[61]

A series of recordings was recently released on Table of The Elements and extracted from Tony Conrad's archives; it comprises Cale's early experiments during his time in the Dream Syndicate titled *Dream Interpretation*[62]*, Sun Blindness Music*[63] and *Stainless Gamelan.*[64]

[60] Frank J. Oteri, "La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela at the Dream House," *New Music Box*(2003), http://www.newmusicbox.org/assets/54/interview_young.pdf., 26

[61] Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71.

[62] John Cale, *Dream Interpretation: Inside the Dream Syndicate Volume 2* (Atlanta: Table Of The Elements, 2001), Compact Disc.

These recordings collect private solo performances of Cale on viola, guitar and organ, as well as performances with other members of the Dream Syndicate, such as Conrad and Angus MacLise. A beautiful and striking example of Cale collaborating with Conrad is a three-minute drone duo entitled *A Midnight Rain of Green Wrens at the World's Tallest Building*. Recorded in 1968 shortly before Cale's ousting from the Velvet Underground, it is an early example of the warmth that can be expressed through the buzz of rough amplification.[65]

Cale had already spent many hours listening to Conrad's collection of Rock 'N' Roll 45s in the apartment they both shared, and had grown quite a fascination with the music when fellow university dropout Lou Reed was asked by his then employers, pop music publishing company Pickwick, to put together a band to perform his surprise hit *The Ostrich*. Cale and Conrad, along with sculptor and composer Walter De Maria, purely by accident and circumstance (they had adequately long hair), became the perfect choice to serve Pickwick's purposes. To solve the basic problem that Cale and Conrad couldn't play guitars, Reed tuned a guitar to a single note, A sharp. This greatly impressed Cale and Conrad as it strangely echoed the kinds of tunings they were using in the Theatre of Eternal Music. Walter De Maria was given the job of drummer – a position he later returned to with Henry Flynt – and Reed dubbed them The Primitives. This exercise in commercial music brought together the great musical minds of Reed and Cale. Along with Angus MacLise and an old friend of Reed's from Syracuse University, Sterling Morrison, the first incarnation of the Velvet Underground: the Falling Spikes, was born. The Velvet Underground – as they were named after the book of the same name which Conrad had lent to Reed – produced two of the most influential and original rock albums of all time, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, and *White Light/White Heat* (1968,

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[63] John Cale, *Sun Blindness Music* (Atlanta: Table Of The Elements, 2001), Compact Disc.

[64] John Cale, *Stainless Gamelan: Inside the Dream Syndicate Volume 3* (Atlanta: Table Of The Elements, 2001), Compact Disc.

[65] Cale, *Dream Interpretation*.

Verve)[66]. A large part of the unique sounds created by the Velvet Underground permeated through the viola playing of John Cale.

Cale's viola playing on these albums is, for the most part, savage. The droning, scraping sound of the viola brought a quality to the Velvet Underground hitherto unheard in rock music. This distorted wall of sound with its overtones, and mystic undertones has proven to be of great inspiration to bands ever since, from the punk explosion of the late 1970s to 1990s shoegaze, to the current drone metal and 'post-rock' scenes. Recordings of Cale and Conrad performing together in Conrad's apartment, before and during the formation of the Velvet Underground display the similarities and mutual influence of these two men. For a period of time, during their mutual tenure in The Primitives and the Theatre of Eternal Music, Conrad and Cale lived together in an apartment in 56 Ludlow Street on the Lower East Side, a place which Cale describes in detail in his autobiography *What's Welsh For Zen?* :

> Tony Conrad and I holed up in his ghetto apartment on Ludlow Street on the Lower East Side near Delancey Street. The street was usually in a state of disorder, littered with debris and garbage from the surrounding tenements, most buildings having no heat, hot water or electricity. The main form of defence against intrusion was a large mattress spring locked over the fire-escape window, which allowed us to have the window open in the heat of summer without making it an invitation to robbery. The block had a generous allotment of polyglot populace, consisting of Puerto Ricans, Chinese and Hassidim. The streetlights didn't work effectively and at night the Chinese merchant would be huddled in the dim light of his store as you passed to climb the five floors through a fusillade of drunken languages. The landlord had a habit of collecting the rent with a .38 protruding from his belt...[67]

It was in this setting of urban decay and intense heterophony that Cale refined his viola sound and experimented heavily in new sounds and new drugs. Many of his experiments during his 56 Ludlow Street days were recorded to tape and they display a young artist exploring the sonic

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[66] The Velvet Underground, *White Light/White Heat* (United States: Polygram Records, 1996), Compact Disc.

[67] Cale, *What's Welsh For Zen*, 64.

possibilities of all the instruments at his disposal, in particular organ, viola and guitar. He, like Conrad, was also involved in many of the soundtrack recordings for underground films by Jack Smith and Piero Heliczer, who lived in the apartment above them. Angus MacLise also lived at 56 Ludlow Street in an apartment he paid for by renovating its interior. Furthermore, Jack Smith's star actor Mario (aka Maria) Montez also lived in 56 Ludlow Street, in a gaudy apartment decorated in gilt, purple and turquoise and replete with camp accessories.[68] This building remained an important site for this scene throughout the 60s, as Conrad eventually departed and Lou Reed moved in with Cale.

In the late 1960s Cale also began producing albums for various artists including Iggy Pop & the Stooges' debut self-titled album (Elektra, 1969), in which Cale appears performing his droning viola on *We Will Fall*.[69] Piekut points out the New York underground elements present here in his analysis of Cale's performance on *We Will Fall* in his the chapter 'Epilogue: Experimentalism Meets (Iggy) Pop' from his book *Experimentalism Otherwise* (2011):

> ...it may be more revealing to consider the actual pitches Cale chose to play. The dominant-tonic (C-F) dyad that he sounds throughout the ten-minute track does not stand out particularly, but when the overdubbed "solo" line begins at about 8:25, Cale's emphasis on scale degrees 4, 5, m7, and 2 indicates a clear continuing attachment to the pitch vocabulary of the Theatre of Eternal Music.[70]

The works in which Cale's viola features most prominently however, is his production and involvement in the solo albums of former Andy Warhol model Nico, entitled *The Marble Index* (Elektra, 1968) and *Desert Shore* (Reprise, 1970)[71] and later in the 1970s with her swansong *The End.*[72] In these albums Cale's viola takes on a more noticeably avant-garde classical style

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[68] Tyler Hubby, "Tony Conrad Ludlow Street Field Recording," (YouTube, 2009).

[69] The Stooges, *The Stooges* (United States: Elektra, 1988), Compact Disc., track 3.

[70] Benjamin Piekut, "Epilogue: Experimentalism Meets (Iggy) Pop," in *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011)., 191.

[71] Nico, *The Frozen Borderline 1968-1970* (Rhino, 2007), Compact Discs. Both *The Marble Index* and *Desert Shore* are compiled on this 2 CD edition.

[72] ———, *The End* (Japan: Island Records, 1974), Vinyl LP.

with disjointed melodies being recorded and then spliced together creating a disorienting effect that in many ways harks back to his experiments with Conrad outside the Theatre of Eternal Music. Cale's viola playing in these works is no longer along the lines of the static drones of his previous work, but rather passionate, romantic, folk-influenced fills more reminiscent of Wagner than Webern. By the end of the 1960s Manhattan's underground was beginning to fragment as some artists became household names, and musicians like Cale began to seek out work in the mainstream music industry. Indeed Cale eventually moved to the West Coast and spent many years working as a music producer in Los Angeles while eking out his own prolific career as a solo artist of mixed commercial success. Cale still displayed echoes of his Theatre Of Eternal Music past while recording these solo albums, a prominent example being the static droning viola of 'Wall', an unreleased recording later added to a CD reissue of his *Vintage Violence* album (1971).[73]

Lou Reed spent several years in the netherworld of hard drugs and released further commercially unsuccessful Velvet Underground records – despite his obvious attempts to write music in a more saccharine sweet pop vein – before reaching international stardom with his reinvention as Glam Rock wild man in *Transformer* (BMG/RCA, 1972).[74] Unlike these artists, compromise never became an issue for La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela or for the main protagonists of this thesis.

Conclusion

Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt each continue to make music that challenges mainstream perceptions of music's place in society, and continue to brandish their own unique artform as a weapon against complacency and conservatism. They created their own musical languages in a

[73] John Cale, *Vintage Violence* (Sony, 1970), Compact Disc., track 12.

[74] Lou Reed, *Transformer* (United States: BMG/RCA, 1998), Compact Disc.

crucible of creativity that has since disappeared under the constant progressive gentrification of Manhattan and surrounding boroughs, but the spirit of their subversive work continues to live on amongst the underground music of later generations and is receiving somewhat of a revival in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The underground scene of 1960s Manhattan was a unique situation for the development of new ideas, and these ideas occurred all at once, piled upon each other, in much the same way the island itself was built. There was no standard formula, no culture in the traditional sense of the word. Rather, it was a heterogeneous Petri dish in which a gathering of mad scientists experimented with new sounds and a new society. This new society never eventuated, but the world of sound would never be the same, and many of these musicians continue to challenge the pervading Western traditions, and in particular those pertaining to violin performance.

The violin and the revolution came together in Manhattan, and while it didn't change the school of thought behind violin playing at all, it serves as a world of sound that the interested violinist can explore if they wish to descend. The violin can be used as much as an instrument to express subversive political ideas as its closeness to the human voice can speak directly to the heart and mind. Henry Flynt made this his modus operandi during the period in question. The violin too can be used to challenge society's perception of beauty and order and its highly physical nature, when channelled through the microscope of electricity, continues to enlighten Tony Conrad's audiences. The harmony of the spheres received an almighty slap in the 1960s; it has never completely recovered and the violin played a small, but significant, part in this.

Chapter 3: Methodology - Researching Revolutionary Practices

This thesis utilises a range of methods, employing a triangulation of musical analysis, discourse analysis and critical theory in order to outline the historical and socio-political basis for instrumental practices. The findings are then analysed and described in detail before being presented, in light of the work of relevant critical theorists, as a manifesto before finally being presented in light of my own practice, in the form of an auto-ethnographic reflection.

The discourse analysis is of an interview I conducted with Tony Conrad; published interviews conducted with both Conrad and Henry Flynt; and in-depth analyses of the writings of Flynt, in particular those writings pertaining to his musical practice. From this the violin works of Henry Flynt and Tony Conrad will be discussed in detail, making up the bulk of the musical analyses, which includes original in-depth analysis of their practice through listening to, and reflecting upon, their recordings made between 1962 and 1984. Alongside the musical analysis, and at times weaving through it, are references to the various literature pertaining to Flynt and Conrad themselves, and to the underground scene they were a part of, thus painting a 'Style Portrait' of each.

These case studies then form the basis for a manifesto: the critical theory section of the thesis, declaring Underground Violin Performance Practices to be the blueprint for a 'radical' approach to violin performance – Radical Violin Performance Practice – through a conjuring of the spirits of Socialist revolutionaries, Parisian philosophers, and Futurist action groups, as well as the specific personal politics and ideologies of underground violinists. The manifesto format – a way of presenting ideas that was used by, and had an influence on, the protagonists of this thesis – was deemed an appropriate and creative way to summarise the core theoretical undercurrents of the thesis, drawing together the conclusions made from the musical description, and historical and socio-political elements and using them to present new ideas on

performance practice. From here the thesis will discuss the influence of these practices in an auto-ethnographic context, displaying the importance of this revolutionary liberation of the violin to modern performers and summarising the main points of the thesis. Below is an overview of the methods of enquiry employed in order to achieve this triangulation.

Modes of Investigation

The avenues by which I have approached this project include literature (books, magazines); web sources such as blogs, YouTube, Kenneth Goldsmith's voluminous Ubu Web archives and similar mass music databases; interviews both published and conducted by me; listening and analysis of recorded output; attendance of live performances, contemporaneous live performance observations, and secondary anecdotal evidence from colleagues. From these sources the most significant have been one-on-one interviews, literature and web blogs (most importantly that of Henry Flynt, which features free access to most of his written philosophical output and links to distributors of his music). Running in tandem with these resources are the recorded artefacts which are the main source of data for musical analysis. The artists in focus are prolific in their musical output and I have chosen to focus only on those published recordings made between 1962 and 1984. This period is by and large the most productive period musically for Henry Flynt and represents an important period of musical activity for Tony Conrad. I have also chosen this period for its importance within the overall development of modern music and underground culture as a whole.

Musical Analysis forms the backbone of this thesis, without which all other elements would fail to work. The two core case studies – 'Style Portraits' – represent a process of discovery, the results of which are extracted, extrapolated upon and then moulded, along with other critical input, into the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist. The Manifesto is the analyses distilled into a distinct theory of performance practice, which is then poured into the structure of an auto-ethnographic reflection in the conclusion. While this thesis is not simply a reflection on

the outcomes of analyses – as indeed I had initially attempted to do – these outcomes cannot be underestimated in their importance to the core findings of this work. The process of analysing the recordings involved initially listening to each recording several times before then making observations in real-time while in the process of listening. This data was recorded in point-form before being extracted and extrapolated upon in the text. Due to the improvised nature of much of the musical material, transcriptions, musical examples and any other form of notation or visual representation has been eschewed for descriptive prose and anecdotal descriptions made by the artists themselves.

The free nature of these artist's extemporisations posed several problems with regards to analysis: firstly, how does one extract the data in an efficient and precise manner when strict form and structural considerations are no longer in the picture? Secondly, how does one represent the subtle nuances and unique practices of such mercurial artists and still do their work justice without the reader actually physically hearing their work? And lastly, how should one approach synthesising what amounts to a sometimes vague collection of personal reflections and artist commentaries? One method worked best for this project, which is a method originally applied to the analysis of similarly free improvisatory works by – at the time – similarly obscure artists. This method, known as a 'Style Portrait', was constructed by author and musician Ekkerhard Jost and used most effectively in his volume entitled *Free Jazz.*

Style Portrait System

Style Portraits have been applied to this thesis in a slightly modified form. In *Free Jazz* Jost describes this method:

> The sample of these portraits is the result of an attempt to present, as clearly and comprehensively as possible, a labyrinthine evolution in the course of which innovation and

> imitation over-lapped, and continuity was frequently broken by mutual influences exerted by the leading musicians on each other.[75]

This statement proved relevant to this thesis and led me to conclude that a modified Style Portrait method would work well. Style Portraits begin with an introductory statement about the period of work and the composer/performer. This introductory section explores the mutual influences and imitations that occur at the time and in the work of the artist in focus. Next, significant performances are recounted and important works are analysed, blending anecdotal evidence with transcriptions of sections of solos.

For the purpose of this study a further modification of mine is to not use any transcriptions. This is in part due to the non-participation of Henry Flynt, whose work is allegedly a mixture of free improvisation and pre-composed scores of some form or another. Jost interweaves the life experiences of the composer into the analysis of the works, showing the effect that a composer's milieu, philosophy or ideology, and personal circumstances can have on their work. Some musical evidence is also made in Jost's own breakdowns of scale and chord structures and graphs depicting certain forms and textures. The term 'Style Portrait', in other words, is somewhat literal in that Jost provides a comprehensive portrait of the performer and draws conclusions about their style from this, providing further evidence via anecdotes and transcriptions.

One further element to the Style Portrait system that I was mostly unable to make use of in this study, is having a personal relationship with the subjects. Jost was a practicing free jazz musician who performed with many of his subjects and their colleagues. In his style portraits, Jost often refers to his experiences performing with, or the works of, the musicians in focus. Due to my geographic isolation, Henry Flynt's refusal to participate, and my very brief meeting with Tony Conrad I was unfortunately unable to have the deeper experience of performing the artist's music with the artist (or any of their contemporaries or students) and therefore gaining

[75]Ekkerhard Jost, *Free Jazz* (Vienna: Da Capo Press, 1975)., 10

that valuable insight that Jost can often refer to in his writings. Therefore, I was unable to include such reflections in the Style Portraits. To counteract the loss of this element, however, I have instead replaced it with contemporary reflections based on my experience watching Conrad perform as well as videos of Flynt on sites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Furthermore, as a practising musician who performs music openly inspired by the works of Flynt and Conrad and their milieu, I have incorporated personal reflections based on my own experiences attempting the sorts of nuances and techniques inherent in their practice.

How to listen to Eternal Music: Approaches to listening analysis

Addressing the act of simply 'listening to music' in an academic fashion is problematic. For the sake of this project there were several factors to consider when listening to the material: volume and duration, quality and quantity, timbre and nuance applicable to each individual performer. Much of the work in focus is long-form, often quite static in nature and full of subtle shifts in timbre and nuance that requires high levels of concentration to properly observe. I personally found that repeated listening worked best, if for some reason my mind drifted or I became distracted I would nonetheless absorb its many facets over several hearings. For music built on drones and sustained tones I found that a wandering mind was part of the experience, almost as with meditation, and much like meditation I would always drift back to the point of focus. Volume is one factor that would further enhance the listening experience and allow for long duration listening sessions. The music of Tony Conrad for instance, when experienced live is sometimes unbearably loud making the experience truly visceral and sometimes quite uncomfortable. Therefore, listening to his music at as high a volume as one can bear brings about many rewards. Conrad's violin playing is like holding a microscope up to sound, and like using a microscope to see an object, Conrad utilises volume to bring out the minute shifts in his glacial music, and while it is equally enjoyable at a lower volume level, the true experience of his work requires maximum volume.

Flynt's work (particularly his earlier works) is less reliant on volume as a tool. No doubt much of his work was performed and recorded at a reasonable volume, particularly that which he recorded with rock band, but the nature of much of his work points toward an even more introverted approach to music making than that of Conrad. Flynt was a far more virtuosic – in the traditional sense of what virtuosity means to us – performer than Conrad, and his recorded output requires more the approach to listening that one might apply to freer forms of jazz or rock music. There are static textures and drones much like Conrad, but there too are filigree flourishes and wild extemporisations utilising both traditional and non-traditional violin techniques. Much of Flynt's work is also of a much shorter duration than Conrad's, therefore allowing me to analyse his work in smaller bite-sized segments. Formally Flynt is also interested in an extended approach to song structure, something that Conrad largely rejects (his approach is more concerned with long durations than extensions of, or departures from, established forms), further adding to the more straightforward approach to listening that I employed for Flynt's work.

Who Owns a Drone? To Notate or Not to Notate

Another specific issue encountered when approaching this project from a methodological perspective was notation and graphic representation. How does one notate a drone? Further, how does one notate subtle timbral nuances that are unique even to each bow-stroke? And lastly would such an undertaking help to reach deeper conclusions on each musician's techniques? For the purpose of this thesis I surmised that this was not necessary, nor beneficial. There are various reasons for this, including Henry Flynt's refusal to participate in the study. Mr. Flynt has stated on numerous occasions that he frequently notates his music and his techniques and that he uses a unique approach to doing so. There is photographic evidence

to support this[76], however, without Flynt's participation it is outside the scope of this thesis to explore this any further. Aside from this there is little to suggest that such an undertaking would help in my aim of linking Mr. Flynt's performance practices to his unique philosophy and political ideology. Notation, in my opinion, can in no way do justice to such abstract associations. In an ethno-musicological sense it has been argued by many of the United State's most forward-thinking musicologists (LeRoi Jones, Alan Lomax) that to approach vernacular musics with the attitude of a Western explorer wishing to tame the uncivilised masses is highly problematic. This same viewpoint can be applied to the semi-autochthonous communities that arise from the many layers of our urban societies. If a musician desires detachment from institutionalised and academic notions of musical practices then it fundamentally contravenes their attempts to do so by relegating their work to the standardised methods of notation employed in Western musical practice. Jost, for instance, chose to avoid only using Western notation when transcribing solos, and rather developed other graphic systems designed to depict timbre and nuance.[77]

For me this approach is problematic on several levels. Firstly the overly scientific nature of such an approach gives rise to a potential distortion of the performer's original goal – if a performer is creating a certain texture in the spur of the moment without pre-meditation how can notation possibly do this justice? To notate such nuances is to attempt to over-analyse, and therefore remove some of the potency and spontaneity of the performance. One cannot notate the express feelings and thoughts of a performer in the moment, however one can reflect on these feelings through close listening, interviews and audience/peer reflections. A graph showing the intensity of one of Henry Flynt's solos will not in any way divulge to the reader the reasons for this intensity. For a man with a specific philosophy that governs all tenets of his life

[76] There are very few publicly available photos of Flynt during the era in focus, and even fewer available of him specifically playing violin. There is one photo, however, in the liner notes to *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* (Recorded, 2004) that captures Flynt playing violin ca. 1975 while reading sheet music in what appears to be a recording studio.

[77] Jost, *Free Jazz*., 142-144.

one only need read his great volumes of ruminations and theories in order to glean the meaning of his unique musical gestures. This does not render the process of analysis pointless however, as with a character such as Flynt an outsider's perspective on his work is needed. Does his philosophy really come across in his music? And if so, how is it transmitted to his audience, and is it effective? All of these questions and more are explored in this fashion throughout the chapter on Henry Flynt.

Tony Conrad's work has been approached in a similar manner, but with some notable variations. Due to the heterogeneous nature of the New York City scene it is largely inappropriate to apply a rigid analytical premise that covers both artists work with a convenient blanket of shared traits. This is after all not a comparative study, but rather a study into the genesis of new and unexplored performance practices. Conrad's work is largely based in drones and this in itself poses a problem for analysis. When does a drone truly start and end? And who can claim ownership to compositions consisting only of such a fundamental musical concept as a drone? This is at the very heart of Conrad's music, the concept of ownership and composition itself, and has previously been addressed by writers such as Marcus Boon in his article *The Eternal Drone,* " just as the drone can cause powerful shifts in individual consciousness, so it also re-organizes traditional hierarchies of music production and consumption".[78]

Conrad has addressed this by declaring the death of the composer and of traditional notions of harmonic structure altogether. Once again, a musician with this kind of ideology cannot be approached with a series of notes and diagrams. Conrad's music can, however, be interpreted in light of various unconventional systems of tuning such as Just Intonation and other pre-Bach systems of Western tuning. This is only one step in analysing his work, because as Conrad himself suggested to me, it is work that is approached with these ideas as a premise, but not as fixed compositional ideas. Conrad chooses whether to stick to his own rules or not, going with whatever he may feel at the time of performance or feeding off whomever he is

[78] Marcus Boon, "The Eternal Drone,"(2003), http://marcusboon.com/node/46.

performing with. Conrad's style is highly distinctive, however, and it is always easy for the initiated listener to pick out his playing in any given performance. This distinctive quality is largely down to Conrad's lifelong dedication to timbre and to sound. To listen to his music correctly one must listen as much to the very texture of the sound as to the complex intervallic relationships he manipulates. How does one depict such minutiae of timbre? Conventional notation is inadequate in this context, and as with Flynt, diagrams do not fit into the overall question this thesis is trying to address. The best path to analyse the work of Conrad is simply to listen intently and describe the very physical experience of his music and the sounds that he creates. Therefore I have approached Conrad's music once again as an observer explaining his own experience of the physical sound, blending this with the philosophical and ideological premise behind each work or collection of works. This, I believe, is how this body of work was intended to be heard and reflected upon and is by far the most accurate way to approach its analysis.

Interview Technique

As stated earlier it was my intention to interview both primary subjects, however without Henry Flynt's specific participation I was able to only interview Tony Conrad. I approached interviewing with as informal a technique as possible, utilising a semi-structured style which involved meeting in a neutral space (in this case Mr. Conrad's hotel cafe on a visit to Melbourne) where I could prompt the participant with various questions and suggestions. The interview was conducted once over a period of ninety minutes and was recorded. No note taking was employed as this was deemed obstructive and non-conducive to the relaxed atmosphere of the interview, however the interviewee was asked to sign documentation as in compliance with Griffith University's ethics guidelines. Since the interview did not involve questions of a highly personal or legally sensitive nature I sought, and received, 'Human ER1' ethical clearance (see Appendix 1 for the ethical clearance certificate). This clearance was granted 21st of May 2010

and expired on the first of March 2012 with the interview occurring on 12 June 2011. Once the interview was completed I later witnessed a musical performance by the interviewee, and upon my return to Brisbane I reflected upon the interview and the data obtained. After a further period of reflection I returned to the recording and made notes as I listened, paying close attention to any crucial pieces of data that could be extracted in such a casual manner. The interview recording was transcribed and data extracted in a more formal fashion in the form of written quotation as can be seen throughout this thesis, and at length in the Conrad chapter (Chapter 5).

No distinct interview method was employed (although the closest comparison would be a semi-structured interview), rather, through the help of my associate supervisor, the late Prof William Duckworth, who knew these men either personally or knew of them through his own experiences in New York City, I was able to construct an approach tailored specifically to the known traits of the interviewee. Interviews on YouTube and in radio podcasts were also of use in this regard, allowing me to glean some idea of what I should and shouldn't ask the interviewee. As an example I knew that Conrad has had a complicated relationship with the minimalist composer La Monte Young and therefore strove to not make mention of the music they made together. Much to my pleasant surprise Conrad discussed this era of his musical life without prompting. This was of great use to the project and could well be put down to my deciding not to push him on the matter. This interview was a crucial part of the research process, the transcript of which can be read in full as an appendix to this thesis (see Appendix 2).

Manifesting a Manifesto

In order to best outline the core theories behind this concept of 'the underground violinist' and open up new ground for violinists to explore in an interesting and accessible way, I felt it best to take a leaf out of the radical book of the 1960s and present this in the form of a

manifesto. A manifesto, according to its basic dictionary definition, is a public declaration of principles, policies, or intentions, particularly of a political nature. The manifesto presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis is a declaration of principles and intentions, of a specifically political and musical nature. 'The Manifesto of the Radical Violinist' as it has been dubbed, draws together the wider theoretical discourse of the left of the 1960s and 70s, with more contemporary theories and draws somewhat of a lineage back to the great manifestos of the post-industrial era. From Marx and Engels' inspirational works to the early twentieth-century writings of the Futurists and Russian revolutionaries such as Leon Trotsky, right through to Fluxus and underground Anarchist groups such as Black Mask, the manifesto has been used to present new and exciting ideas on the arts. Those leftist theories relevant to the 1960s are mostly drawn from Flynt's *Marxist Art Roster,* an article found on his website which lists the works that members of the hard left underground were reading at the time. From this list I selected several works[79] and drew highly useful and important conclusions from them when held up against the ideas and philosophies of the underground violinists themselves.

In particular, the writings of Soviet artists such as the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky and film-maker Dziga Vertov (who didn't make Flynt's list due to his perceived formalism, but is mentioned in the introductory paragraphs[80]), served as excellent ground for comparison with the practices of radical underground violinists. The writings of the Situationist International[81], many of which are in a declamatory manifesto style, served as more of an inspiration for the form of the chapter than anything else, however their radical views on the urban landscape are reflected upon to some degree. The more contemporary theory of 'hauntology', as posited by a veteran of the 1968 Paris student uprisings Jacques Derrida, forms the backbone of the manifesto, and

[79] Lee Baxandall, *Radical Perspectives in the Arts;* Leon Trotsky, *Literature and the Revolution; The Situationist International Anthology* ed. Ken Knabb; Harvey Swados, *A Radical's America*; LeRoi Jones, *Blues People;* the poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky as compiled and translated by Herbert Marshall in his *Mayakovsky* compendium, among others.

[80] Henry Flynt, "Marxist Art Roster," *Philosophy*, http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/syllart.html.

[81] Knabb, ed. *Situationist International Anthology*.

while not mentioned by any of the protagonists of this thesis as an influence, this theory serves well as a way in which to describe the spectral, Marxian spirit of underground violin performance practices. Indeed as the analysis herein will show, underground violinists haunted and continue to haunt, the hegemony of Western culture, and the Manifesto of the Radical Violinist is designed to challenge the reader to continue the haunting in new and innovative ways.

A Bridge to Analysis

The most appropriate character with which to begin the discussion and analysis of underground violin performance practices is arguably Henry Flynt. Flynt was the first to embrace new ideas coming out of New York City and put them into practice on his violin and other instruments of interest to him. In the late 1950s he met Tony Conrad, who introduced him to the music of La Monte Young, a man he would soon meet and make music with. Flynt likewise introduced Conrad to Rock 'n' Roll, country, and perhaps most important of all, Indian classical music. Without Flynt's first forays into popular and avant-garde musics, and his firm ideals and extreme philosophies – even at the earliest stages – underground violin performance practices would undoubtedly be something altogether other from what will be discussed in this thesis. His strong personality and early ambitions drew the main characters of this story together, and his musical tastes and revolutionary ideas serve as the rock beneath which Conrad and his ilk would crawl and stay for decades to come. The following chapter is an overview of his revolutionary achievements and an in-depth analysis of his philosophy in practice through the medium of his violin.

Chapter 4: Trucking and Trancing - the Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues violin of Henry Flynt

"Perhaps the most diseased justification the artist can give of his profession is to say that it is somehow scientific."

Henry Flynt, 'Art or Brend'

Introduction to the Source

Henry Flynt is an artist with an extremely specified and extreme ideological basis for his practice. This ideological basis is in many ways quite obscure and is, for the most part, not shared by any of the contemporaneous philosophers of his time. Therefore the primary sources for this chapter are Flynt's own writings found at his voluminous blog: http://www.henryflynt.org/. This site contains much of Flynt's philosophical writings from the 1950s to the present day in html format, and there are several essays of central importance in constructing this chapter. Much of the biographical information is taken from a collection of essays on Flynt by other authors entitled 'About Henry Flynt' and a timeline compiled by Flynt entitiled 'Correlative Chronology'. The core philosophical, ideological and aesthetic sources are 'Art or Brend?' (1968), 'The Creep' (1960), 'Essay: Concept Art' (1961), 'My New Concept of General Acognitive Culture' (1962), 'The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music' (1980), 'On Pandit Pran Nath' (2002) and lastly the 'Brend' chapter from 'Culture to Brend' (1994). Of these, 'The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music' is the most referenced source for the chapter. Various other articles from Flynt's archive were also sourced and are referenced as appropriate throughout. For the sake of fluidity and continuity I have chosen to list these sources here rather than interrupt the flow of the text with endless referencing and in-text citations. This decision has been made not least of all because the essays are presented in html format, thus rendering any reference to page numbers or distinctive sections almost impossible, or at the very least cumbersome. This chapter represents a first in its attempt to bring together Flynt's philosophical writings and examine, in an in-depth fashion, the

way in which his works for violin transmit and express these philosophical underpinnings. This chapter addresses Flynt's violin work as a kind of agitprop via performance practice, a unique way of looking at the work of an utterly unique artist.

The Beginning: A Creep is born

Henry Flynt's (b. 1940) musical life began in his hometown of Greensboro, North Carolina, where he largely took an interest in Western classical music, and in particular modern classical music. Flynt takes pride in the possibility that he was the only person in Greensboro, or even the state, in possession of a score of Schoenberg's extremely difficult Violin Concerto.[82] However, Flynt began to show an interest in Rock n' Roll music even at this early stage, buying copies of the sheet music of 'Hound Dog' and other hits of the period, and attempting them on his violin.[83] This interest in African-American and working class white vernacular music, however, did not take hold until after his move to New York City in 1963. While attending Harvard as a Mathematics Major, Flynt continued to solidify his philosophical ideas and created music that sat largely in the vein of the aleatoric works of John Cage. As his interest shifted to ethnic music – both that of the Americas and most particularly that of Africa, India and Romania – and his philosophy brought him to decidedly Marxist/Leninist conclusions, Flynt increasingly began to compose in a style that would reflect this new-found enthusiasm for the music of those who existed at the bottom of America's social ladder. For the sake of this study the period in focus will be that in which Flynt was most active as a violinist, firstly as an exponent of his own unique, Mayakovsky-inspired Anti-Art stance and member of the Communist Worker's World Party, and then as an advocate of his more nihilistic period of 'Brend' and 'Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music', as he would later go on to term it. This

[82] Kenneth Goldsmith, "Henry Flynt Interview by Kenneth Goldsmith Wfmu," (WFMU, 2004).

[83] Henry Flynt, "My New Concept of General Acognitive Culture," http://www.henryflynt.org/aesthetics/acogcult.html.

period stretches from his first residence in Manhattan in 1963 to his violin instrumentals of the middle-to-late 1970s and his final dismissal of the violin altogether in 1984.

In the early 1960s, self-proclaimed "creep"[84] Henry Flynt was still a mathematics student at Harvard. A bright student in high school, he received a scholarship to Harvard for his exceptional academic aptitude, only to gain a reputation for erratic attendance, choosing only to sample the lectures he found most important and interesting. Due to his low academic performance, Flynt withdrew from Harvard on probation, and was drawn to New York City to be a part of the avant-garde, and the exciting movement around it. In particular, the work of composer and jazz musician La Monte Young was the magnet which drew him there, to whom he was introduced by fellow Harvard mathematics Major and violinist, Tony Conrad. Flynt's love of the earlier work (pre – *Free Jazz*) of Ornette Coleman was of particular importance in the development of his music and it is this interest in the new innovations in jazz music that inspired Flynt to first travel south from his dorm in Cambridge. Flynt epitomises the eccentricity and uniqueness of early underground violin performance. In many ways he was the catalyst for a turn towards popular music idioms for downtown avant-garde musicians of the time, heavily influencing his contemporaries, such as Tony Conrad and, by proxy, a young pre-Velvet Underground John Cale, to do the same. Flynt first met La Monte Young in 1960, and throughout 1961 and 1962 they rehearsed and recorded improvised works, including some for violin and piano. Young would begin these sessions by comping on piano in a style that involved endless, rhythmic ostinatos, or riffs, over which a solo instrument could improvise freely. This would have a powerful effect on Flynt and his music.

[84] Ibid.

Acognitive Culture, WWP, American Ethnic Music

Flynt made his New York debut in 1961 at a concert in Yoko Ono's loft where he performed to an audience, which included a somewhat impressed John Cage. John Cage's impression, however, quickly turned to one of dismissal after asking Flynt what inspired his performance, to which he answered "Bo Diddley and Ornette Coleman". According to Flynt and those in attendance Cage responded by asking him what he thought he was doing there and henceforth withdrawing any further interest in Flynt's work.[85] This event seems to have had a profound effect on Flynt and sowed one of many seeds for his belief that Western art music is fundamentally racist and corrupt.

Flynt soon became an active, if reluctant, participant in the 'happenings' and 'word scores' of the nascent Fluxus movement of which La Monte Young was an important figure. Flynt also began to develop his philosophical ideas including what he called 'acognitive culture',[86] before moving towards a more dogmatic left-wing political agenda and adopting an 'Anti-Art' stance in the tradition of Lenin and Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. After finally moving from Cambridge to New York City in 1963, Flynt became a prominent figure in the sectarian left, joining a small downtown group the Communist Worker's World Party or WWP.

As a member of the WWP, Flynt became closely involved in the civil rights movement and wrote several articles on the revolutionary awakenings of Africa. During this time he began devising new philosophies and ideas on art and music that were heavily imbued with a unique interpretation of revolutionary Marxist ideology. Indeed there is a peculiar Soviet dimension to Flynt's musical works, imbued with a sensibility akin to the cut-up documentary films of Dziga Vertov (minus any formalist trappings) and the declamatory, vernacular 'proletarian' poetry of Vladimir Mayakovsky. Proof of Flynt's interest in Mayakovsky in particular can be found in

[85] Benjamin Piekut, "Henry Flynt in New York: Yoko Ono's Loft," in *Henry Flynt in New York* (YouTube, 2008).

[86] Flynt, "My New Concept of General Acognitive Culture."

photographs of Flynt presenting his Anti-Art lectures at Harvard, portrait of Mayakovsky hanging over his head.

Flynt quickly became disenfranchised with the overt dislike of popular music expressed by Cage and, particularly, Karlheinz Stockhausen, which Flynt saw as a barely-veiled racist rejection of African-American music. Flynt accused Stockhausen of propagating music for the purposes of 'cultural imperialism'[87] and began to drift away from the milieu of Fluxus, developing his own concept of 'American ethnic music'.[88]

Flynt states in his paper 'The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music', that he first truly made his break with hierarchical Western musics - such as so-called classical and jazz music – when he bought his first Delta blues record. From here he became infatuated with rock instrumentals such as 'Green Onions' and 'Night Train' and began to apply the sort of sonorities he was hearing in this music to his violin playing. In particular, the innovations in technology that Rock 'n' Roll had embraced were of great interest to Flynt. A fascination with the power of technology runs throughout his often Science Fiction-influenced philosophical writings.

Science Fiction is in many ways another element of 1950s American popular culture that Flynt took to the extreme in his writings and socialist theories, greatly inspiring his later utopian theories. In a musical sense he began to employ such innovations as the use of valve and tube amplifiers, and studio techniques used commonly by Rock 'n' Roll producers such as ample applications of reverb and tape delay. The slap-back reverb of Rockabilly guitarists in particular appears prominently in his solo violin pieces from the mid-1960s to his works with band in the 1970s. Flynt's brochure *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* reads like a testament to these ideas. Designed by George Maciunas, it displays images

[87] Henry Flynt, "Action against Cultural Imperialism: Picket Stockhausen Concert!," http://www.artnotart.com/fluxus/hflynt-actionagainst.html.

[88] Henry Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music," http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/meaning_of_my_music.htm.

of electric guitars, amplifiers and electric organs, as examples of the technological prowess employed by the working class denizens of American popular music. Maciunas proposed the ideas presented in the brochure to the offices of the Soviet Union, including that of Soviet Union leader Nikita Khrushchev, who offered suggestions of how this approach could be altered,[89] however, for the most part it was dismissed – most vehemently by Worker's World – as being a work lacking in ideological clarity.[90]

This lack of interest from the Party proved to be a massive blow to Maciunas' credibility, and to that of Flynt, however, Flynt was not going to let this stop him from continuing to propagate his utopian vision of cultural policy. With Maciunas and Fluxus, Flynt had largely held true to his ideology of Anti-Art and had written drafts of his theory of 'Veramusement': a culture based in pure recreation, where one does not create art or perform, but rather communally or individually create their 'just-likings' in an environment lacking in competition or commercial interests. In fact Veramusement stands in direct opposition to the notion of culture itself, and seeks to *replace* culture with Veramusement, a word created by Flynt that would later morph into his own neologism, *Brend*. It is not surprising then that many of Flynt's compositions made in the 1960s are solitary violin pieces recorded at home or in the loft spaces of friends such as sculptor Walter De Maria.[91] A further explanation for Flynt's love of solitary musical exploration is his pre-Brend theory of 'the creep', in which the idealised state of being for any man is to exist in a self-induced state of permanent bachelorhood. Celibacy is enforced, and social interaction is seen as being based entirely in the kind of universe of constructs often evoked by nihilist philosophers and therefore entirely necessary only on the most superficial level.[92] The 'creep' was a state of being which involves complete

[89] Michael Oren, "Anti-Art as the End of Cultural History," *Performing Arts Journal* 15, no. 2 (1993)., 23.

[90] Benjamin Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture!," in *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: Univeristy of California Press, 2011)., 94

[91] Henry Flynt, "Correlative Chronolgy - Henry Flynt: The Intense Years (1954-67),"(2007), http://henryflynt.org/overviews/henry_flynt_correlative_chronology.htm.

[92] Henry Flynt, "Creep," in *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization* (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1975).

separation from all socialised activities and norms, therefore reaching a heightened state of being.

The late 1950s to the early 1960s presented the period in which Flynt created many of the theories behind one of very few published written works, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization.*[93] This timeframe saw Flynt create his theory of 'the creep' as well as his cultural manifestos for 'Creep Acognitive Culture', and its alternative for "humans"[94], 'General Acognitive Culture', as well as his more famous 'Concept Art'. Acognitive culture or 'general acognitive culture' is Flynt's theory for the replacement of capitalist, careerist culture with the pursuit of an individual's 'just likes'[95]. These 'just likes' represent those activities that one does for pure recreation and acognitive culture encourages the refinement of said activities for personal enjoyment rather than social or financial gain. In a sense acognitive culture is a call to break free from the commercial realms of 'serious culture'[96]: As Flynt states in his 1962 article *My New Concept of General Acognitive Culture,* "One can't create acognitive culture as a profession".[97] Further, acognitive culture works as an extension of the nihilistic allusions present in his creep manifesto. Indeed Flynt often describes acognitive culture as a kind of cognitive nihilism in which the reader is asked to question the validity of cognition itself.

The True American Ethnic Music: Rock 'N' Roll Hillbillies

The era of American ethnic music that most affected Flynt was the relatively short period from the late 1950s to North America's inevitable infection with 'Beatles fever' in

[93] Henry Flynt, *Blueprint for a Higher Civilization* (Milan: Multhipla Edizioni, 1975).

[94] Flynt, "My New Concept of General Acognitive Culture."

[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Ibid.

1964.[98] This was a period where American working class vernacular music was being exploited by the recording industry indiscriminately, and as a result a strangely healthy diversity was encouraged. This can be quite simply summarised in the lyrics to *Hillbilly Music* – later known as *Hillbilly Fever* and derived from the 1950s bluegrass standard of the same name by Ferlin Husky as sung by Jerry-Lee Lewis:

> Hillbilly fever goin' 'round
> Good old mountain music's got me down
> You hear guitar, fiddle
> Boy, you're shakin' around
> Hillbilly fever goin' 'round
>
> Well, rock 'n' roll music's goin' 'round
> When you feel it, ooh you can't sit down
> Well, you gotta shake, break, oh yeah
> This thing's goin' 'round the town
> Rock 'n' roll music goin' 'round
> (Roll yeah!)
>
> Oh, country music's goin' 'round
> You get the feelin', boy you can't sit down
> Well, you rock to the right
> You rock to the left
> You feel so doggone good
> Mmm, this country music's goin' 'round
> Yeah, this country music's goin' 'round
> Yeah, rock 'n' roll music's goin' 'round[99]

This song is an unabashed declaration of love for country music and Rock 'n' Roll and sonically the song very much reflects this heady mixture of Afro and Anglo American roots. This blend of hillbilly or country music and R&B or 'race music' is now commonly known as Rockabilly and was the staple of famous independent labels such as Sun and Atlantic for the period Flynt recognises as the golden era of American Ethnic music. It was a music, much like Flynt himself, that was an undeniable product of the south where rebellious young whites such as Elvis Presley would sneak into black juke joints to hear R&B artists belt out tune after tune

[98] Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."

[99] Jerry Lee Lewis, *Hillbilly Music* (United States: Sun Recordings, 1961), Mp3.

with riotous abandon. The earliest publically available piece of Flynt's to emulate the timbre and stylistic nuance of rockabilly is 'Echo Rock', recorded in 1966.

Flynt saw "street-Negro music"[100], meaning Jazz, R & B, early pre-Beatles Rock 'n' Roll, Blues and Hillbilly (meaning Bluegrass and Country) music, as the true music of the USA's oppressed classes. Hillbilly music, in particular, represented a very personal example of the music of oppressed people to Flynt. As a native of North Carolina – who grew up in a lower-middle-class family and attended public schools – he was well aware (albeit from a distance) of the plight of its poor, white rural population, however he did not develop a great love of the hillbilly fiddle music of the region until he moved north. Flynt sought to break free of his classical violin training by taking on the role of a self-taught musician, invoking the origins of bluegrass in the improvisations of isolated farmers. At its very heart Flynt's music is based in this kind of ideal and imagery – the recreation and expression of workers and the working classes, particularly those of rural America. This led to Flynt's creation of what he dubbed "Avant-garde Hillbilly & Blues Music".[101]

> My music is a sophisticated, personal extension of the ethnic music of my native region of the United states [sic]. In all of my experimentation, I assert myself as an autochthon...siding with the emotional experience and the musical languages of the autochthonous communities.

To Flynt, reaching the mindset of autochthonous musicians is at the very core of his musical explorations. In order to 'brend' one must give up their pre-conceived notions of technique and play simply what comes from the heart. In Flynt's case this means playing his beloved American Ethnic music in a manner as reminiscent of the untrained "folk creature" as possible.[102] Flynt gives the example of Ornette Coleman in his paper on the topic, 'The Meaning of My Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues Music': "I was inspired by the image which Ornette

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[100] *Branden W. Joseph, Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cafe (a "Minor History) (New York: Zone Books, 2008).*, 209

[101] Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."

[102] Ibid.

Coleman had at the beginning of his career: the image of the untrained 'folk creature' as avant-gardiste."[103]

Further he sees it as entirely inappropriate to interpret American Ethnic music with the ears of a Western listener. This is perhaps absurd in many ways as American music is so intrinsically linked to the music of the Western European homelands of white settlers, but Flynt is not the first to declare such sentiments. At the same time that Flynt drew such conclusions, ethnomusicologists such as Lomax and writers such as LeRoi Jones were calling for students of African-American music to free their ears of the shackles of Western musical interpretation and notation.[104] In the case of African-American music this makes perfect sense, however in the case of other American musics it is a hard pill to swallow until one embraces Flynt's view that the concept of the so-called Western world is intrinsically flawed.

Flynt's view of culture is entirely incompatible with the notion of a homogeneous Western palette. This view is based in obvious Marxist/Leninist social terms as those who exist in the comfort of bourgeois society, replete with its notions of homogeneous Western culture and pampered with higher standards of living and education are indeed enculturated in such a fashion. However, those at the bottom of the social ladder, where education and therefore cultural indoctrination cannot reach, are forced to create their own means of expression and artistic release. Leon Trotsky once wrote: "In my eyes authors, journalists and artists always stood for a world that was more attractive than any other, a world open only to the elect".[105] Trotsky felt that this world should not only be open to the 'elect' but should be replaced by a new 'Proletarian Culture': "We must, first of all, take possession, politically, of the most important elements of the old culture, to such an extent, at least, as to be able to pave the way

[103] Ibid.

[104] Alan Lomax, "Song Structure and Social Structure," in *Write Me a Few of Your Lines: A Blues Reader*, ed. Steven C. Tracy (Amherst: University of Massachusettes Press, 1999)., 32.

[105] Leon Trotsky, *The Basic Writings of Trotsky*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Schocken Books, 1963)., 3

for a new culture".[106] For Flynt too, it is these people's culture – the Proletariat, both black and white – which matters most, and it is their music that cannot be interpreted from the Western perspective. Flynt's American Ethnic music is the music of the Working Class of the mid Twentieth Century, and is therefore entirely alien to comfortable bourgeois notions of art and culture.

Communists in the Garage: Protest works for band and early Solo Ragas

In 1966 Flynt began to experiment with works composed for rock band. Several factors inspired Flynt to make this move and one particularly strong element was his appearance on stage at the Dom with the Velvet Underground. While this position was short-lived due to Flynt's insistence on including his Hillbilly idiosyncrasies in the Velvet Underground's decidedly European aesthetic, he did benefit in the form of guitar lessons from Lou Reed – his payment for the engagement. Flynt made good use of his brief schooling in garage rock guitar playing by starting his own punk band, The Insurrections, with Walter De Maria on drums and Paul Breslin – a local jazz musician in Flynt's circle at the time – on bass. The Insurrections recorded a selection of songs in Walter De Maria's loft which did not see the light of day until Bo' Weavil Records released a compilation of them in 2004 entitled *I Don't Wanna.*[107] This collection of recordings includes no violin playing, but instead features Flynt performing on guitar and singing in his own unique style. Flynt's experiments in minimalistic guitar playing would be reflected in his violin practice of the time and would be revisited in later years, and even today when he makes rare public performances of Rockabilly guitar duos with his niece Libby Flynt. In 1966 Flynt was inspired not only by the rock music going on in his own neighbourhood and amongst his friends and colleagues, but also by Bob Dylan's decision to

[106] Leon Trotsky, "Proletarian Culture and Proletarian Art," *Literature and Revolution*(1924), http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1924/lit_revo/ch06.htm.

[107] Henry Flynt, *Henry Flynt & the Insurrections: I Don't Wanna* (Chicago Locust Records, 2004), Compact Disc.

pick up an electric guitar and record 'Subterranean Homesick Blues'. For Flynt 1966 was a time where he too embraced electricity, and his solo violin recordings of 1966 and beyond are largely performed through amplifiers and peppered with various amplifier, tape and studio effects. Much of this interest in electricity naturally tied in with his and Maciunas' *Communists Must Give Revolutionary Leadership in Culture* manifesto, but it also reflected the music of his contemporaries, such as John Cale and Tony Conrad who were using amplification and bowed string instruments to great effect. Flynt recorded many other pieces with solo electric violin throughout the latter half of the 1960s including the notable 'Hoedown'[108] dated to 1968.

The Master and Thereafter: the Profound Effect of Pandit Pran Nath.

One substantially important musical experience had a profound effect on Flynt's violin practice from 1970 onward. 1970 was the year that marked the long-term arrival of Pandit Pran Nath in New York City. Brought over by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, Pandit Pran Nath began teaching many of Manhattan's artistic community and Flynt was included amongst them. Flynt would not take on the guru-student relationship that colleagues such as Young, Zazeela and Riley embraced, however, and he only worked under the tuition of the Kirana master for a short period. Despite this Pandit Pran Nath became the highest embodiment of musical achievement to Flynt and their involvement would have a profound effect on Flynt's future compositions. Hindustani music had begun to affect Flynt's musical practice long before meeting Pandit Pran Nath in person. In his recollections of their days at the Harvard dorms in Cambridge, Tony Conrad described going to visit Flynt's room and stopping outside his door when hearing music:

> ...as I clambered up the stairs to his little apartment, I heard magical sounds coming through the door and I didn't recognise them at all and I hesitated because I knew - knowing his penchant for

[108] Henry Flynt, *New American Ethnic Music Vol. 2: Spindizzy* (United States: Recorded, 2003), Compact Disc.

> privacy I knew that if I knocked on the door, the music would stop and I'd never find out anything about it. So I just stood outside the door and listened to this magical music for a half hour until it ended and then I knocked on the door and I said "What was that?" and he said "Ali Akbar Khan's first recording on Angel..."[109]

At this early stage in Flynt's musical awakening he also began to ingest field recordings of African music available in the Harvard libraries, and the newly available recordings of other Hindustani masters such as *sarangi* (a type of bowed fiddle held vertically like a viol) player, Pandit Ram Narayan – who interestingly is the younger brother of tabla player Chatur Lal who famously played on the Ali Akbar Khan record which so profoundly affected Flynt and Conrad when heard in Flynt's dorm at Harvard. Much of Flynt's later violin practice would be clearly influenced by the nuances of the *sarangi,* and echoes of Pandit Ram Narayan's playing are heard throughout the available recordings of Flynt's 1970s works.

The extent to which Flynt was influenced by Pandit Pran Nath can be clearly seen in Flynt's reflections on his own work, published in the liner notes to his *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music*[110] album. The pieces in this album, as will be discussed in more detail later, were recorded from 1975 – 1979, the period leading up to Flynt's most Indian-inspired works. Flynt describes the opening piece, 'Graduation' as a "hillbilly response to the low-and-slow vocals of Pran Nath". Later in the album we hear the "contemporary cowboy raga" of 'Lonesome Train Dreams' as Flynt describes it. On his *Philosophy* website can be found an article titled 'On Pandit Pran Nath', in which Flynt goes into more detail about the profound effect this great teacher and musician had on him:

> I was beside myself for days after hearing [Pandit Pran Nath's performance of the Raga] *Bhairava 19 V 1974*...Pandit Pran Nath was more fully realized than blues musicians—no less honor to them—but he had an advantage of context. He did not have to practice an 'illicit' music

[109] Tony Conrad, interview with author, transcript, 7.

[110] Henry Flynt, *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* (United States: Ampersand, 2001), Compact Disc.

> while situated socially below a hostile majority. (Although his parents threw him out at 13 for wanting to be a musician.) He was 'at home', in his own country, his own tradition, and the musical vocation entailed a comprehensive 'yogic' discipline which is not expected in the West. The European modernist project of annulling tradition was not an issue in his landscape. All the same, he departed the expected Hindustani practice to the point where he was alone (and not universally beloved) in his originality. Guruji went to strange emotional places, already familiar in his native culture, which the West would call surrealistic or like an inexplicable dream. But instead of being odd in an estranging way, it involved you; he forcibly confronted you with your own appreciation of emotion, poignancy, and exaltation. It took you into yourself and showed you that you have sensibilities, and nobility, you did not know about. A sensibility of poignancy and exaltation. Other Hindustani singers are great entertainers. Guruji's job description was: to awaken your true self. The most remarkable thing is that he chose the path of probing people emotionally, reaching them in an earthy and basic way and yet with an underlying strategy of the highest intelligence. He channelled his incredible technique into emotional confrontation, into involving us emotionally.[111]

Clearly Pandit Pran Nath's singing touched Flynt at a deep level, and his imprint is seen throughout Flynt's work during the 1970s and into the 1980s.

Back in the Garage: Nova'Billy and Other New Country and Blues Music.

In the early 1970s Flynt recorded more works for solo violin and resurfaced with a new combo named Nova'Billy. The solo works of the early 1970s represent a further development of New American Ethnic music into more and more electronically modified territory. Nova'Billy existed for a very short period in 1974–1975 and represents Flynt's first attempt to put together a country rock band to make official recordings and perform on a regular basis. The band consisted of various musicians from the New York scene, many of whom, much to Flynt's

[111] Henry Flynt, "On Pandit Pran Nath (1918-1996)," *Philosophy*(1996-2002), http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/on_pandit_pran_nath.htm.

disappointment, would make the move into punk shortly after leaving Nova'Billy. Indeed Flynt seems to blame the emergence of punk on the demise of yet another attempt to reach a wider audience. His dismay towards this music is surprising to some degree as the sounds that Nova'Billy create can be compared to the No Wave movement of the late 1970s, a New York City-based movement very much started in the punk spirit. Like so much in Flynt's life this attempt to reach the people did not come to fruition and Nova'Billy's gigs were poorly attended, eventually leading to the group dissolving. In this incarnation, however, Flynt did record a large volume of works which rarely saw the light of day at the time, but have since resurfaced in a compilation released by Locust Music in 2007. *Nova'Billy*[112] is a collection of recordings of startling inventiveness and a sound that still reverberates as being both original and forward-looking today. Flynt's violin performance on these recordings is very much at its pinnacle with improvisations that amalgamate all of the tenets of Flynt's American Ethnic Music philosophy inhabiting pieces that conspicuously declare allegiance to a utopian agenda and to a new found interest in hedonistic abandon.

During this period Flynt also participated in rare live performances, including a fundraising event, circa 1967, for a recently incarcerated Angus MacLise called *Brain Damage in Oklahoma City*[113] where he performed on voice and song flute alongside Tony Conrad, Jackson MacLow, Hetty and Angus MacLise, amongst others. Flynt also made, unfortunately undocumented, live solo violin appearances opening for The Fugs and at various other locations which he claims very few people attended. The period after 1967 and Flynt's break with the dogmatic left appears to represent a period of questioning for him as he, somewhat contrarily, after completing a degree in Economics at NYU, took up a position as an economic consultant at a firm near the Stock Exchange on Wall Street.[114] 1968 marks the year that Flynt completed his writings on the archly utopian Brend theory, culminating in an unpublished essay 'Art or

[112] Henry Flynt, *Henry Flynt & Nova'billy* (Chicago: Locust Music, 2007), Compact Disc.

[113] Angus MacLise, *Brain Damage in Oklahoma City* (United States: Siltbreeze, 2000), Compact Disc.

[114] Che Chen, "About Henry Flynt,"(2008), http://henryflynt.org/overviews/henryflynt_new.htm.

Brend?'. This essay clearly outlines Flynt's view to erase the notion of work and bring about a utopian society through the wholesale embracing of one's Brend or just-likings.[115] Through replacing work with Brend, art would cease to be a form of career pursuit and would rather become a form of pure leisure, henceforth making all art a personal and original expression of its creator. In this utopia the isolationist solo violin pieces that make up so much of Flynt's musical canon would exist within a great polyphonic mixture of unique human expression, free of the confines of remunerative expectations and social repression. In this sense Flynt's music almost exists as a form of art created for a society that doesn't exist yet, or may never exist.

Later Works: ISE, C.C. Hennix and other Acceptable Europeans

Another community of acognitive folk-creatures, from which Flynt took much inspiration, was the peasant class peoples of Romania. Romanian folk music seems to have played a major part in Flynt's musical life from the beginning. During his freshman year at Harvard Flynt insisted that Tony Conrad listen to the music of Béla Bartok, a composer who drew heavily from his ethno-musicological research into Hungarian, Romanian and Transylvanian folk music. While Flynt would eventually dismiss Bartok's music, and in particular his ethno-musicological practices, this early interest in Romanian music stuck with him. Romania's revolutionary status was no doubt another drawcard of this music, as is the non-conformist and distinctly non-European culture of the Roma people whose nomadic gypsy society is largely associated with Romania and surrounding areas. The violin is an instrument at the heart of Romanian folk music and exists as a practice entirely unique from the European music from which the violin is borrowed. Romanian violin music is rough, syncopated and swung, involves modifications of the instrument and unusual tunings, microtonal intervals and is a heterogeneous music of the people, used for the purpose of communal enjoyment and dancing. All of these qualities sit well with Flynt's idea of American Ethnic Music, and the

[115] Henry Flynt, "Art or Brend?,"(1968), http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/artbrend.html.

sizable Eastern European ethnic communities of New York City no doubt added further weight to their inclusion in his practice. Like American folk music, Romanian music is diverse and consists of musical elements from many different ethnicities – Indian, Turkish, Slavic amongst others – further adding to its attractiveness to Flynt and his philosophical and political agenda.

Throughout the 1970s Flynt further deconstructed the inner-workings of cognition and presented ever more complex challenges to the pillars of Western culture. During the latter half of the 1970s Flynt, along with his friend, Swedish mathematician and composer Catherine Christer Hennix, began their Genius Liberation Project. The Genius Liberation Project involved the establishment of a short-lived commune, designed to attract great minds whose work was cutting-edge and misunderstood like that of Flynt and Hennix. This project failed after a very short period of time and indeed never attracted any attention from its desired demographic. Musically, however, Flynt and Hennix began to devise a new style of composition given the acronym ISE or Illuminatory Sound Environments. ISE represented a new form of musical expression that sought to create an hallucinatory experience in sound. ISE pieces involve sounds that are manipulated to a point that they no longer resemble their source materials, great smudges of glissandi and blurry clusters of notes. During the time in which Hennix and Flynt began to explore ISE both of them were pursuing the psychedelic experience in distinctly different ways. For Hennix the psychedelic experience involved altered states of consciousness, for Flynt it involved a "counter-attack on everyday life and consensus reality".[116] Flynt was interested in debunking the psychedelic experience and proving that the quasi-mystical aura that surrounded the psychedelia at the time was nothing but the propaganda of charlatans. Some of the most prominent pop philosophers of the 1960s and 70s were psychedelic gurus such as Timothy Leary – a man Flynt may well have come across in his Harvard days. Leary preached liberation through hallucination, a new society born through the psychedelic experience brought on by the use of drugs such as mescalin and LSD. In 1975 Flynt began to attempt to debunk the myth of the psychedelic experience by interviewing friends who were well-experienced in

[116] Marcus Boon, "Shaking the Foundations: Catherine Christer Hennix," *The Wire* 2010., 30.

psychedelics, spending some time interviewing ‘drop-outs’ at a ‘Dead Head’ commune in Kansas, and finally actually imbibing an hallucinogen himself. At the conclusion of all of this Flynt discovered that the psychedelic experience is not one of hallucination, but of illumination and self-exploration and that the widely-believed notions of spiritual enlightenment were nothing but theatrical posturing by those with a vested interest in appearing like spiritually enlightened beings. Flynt explains the mass acceptance of this kind of experience amongst the counter-culture as a kind of mass hysteria brought on by a form of collective wishful thinking.[117] Flynt goes into great detail on this subject in his essay ‘The Psychedelic State’, found at his website. For Flynt, ISE compositions were about creating an illuminatory and hallucinatory state through sound and not through drugs, which only serve to fuel another commercial industry. Like all of Flynt’s work, ISE’s ultimate goal is to challenge perception, common notions of societal experience and to transcend such base elements as commerce.

Flynt’s highly anti-commercial stance resulted in an uncompromising position from which he was unable to secure a record deal, despite several attempts at courting interest from major labels, such as Atlantic. His unique combination of seemingly disparate philosophical elements resulted in a deeply personal practice that, through analysis, is found to be a direct and visceral expression of his singular worldview. Flynt’s philosophy is constantly evolving, but the period of work that the following analyses focus on essentially covers his ideological evolution from ‘the Creep’ and ‘acognitive culture,’ to ‘veramusement’ and the ultimate distillation of all of these ideas, ‘brend’. Brend is the best theory with which to summarise Flynt’s musical practice, and how it interacts with his philosophy and politics. By harnessing one’s ‘just-likes’ and creating music as a product of pure recreation, people of all classes are free to express themselves without the constraints of tradition and institutional expectations. This is a practice born in a desire to transcend the material world, reflecting a view of reality free of false constructs that could inspire the folk music of a future technological utopia where culture is back in the hands of the people and out of the hands of industry. This practice came to the fore

[117] Henry Flynt, "The Psychedelic State,"(1992), http://henryflynt.org/depth_psy/psychostate.html.

in Flynt's world during the early 1960s, and what follows here is original musical analysis – with reference to Flynt's own personal reflections, and those of his contemporaries – starting at his first solo work in 1962 and finishing with his final ISE works in the early 1980s. Flynt's work for violin has, until this time, largely gone unanalysed, with the exception of Flynt's own analyses and those of academic Benjamin Piekut, both of whose work is referenced throughout these analyses.

Creep Acognitive Analysis: How to Brend, American Ethnic Style.

Flynt's first forays into American Ethnic violin performance were in the form of duets with La Monte Young on piano. These duets were performed and recorded in January 1962 and consist of Young largely performing a straight twelve-bar blues pattern without the traditional swing element. Instead, Flynt encouraged Young to perform with a faster, more Rock 'n' Roll, duple subdivision as an accompaniment to his "scrapes, screeches and squawks" on the violin, song flute and alto sax.[118] According to Benjamin Piekut, the foremost scholar on Flynt's work at this time (2012), this session could be "considered a fourth attempt at producing his own version of Ornette Colemans's innovations".[119] The previous three attempts by Flynt are said to include his piano performances at Yoko Ono's loft in 1961 (mentioned earlier) and some solo violin recordings made in August 1961 and known only as 'Tape 14'. After the 1962 sessions, Flynt was eager to get out and perform at clubs, however in typical Beatnik style, Young refused to take part in anything so commercial as paid performance dates and the project – as it so often would with Flynt – folded. The duet performance recordings are unfortunately either locked away in La Monte Young's archives or were destroyed by Flynt during his later Anti-Art upheavals, however the 1961 solo violin recordings on 'Tape 14' have been heard by a select few, including Piekut. According to Piekut 'Tape 14', "…provides a fascinating glimpse into

[118] Piekut, "Demolish Serious Culture!.", 79.

[119] Ibid., 79.

his [Flynt's] musical development. Both tracks last about eight minutes, and consist of Flynt's solo violin improvisations to the accompaniment of his tapping foot, the tempo of which fluctuates considerably".[120]

Furthermore, Piekut finds that Flynt, like his Harvard classmate Tony Conrad, had begun to experiment with alternate tunings: "though it is impossible to be certain, his instrument sounds as though it had been set up in the open tuning Bflat-F-Bflat-F. The middle perfect fourth almost functions like a drone, but it is not heard often enough in this capacity". [121] It is likely that if Flynt did indeed use such a tuning in these recordings then he was aiming for the effect of complimentary strings, as one may find on a mandolin or the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, an instrument no doubt familiar to Flynt. Romanian fiddlers too, would often fashion their own violins to feature complementary strings in order to increase the instrument's volume and to create a sense of accompaniment without actually using any. Hindustani instruments such as the sitar and sarod also feature complimentary strings for similar reasons and would almost certainly be a reference point for Flynt. Piekut goes on to describe 'Tape 14' in further detail:

> Flynt's playing consists mainly of double-stops and shrieking glissandi up and down the fingerboard. The style is quite varied throughout both takes, but legato textures are far more prominent than "chop-chop" fiddling strokes. We heard many overtones and scratchy noises, played with manic, messy abandon. About six minutes into the second take, Flynt hints at a repeating two-beat riff for about twenty seconds, but this is the closest he comes to referencing Young's rhythm piano style...[122]

This observation reveals several important points that are highlighted in the original analyses that follow: firstly the importance of double-stops and glissandi; secondly the absence of so-called 'chopping' fiddle strokes that are common to traditional American fiddling styles and incredibly popular for so-called pop and jazz violinists in the twenty-first century; thirdly the

[120] Ibid., 75

[121] Ibid., 75

[122] Ibid., 75

inclusion of extraneous noises and harmonics (not 'overtones' as described by Piekut), both stopped and natural; and the extreme importance, borrowed from Rock 'n' Roll, and not from Young, of the riff. While it is unfortunate that I was unable to hear 'Tape 14', the following original analyses further highlight many of Piekut's findings and divulge many more that are idiosyncratic to Flynt and echoed in the wider world of underground violin performance.

The first published recording of Flynt's violin works for solo creep is 'Acoustic Hillbilly Jive', recorded in 1963, most probably in his apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and not released to the public until 2002.[123] It is immediately apparent from the opening phrase that Flynt had already become obsessed with his ideal of American Ethnic music. Consisting of foot stomping and hypnotic bluegrass-style fiddling it represents an obvious blend of his influences at the time – that of La Monte Young and the Delta Blues records of which Flynt had become very fond. The Delta Blues shines through Flynt's performance on this recording with 'hammer-ons'[124] and other distinctly Blues-based performance techniques being employed throughout. It is largely pentatonic harmonically and is clearly made up of one of the essentials of all blues and rock music: riffs. Flynt's playing is highly unusual for the time in that he employs riffs at the expense of playing the kind of licks or melodic fills that one might hear more commonly in American Ethnic music (take for example the violin of Doug Kershaw in his, and brother, Rusty's Cajun rockabilly hits of the late 1950s and early 1960s[125]). Solo violin music based in the juxtaposition of riffs, or rhythmic *ostinati*, appears to be solely the realm of Flynt and almost entirely unique in the canon of solo violin performance. Flynt makes use of unusual bow techniques in 'Acoustic Hillbilly Jive' by holding

[123] Henry Flynt, *Back Porch Hillbilly Blues Volume 1* (Chicago: Locust, 2002), Compact Disc.

[124]Hammer-ons are common to blues guitar playing, and essentially consist of a quick, sharp finger movement unplucked and moving to a note above the original struck tone. It can be likened to some Hindustani vocal techniques and to Western glissandi. This kind of technique can only be employed on the violin while playing *pizzicato* or plucked notes or when employing a struck bowing technique on a heavily-amplified instrument.

[125] Rusty & Doug Kershaw, *The Cajun-Country Rockers - a Milestone in Rock 'N' Roll Music Vol. 3* (Germany: Bear Family Records, 1979 (1961-62)), Vinyl LP.

his bow in an unconventional manner in order to make scattershot thrown strokes reminiscent of the ‘chicken pickin’’ of American Ethnic stringed instruments such as the banjo or, more likely, the attack and decay of hollow-bodied electric guitars. Regardless of its specific purpose Flynt clearly employs this bow technique to bring rhythm to the fore and in essence evoke the timbre and feeling essential to African-American music. Another technique introduced frequently into this piece is the use of glissandi. Flynt employs glissandi frequently throughout his entire recorded output, and unsurprisingly so when one thinks of the slides and bends of Blues music, the wild wails and dips of Hillbilly music and the aching glissandi of Hindustani vocal music, the significance of which has been discussed in Chapter 1. Flynt’s use of glissandi is rooted very much in his desire to approach music from the mindset of musicians from all of these traditions without sounding like music from any tradition at all.

Flynt’s most effective early foray into “Street-Negro Music” is ‘Echo Rock’[126] for solo electric violin and tape loops. It consists of Flynt’s idiosyncratic fiddle riffing, however in this instance the violin is performed through a wall of reverb reminiscent of early Elvis Presley recordings and those of other Sun recording artists of the late 1950s. It is essentially a rock piece as it follows the twelve bar blues formula and Flynt clearly attempts to emulate some essence of the rhythmic force of Bo Diddley and the Africanised white twang of Chuck Berry. The use of these sorts of effects on the violin was entirely unique to Flynt and is still an unusual practice today. The only violinist of Flynt’s era, whom he certainly would have come across, who utilised echo and delay effects was Takehisa Kosugi, member of influential Japanese ensembles such as Group Ongaku, Hi-Red Centre and Taj Mahal Travellers and later a student of John Cage and resident composer for the New York City-based Merce Cunningham Dance Theatre. Kosugi was certainly present amongst Flynt’s milieu during the 1960s and 70s and there are strong similarities in his delay-soaked Hindustani violin solos to Flynt’s later works for solo violin and tambura. ‘Echo Rock’ is highly representative of Flynt’s “Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues Music” and is one of his most obvious attempts to blend his philosophy and

[126] Henry Flynt, *Backporch Hillbilly Blues Volume 2* (Chicago: Locust, 2002), Compact Disc.

political views with his violin practice. 'Echo Rock' is an attempt to reach Flynt's ultimate goal of bringing American Ethnic music to the metaphysical realms of Hindustani music and out of the degenerating realms of capitalist commerce.

Flynt's work for solo and looped violin, 'Hoedown', is a lengthy work of almost fifteen minutes and consists of up to three looped violin parts that drop in and out of the mix at different points. Recorded in 1968, this work is highly reminiscent of the innovations made in tape looping by Flynt's contemporaries such as Terry Riley, who by now had already made himself famous with his performances using the 'time-lag accumulator', a form of early loop station invented by Riley. Flynt, however, would not reach any level of prominence with his innovations in tape looping at the time. Pieces such as 'Hoedown' are far ahead of their time as looping has only become a widespread violin practice in the Twenty-First Century due to the wide availability of inexpensive digital looping systems. 'Hoedown' is very much a clear progression of Flynt's American Ethnic style, with a clear expansion of the forms used on earlier recordings bringing the work more into the territory of raga, something which Flynt wholeheartedly desired.

Tape manipulations are brought to the fore in his 1971 works 'Telsat Tune' and 'Full Telsat'[127], as is what appears to be the introduction of various effects, possibly generated by the newly invented effects units being made available to the public at the time. As has been the case in previous works of Flynt, delay and reverb effects play an important part in creating the desired mix of poly-rhythmic effect and Rockabilly aesthetic. In the case of 'Telsat Tune' and 'Full Telsat' a more electronic form of distortion begins to come to the fore, perhaps due to the employment of a fuzz box or other signal distorter, or indeed simply by over-extending the gain setting on his amplifier (or perhaps even just overloading the microphone he has used to make the recording). Regardless of the method behind this, his use of distortion at this time clearly displays Flynt's continued love of Rock 'n' Roll music and his awareness of some of its more

[127] Henry Flynt, *New American Ethnic Music Volume 3: Hillbilly Tape Music* (United States: Recorded, 2003), Compact Disc.

recent contemporaneous developments. Both 'Telsat' pieces are essentially duets with bass, and are a pre-cursor to the kind of instrumental interplay that will be seen in his mid-1970s works with band.

The Importance of Glissando

Three years after recording 'Acoustic Hillbilly Jive', Flynt plugged in and revised his piece with a new version entitled 'Informal Hillbilly Jive'[128]. Structurally this piece from 1966 – seemingly Flynt's most musically productive year – is almost identical to the early acoustic performance, however, in a timbral sense the addition of amplification transforms the feel of the piece entirely. A timbral approach to listening is integral to understanding American ethnic music, and indeed much non-Western music. Flynt's reaction to traditional notions of Western musical understanding can be traced as far back as 1961 when he first drafted his more well-known – at least by the wider New York City art community – essay 'Concept Art'. In this essay he calls for a new type of artistic pursuit devoid of the arithmetical structure found in most Western art music. Flynt had indeed disavowed mathematics altogether a year or two earlier, by stating that all mathematics is essentially false. In non-Western music, such as Hindustani and African music, Flynt saw an approach to listening and creating music that was analogous with his new ideas. These musical traditions represent an approach to music that is kinaesthetic and impressionistic in form rather than architectural and academic. 'Acoustic Hillbilly Jive', for instance, is once again heavily laden with Flynt's idiosyncratic use of pronounced glissandi. In his essay 'Structure Art' Flynt reflects on the importance of this musical gesture in his philosophical ideas: "for the sake of example, let me observe that old-fashioned musicology said that glissando could not be an element of melody, because it fell in the cracks between the

[128] Flynt, *Backporch Hillbilly Blues Volume 2*.

piano keys. A segmentation peculiar to the European mind had the effect of rendering thousand-year musical traditions non-existent".[129]

To Flynt the tyranny of the equal-tempered keyboard caused Western music to be responsible – and this is mirrored with only a cursory glance into the arena of Imperialist cultural policy as well – for a great deal of prejudice and injustice exacted upon non-Western music. Glissandi cannot be performed on a pianoforte and therefore, when such effects were employed on non-fretted string instruments such as the violin, it was seen as appropriate to perform it as an expressive ornament and not as an element of voice-leading. In some respects Flynt is incorrect in suggesting this, as grossly performed glissandi were quite prevalent amongst violinists of the *bravura* tradition, and this is well documented in recordings of late nineteenth-century violinists such as Fritz Kreisler and Joseph Joachim. However, Flynt is correct in that the aesthetic considerations behind glissandi had much more to do with ornamentation and showmanship than any integral part of the piece's structure. In the North Indian Kirana vocal tradition, what we in the West may interpret roughly as glissandi appear to be an incredibly important leading device for the melodic and harmonic development of any one piece, and they held obvious emotional importance as well. To the performer of Hindustani music a melody is not the result of a combination of intervals and tones but rather part of a living entity that is brought to life by the performer. A raga exists before and after the performance occurs and the performer simply channels it – as Pandit Pran Nath once said "Raga is living souls".[130] In American Ethnic music glissandi are employed by musicians in perhaps a less self-conscious fashion. They are part of the performer's abandonment of inhibitions and loss of self-awareness, the yelp and piano-destroying chromatics of Jerry-Lee Lewis or the raucous screams of Little Richard. Such performers were integral to Flynt's musical development, and all of them employ glissandi in one form or another outside the bounds of

[129] Henry Flynt, "Structure Art," *Against "Participation": A Total Critique of Culture*(1993), http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/totcritcult6.html.

[130] Farley, *In-between the Notes*.

formal restrictions and, therefore, exist outside the traditional Western imperialist imposition of power structures via cultural indoctrination.

Cowboy Raga

It is important to note here that the following descriptions of sections of Hindustani music are not in any way comparable to Western notions of form. Many Hindustani musicians, particularly in the ancient style known as *dhrupad*[131] such as Pandit Pran Nath, lay immense importance on the free-form introductory *ālāp* section. This ethos influenced a generation of composers through musicians like Pandit Pran Nath, who worked closely with both La Monte Young, and Terry Riley. While he represented the more virtuoso *khyal* style and was not considered a particularly significant musician in India, he would spend intensely long periods of time on the *ālāp* and gave only enough time as he felt he needed to on the other sections. The *ālāp* section of a raga performance is part of what is known as the 'unbound'[132] (*anibahdd)* element in Indian music, and this sense of being 'unbound' rings true with much of Flynt's violin practice. This seemingly formless approach to structuring music is crucial to understanding Flynt's desired freeing of American vernacular music from the bounds of Western formalism, thus bringing it into what he perceived to be heightened realms of music, such as Hindustani music (which has considerable formalism in its own right), – a music that

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[131] According to Encyclopædia Britannica Online: "dhrupad, in Hindustani music, ancient vocal musical form in four parts preceded by extensive introductory improvisation (*alapa*) and expanded by rhythmic and melodic elaborations. It is related to the shorter, later *khayal*, which has somewhat eclipsed the *dhrupad* in popularity. The classical *dhrupad*, heavy and majestic in style, required great breath control. It was used in praise of heroes, gods, and kings."

[132] Martin Clayton, "Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rag Performance," *Oxford Scholarship Online*(2011), http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195339680.001.0001/acprof-9780195339680., 4

requires an intense internalisation of rhythmic and melodic concepts. The *ālāp* section of Hindustani music is perhaps the most important element for Flynt, and indeed many others in the New York Underground during this time, and can be somewhat artificially divided into three parts. The *ālāp* often comprises a lengthy improvisation in a slow and free fashion known as *vilambit ālāp* which introduces the piece and outlines the raga. Flynt has described the slower, more drone orientated elements of his practice as "country *vilambit"*. The *jor* follows and is the section of the *ālāp* which introduces a pulse, and thus perhaps hints of the pre-composed melodic (*rāg*) and rhythmic (*tāl*) elements of a raga performance. The shift from *ālāp* to *jor* is often distinguishable by the entry of a distinct rhythmic pulse[133] and signified in Flynt's music by a movement from more free-form elements to solid, repetitive riffing. After the *jor* section comes an increase in rhythm which finally reaches climax and ends the *ālāp* section: this is sometimes known as *jhala*, however this is a term also used to describe the final section of the performance where the composed melodic and rhythmic material is introduced, the *gat*.[134] Many of Flynt's works end in this fashion, however, he will also often return to the *jor* section or perhaps a more ā*lāp*-style section. Flynt's treatment of the *gat* is emblematic of jazz structure where musicians more often than not return to the 'head' or pre-composed melodic content of a piece. Flynt makes reference to these shared qualities on several occasions in 'The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music', stating for instance that a jazz musician's skills or 'chops' can be likened to knowledge of raga and further:

> It seems to me that some of the esthetic [sic] values which I have affirmed are shared by Indian music. It also seems that some of the overall technical characteristics which belong to my music are shared with Indian music. From the start, I wanted to open up blues and country music for forward-sweeping melodic improvisation. I often eliminate chord progressions in my music, because I experience changes of root like stoplights on a highway. Instead, I employ tonic pedal-

[133] George E. Ruckert, *Music in North India: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)., 24

[134] Martin Clayton, "Performance Practice and Rhythm in Hindustani Music," in *Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rag Performance* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2011)., 2-3

> point harmony. Then, I treat the melodic modalities of blues and country music literally as ragas, with extensive use of glissando and melodic ornamentation.[135]

Flynt often juxtaposes these two distinctly non-Western concepts of musical structure to build his pieces, once again harking back to the basic principles of his American Ethnic Music and the core desire to elevate it to the stature afforded Hindustani music. Photographic and anecdotal evidence also suggest that Flynt used pre-composed and improvised sections in his music with photographs displaying Flynt playing violin in front of a music stand covered in sheet music lining the sleeve notes to his *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* album.[136] This juxtaposition of Hindustani and African-American practices in Flynt's music would increase in their application throughout the late 1960s and into the 1970s.

An Analysis of Nova'Billy: Unbound Country Rock.

'Conga'[137], performed by Flynt and his country rock combo Nova'Billy, is one piece which represents a pure and unusually succinct distillation of Flynt's Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues violin practice. It involves blues licks performed in a highly rhythmic three-way dialogue with saxophone and drums. Flynt's soloing unfolds in a non-linear modal fashion like that of Ornette Coleman, where an idea is stated and then varied melodically with little adherence to a strict harmonic structure. Like so many of Flynt's pieces for violin, 'Conga' is based in riffing in the Bo Diddley vein. A rhythmic sense based firmly in Southern American and African traditions but entirely different from both. The violin soloing can be described as being ostensibly 'free', although Flynt would perhaps be hesitant to describe it as such. He employs all of the idiosyncrasies inherent to his violin practice in this short piece, naturally utilising

[135] Flynt, "The Meaning of My Avant-Garde Hillbilly and Blues Music."

[136] Flynt, *Graduation,* sleeve notes, 3-4

[137] Flynt, *Henry Flynt & Nova'billy*.

glissandi to lead in quick shifts from the lower to the upper registers of the instrument and to subvert traditional European notions of violin performance and musical order. 'Conga' also sees the introduction of a greater use of stopped and open harmonics, usually reached through *glissando*, which have a vibrant and piercing effect when played through Flynt's seemingly voluminous amplification. High volume open harmonics were later used to great effect in Flynt's ISE (Illuminatory Sound Environments, mistakenly referred to in most media since as HESE. Instead of correcting them, Flynt and Hennix went with it and described the acronym as Hallucinatory Ecstatic Sound Environments) pieces, where the piercing timbral effect of the harmonics would blend effortlessly with the complex harmonic overtone series conjured by Christer Hennix's Pandit Pran Nath Tamboura – a type of tamboura invented by Pandit Pran Nath and renowned for its dense harmonic textures and almost alien timbral qualities – playing. This music would strive for the kind of hallucinatory state that one would experience with LSD or Mescalin, without necessarily needing to imbibe said intoxicants.

Flynt largely refutes the mythology of the psychedelic experience, but hallucination and drugs did play a part in his practice. One piece that overtly refers to his seeming interest in amphetamines – he makes references to his experiences with the amphetamine *dexamyl* in some of his writings – is 'Amphetamine Rhapsody'[138]. Flynt's approach to his violin in this piece can best be described as skittish and angular. It has the sharp edges and extreme mood-swings inherent in the amphetamine experience. At its very core this piece sounds essentially like Hillbilly music on speed, with fast repetitive riffing akin to the sort of 'motorik' music coming out of Germany at the time and quick angular violin solos highly reminiscent of Flynt's beloved Ornette Coleman, replete with *sul ponticello* (bowstrokes on or close to the bridge) "hooting and booting". There is a great deal of interplay between violin and saxophone in 'Amphetamine Rhapsody' and Flynt's violin playing sounds very much like an attempt to emulate the stylistic and timbral attributes of the horn. Flynt employs many techniques common to blues and later jazz technique such as the fast lower and upper leading ornaments commonly called 'hammer-

[138] Ibid.

ons' or 'hammer-offs', the 'hooting and booting' more common to those saxophonists who cut their musical teeth in R & B bands, and an angular approach to register that is a decidedly virtuosic feat on the violin and is therefore more commonly employed on blown instruments. The amphetamine trip of this piece is completed by the inevitable come-down, represented by a marked slowing of pace and the break-down of the skittish soloing into a more scattered flittering of Coleman licks and trilled sections reminiscent of La Monte Young's tremolo 'clouds' and the fluttering Moroccan-influenced textures of John Coltrane. 'Amphetamine Rhapsody' represents one of only a couple of Flynt works that refer directly to drug use, one of the others being the final piece on *Nova'Billy* titled 'Stoned Jam'. This perhaps reflects Flynt's newfound interest in a more hedonistic way of life, a freer way of life that was undoubtedly brought on by his break from dogmatic ideology and the more social nature of playing in a band on a regular basis.

Despite Flynt's break from the dogmatic left, Nova'Billy performed many compositions that contained overt references to left-wing ideology. The most obvious of these is their reworking of the Communist Internationale into a proto-No-Wave exploration replete with sing-along chorus and typically wild soloing. Flynt still took an interest in the benefits of socialism, enrolling in the PhD course for Economics at the New School with a thesis on socialist economic administration.[139] Flynt spent eight years working on his thesis only to withdraw at the last minute, without receiving his Doctorate, in typical Flynt style. During this time he also moved upstate to start his 'Genius Liberation Project' with fellow Mathematician, philosopher and artist, Christer Hennix. Despite all of this revolutionary activity none of the instrumentals on *Nova'Billy* are given such overt political titles, rather, they are adorned with more typical Flynt-style American Ethnic names such as 'Double Spindizzy', 'Lonesome Train Dreams' and 'Twist Out', and thus remaining the modus operandi of most of the *Nova'Billy* pieces. Nonetheless, the images that such names evoke are that of a distinctively street-level America,

[139] Henry and C.C. Hennix Flynt, "Henry Flynt 2011 Concept Art 50 Years." (Berlin: Grimmuseum, 2011), http://www.grimmuseum.com/blog-65/index.html., 53.

the ‘Street Negro’ music brought about by the brend of the occupants of Flynt’s utopia. In all of these pieces Flynt employs the idiosyncratic techniques of his Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues Music to great effect, evoking the constant rhythms of America’s vast railways to the wild circular dances of Appalachian hillbillies. All of this evokes an image of the United States firmly rooted in the culture of the Working Class, while retaining the lofty heights of invention present in the free-form blues of Ornette Coleman or the elongated *ālāp* of Pandit Pran Nath. Shortly after the demise of Nova’Billy, Flynt re-entered the studio to record material with undocumented musicians that was in 2004, released as the *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* album. This album represents the distillation of Flynt’s American Ethnic Music into its most potent form.

Graduation: Analysing the Pure Form of Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues Music

On *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music* Flynt once again adopts open leftist references in song titles such as ‘No Rights’, and creates what is one of his masterpieces in ‘A Portrait’. His violin style in these pieces is even more defined and idiosyncratic, and it is clear that Flynt has refined his own practice into a set of ideals and sonorities that are highly distinctive. ‘No Rights’ is essentially a funk piece, based on a political song,[140] reminding the listener of the angular white boy funk of later No Wave artists such as James Chance. Layered on top of these funky rhythms is Flynt’s idiosyncratic Hillbilly fiddling distinguishing the piece immediately as American Ethnic Music. Flynt’s soloing in ‘No Rights’ is more reminiscent of John Coltrane than Coleman, with the static bluesy accompaniment making it perfect ground for more modally inclined improvisation.

‘A Portrait’ is an highly inventive piece that is, like much of Flynt’s music, firmly planted in the future and well ahead of its time. It opens with a typically Flyntian violin riff that

[140] Flynt, *Graduation*, sleeve notes, 2

sounds like it could be the basic progression taken from an old Appalachian fiddle tune. Glissandi are very prominent in this work, perhaps due to the greater influence of Hindustani music on Flynt's work at this time, and certainly employed as a standard element in Flynt's violin practice to emphasise the essential ethnic qualities inherent to his style. Increasingly in this piece, and others from the later 1970s period, Flynt began to introduce long, aching glissandi reaching up to open harmonics. This gesture appears in most of Flynt's later violin works and is highly reminiscent of Pandit Pran Nath's vocal style (see Chapter 1 for a detailed description of this style). This piece also contains a gypsy-like violin section highly reminiscent of Romanian gypsy music, a musical style that Flynt sees as one of the few relevant musical expressions found on the European continent.[141] Flynt's interest in Romanian gypsy music stretches all the way back to his youth in North Carolina where he first discovered the music of Bela Bartok and began to immerse himself in his compositional style. Flynt soon disavowed Bartok's work – particularly his famous ethno-musicological collections – as being a misguided product of imperialism, but interestingly it seems that Bartok's work must have been where Flynt first encountered Romanian music. Romanian gypsy music is in many ways highly analogous with Flynt's concept of American Ethnic Music as it is a music derived from autochthonous communities that create a diverse musical language born out of oppression which they distil into a living folk music that lacks any academic compositional processes or commercial precedents. 'A Portrait' also reaches back to Flynt's first jam sessions with La Monte Young, as Flynt's Coleman-inspired soloing lies on a solid bed of tremolo piano reminiscent of Young's 'cloud' style. 'A Portrait' ends, as it began, with a violin lick lifted straight from the field recordings of Alan Lomax and Harry Smith, and as timeless as the mountains that spawned the music.

On the Path to ISE (HESE): Illuminating Hallucinatory Environments

[141] Henry Flynt, "The Art Connection: My Endeavor's Intersections with Art,"(2005), http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/the_art_connection.htm.

At the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s Flynt began to experiment with recordings that reflected the creation of his, and C.C. Hennix's, ISE concept. There are four extent major examples of this era of Flynt's practice – leading up to him putting the violin down for good in 1984 – 'C Tune' (1980)[142], 'Purified by the Fire' (1981)[143], 'You Are My Everlovin'' (1981, live)[144] and 'Celestial Power' (1980)[145]. Another major example that will be referred to in this analysis is his ISE masterpiece 'Glissando No. 1' (1979)[146], however whether the violin is used or not in this piece is contestable hence leading to its omission amongst the in-depth analyses to follow. It is also interesting to note that these pieces for solo violin and loops are all very similar in form and content. They by and large represent Flynt's final attempt at capturing his so-called 'cowboy raga' or 'country vilambit' to tape, consisting of long *ālāp*-style extemporisations littered with a documentary-like pastiche of American vernacular music and placed through a psychedelic filter. These pieces are the popular music of his technologically advanced future Communist utopia, the occupants of which can brend to their heart's content.

'C Tune' begins, like all of the pieces from this era, with the constant drone of pedal-point tape loop. In this instance – as with 'Purified by the Fire' and 'You Are My Everlovin' – the drone loop is a pre-recorded performance by C.C. Hennix on his Pandit Pran Nath Tamboura. The Pandit Pran Nath Tamboura is reminiscent of a synthesiser with its intense range of overtones. Over this base Flynt begins to slowly unfold melodic and harmonic material on his distorted electric violin, making use of such idiosyncratic elements as rising and descending glissandi evoking the vocal style of Pandit Pran Nath himself. The melodic and

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[142] Henry Flynt, *C Tune* (Chicago: Locust, 2002), Compact Disc.

[143] Henry Flynt, *Purified by the Fire* (Chicago: Locust, 2005), Compact Disc.

[144] Henry Flynt, *New American Ethnic Music Volume One* (United States: Recorded, 2002), Compact Disc.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Henry Flynt, *Glissando No. 1* (United States: Recorded, 2011), Compact Disc.

harmonic content that begins to arise is not Hindustani in character however, but rather that of Flynt's Hillbilly blues and his love of the direct expression found in the modal work of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. 'C Tune' is one of the true pinnacles of Flynt's American Ethnic Music, presenting a language that is identifiably American but approaching it with the unfolding poise of Hindustani music and the Futuristic freedom of post-bop jazz. 'C Tune' in a sense is always unfolding, giving glimpses of melody before distorting them with harmonics and permutations of bow and finger pressure. Hints of riffs appear in moments of Flynt's idiosyncratic see-saw bowing and Hillbilly double-stopping, and in his use of thrown-strokes and left-hand pizzicato that in even his earliest pieces, gave his playing a character akin to the lawless abandon of America's hills and wide-open plains. There is a pastiche element to 'C Tune' that reminds one of the way in which Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov made films, a story told through glimpses of everyday proletarian life brought to the listener through the grandeur of larger forms. In Vertov's case this was feature length documentary films; in Flynt's case this is forty-five minute documentaries in musical style. In 'C Tune' the listener hears the fiddling of rural America, the blues of Black America, and the exotic sounds of ethnic America.

Out of all of these long-form solo violin pieces from the late 70s and early 80s 'Celestial Power' is perhaps the most intensely American. It, like 'C Tune' takes the form of a long unfolding *ālāp*, however the Hindustani element is less present and the proletarian Street Negro Music is more evident. The tape loop over which Flynt performs his extemporisation is not the alien drone of the Pandit Pran Nath tamboura but a chopping rockabilly guitar riff performed by Flynt himself. In a sense this tape loop works like a rockabilly tamboura over which Flynt performs a long meditation on proletarian Americana. There is one important point to note. The piece was recorded while Flynt was under the influence of LSD[147] giving it a much more fractured sense of direction. Flynt states that he found the sound of harmonics pleasing to

[147] It is important to point out that there are a few different versions of 'Celestial Power' that were recorded at the time. The one in question in this analysis is Flynt's "Psychedelic Version" recorded in his apartment in 1980 during a trip on an "LSD-like drug."

his ears during his trip[148] and therefore the piece is littered with explorations into open and stopped harmonics evoking a sound more peculiarly New York than a lot of his other work. Flynt's performance on 'Celestial Power' is quite clearly stoned when listened to carefully, featuring a much less studied approach to technique and a lot more inaccuracy in terms of intonation than one is accustomed to when hearing Flynt's recordings. In his paper describing his own perspective on psychedelic drugs and their associated culture, 'The Psychedelic State'[149], Flynt describes the experience of making the violin part to 'Celestial Power':

> During the last active phase of my episode, I recorded a forty-five minute electric violin improvisation with the Celestial Power guitars as accompaniment...The activity of playing the violin was entirely different from what it had ever been. Usually, playing the violin was tense work for me. I tended to work in formats shorter than ten minutes, and had to make repeated takes to achieve an acceptable one. Only the energy generated by having exceptionally conducive accompanists had impelled me to do long, single-take improvisations. This time, my improvisation was as I had already planned it when experimenting with this piece--flute-like, tonal, melodic. But I passed immediately to a daring, ranging style - pieced together from long glissandos, harmonics, and 'illicit' techniques such as 'soft-stopping' and legato on the bridge. Instead of being tense work, playing was an unhurried exploration...While playing, it seemed that I was achieving miraculous effects, such as causing an ordinary stopped note to sound an octave above itself. In fact, I was using legato on the bridge to isolate harmonics, probably aided by the amplification, which tends to make overtones more prominent. No doubt the drug helped with the bow-sensitivity and steadiness needed to achieve this effect...I ceased to be conscious of the somatic exertion of playing the violin and only attended to what I wanted to hear and my relish of what I heard. Yet that somatic exertion of improvising a new piece was indispensable.

Clearly for Flynt the experience of recording 'Celestial Power' under the influence of LSD was very important to him, however, he later points out that:

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[148] Flynt, "The Psychedelic State."

[149] Ibid.

> My assumption that the recording would be able to convey to anybody what I had done and what it had meant to me was shattered when I played it to the girlfriend of a classical violinist a few years later. I thought I was doing her a favor; but she found it to be aimless scraping. Once again, the drug is found to be an insignificant component; it is nothing compared to character and socially inculcated values.

While Flynt makes an important point about the power of perspective on a person's reception of music, there is an element of truth to his friend's statement. 'Celestial Power' is comparatively aimless when held against the more well-formulated ideological playing behind Flynt's other works, however this aimlessness only serves to hint at the new interests that began to obsess Flynt towards the end of his practice of violin, that of shamanism and mysticism. A kind of street shamanism would not have been alien to Flynt, in a city where such hobo composer geniuses as Moondog, and the lesser known free jazz saxophonist Charles Gayle, chose to live the life of Indian *sadhus* on the streets of Manhattan, giving up all material goods in the pursuit of something higher (or perhaps, when stripped of the mask of folklore simply struggling with the demons of mental illness and drug dependency). As is always the case with Flynt, he takes an extreme oppositional stance to the idea of the shaman or the mystic, seeing no trace of true spiritual enlightenment in the psychedelic experience. 'Celestial Power' is undeniably part of his journey to such conclusions and is an excellent musical example of Flynt's complex views on depth-psychology and what he began at this time (1981) to term "Personhood Theory"[150] – an illogical further extension of his Creep theory. This psychedelic experience was also had after several years of exploration into a more hedonistic way of living, and seems to be the logical conclusion to Flynt and Hennix's forays into ISE.

'Your Are My Everlovin' and 'Purified by the Fire' are both similar pieces and share much in common with 'C Tune' on a sonic and stylistic level. These pieces all seem to be grasping for the same essential truth that is at the very core of Flynt's philosophy: the death of

[150] Henry Flynt, "Personalysis: A Sketch," *Philosophy*(1996), http://henryflynt.org/person_world/pertheorysketch.html.

art and the birth of a fairer, egalitarian and ultimately personal form of expression. Flynt's personal expression is present as ever in both 'You Are My Everlovin' and 'Purified by the Fire'. As with 'C Tune', they are long cowboy ragas consisting of tamboura drone and long unfolding lines of electric violin. 'Purified by the Fire' in particular represents a strong example of the "trucking and trancing" Flynt describes in the liner notes to his *Graduation* album.[151] Making use of repetitive riffs consisting of glissandi and double-stopped perfect fourths, Flynt shifts in and out of the harmonic series emitted by the tamboura, creating a trancelike experience akin to driving down the highway after two consecutive sleepless nights spent in an amphetamine-enhanced state. Fragments of melodies shift in and out of conscious awareness before the trance breaks down into its constituent pieces and Flynt returns to his *ālāp.* Ultimately these long-form pieces involve all of Flynt's idiosyncratic approaches to violin performance and show the highly personal and studied mannerisms inherent in this practice. It is because of Flynt's intense involvement in his personal philosophy that this is so apparent and without this extreme philosophy these pieces would be at best ineffective meandering and at worst the "aimless scraping" described by Flynt's friend.

A striking example of Flynt's philosophy of music boiled down to its purest form came in the shape of what many have called his masterpiece, 'Glissando No. 1'. 'Glissando No. 1', dated to 1979, is a piece composed in response to Hennix's own ISE masterpiece 'The Electric Harpsichord'. 'Glissando No. 1' very much does what the title suggests, consisting of great swirling hallucinatory glissandi generated by a source that is almost completely unrecognisable. The piece is designed for performance on tape and is largely an example of Flynt's strong grasp of stereo mixing techniques and skills at tape manipulation, however, it represents a clear symbol of his ideology in practice. The glissando is one the most important symbols in Flynt's musical language, the ultimate non-Western technique, impossible to perform on the great standard-bearer of post-Industrial Revolution European music, the pianoforte. 'Glissando No. 1' serves as an interesting point at which to move into the concluding summary of Flynt's work on

[151] Flynt, *Graduation and Other New Country and Blues Music*., liner notes, 2.

the violin. While the violin is not discernible amongst the massed swirling glissandi, it is hard to believe that Flynt could have reached such a sound, the sound of a future music yet to be properly explored, without many years refining a musical practice that has a unique and radical approach to the violin, and more broadly stringed-instruments, at its core.

In Conclusion: A Revolution of One

Flynt's violin practice was informed deeply by his political, philosophical and social ideology. Flynt was a violinist whose work was a reflection of his life as a dissident, an outsider even among the subversive thinkers within his milieu. His project was – and to some extent still is – an extreme extension of a wider shift toward utopia, and for this utopia an extreme redefinition of culture was required. Like the Bolsheviks before him, and the Maoists who were his contemporaries, Flynt sought to change culture, to destroy art and replace it with a new form of expression altogether. This was to be an expression devoid of commercialism, devoid of commerce completely, careers and professionalism were to be cast aside and culture was to be reborn as something both highly individual and communally nutritious. Flynt sought to burn down the established institutions of art with a stroke of his bow and cast the ghost of fascism out with new high-lonesome heterogeneity. Flynt's American Ethnic Music was not a *völkisch* attempt at asserting a distinct American national voice into the new music of the time. It was, rather, a futurist embrace of street-level America, where a polyglot populace were raising arms – or raising an electric guitar – in a class war that would never be won. To Flynt the proletarian music of 'now', Rock 'n' Roll or Country and Western, were the true avant-garde. This was an avant-garde in the literal sense of the word, the forward guard of a revolutionary army ready to replace art with Brend and take their music out of the commercial realms and into something more akin to Hindustani music, a music made for something 'other'. For the Hindustani musician this 'other' is god, for the 'street-Negro' musician this 'other' would be their self. For Flynt, if all pursued their Brend, their 'just-likes', then the world would be a better place. In

order to do this the institutions of art must be destroyed, but his attempts to do this failed. Flynt's music for violin never reached much of an audience at the time of its creation and he was unable to gain any real interest from recording companies for his prolific compositions. As a result his music fell into obscurity until recent years where the modern taste for all things old and undiscovered has led to his voluminous works being unleashed on a new generation of musicians hungry for change. Henry Flynt continues to lead his revolution of one, having never been able to convince more than a few of his closest friends that his ideas were more than the ramblings of a mad man, and he has once again picked up his rockabilly guitar to brend before audiences at major art festivals. A man of contradictions and extremes, Flynt and his Avant-garde Hillbilly and Blues Music is now finally getting a voice on a small, but international, stage.

Chapter 5: Deaf Left Ear: The Radical Violin Practice of Tony Conrad

"Heterophony is the sound of radical democracy...interwoven individual voices, in their full multiplicity."

Tony Conrad

Born Anthony S. Conrad, 1940 in Concord, New Hampshire, Tony Conrad had his first profound violin experiences while receiving private lessons from a local violinist while living in a small town north of Baltimore, Maryland. These experiences were discussed with Conrad during an interview conducted on 12 June 2011, and will be quoted at length throughout this chapter. With Conrad's work, as a living artist, it is important to let him speak for himself, further highlighting the profound individuality of his performance practice experience. This experience at first was largely negative, with Conrad showing little interest in practice and having little interest in the repertoire that he was being taught. Through sheer frustration his teacher began to teach Conrad the basic fundamentals of music, and upon learning that he had a penchant for mathematics and science, began to show him the fundamentals of acoustics. This suitably piqued Conrad's interest, and since his attempts to play in tune were at best dubious, his teacher began to give him double stop and scale exercises in which Conrad would play double stops for long durations – a commonly-applied technique by violin teachers to get students to play in tune – and slow, deliberate scales and arpeggios. For Conrad these long double stop exercises were a revelation that would change his attitude toward music forever.

> My own personal practice began in fact almost directly as an outgrowth of the fact that I hated how my playing sounded, for the most part, that I was unwilling to practise and that my teacher more or less gave up on me. And as in so many other things in life, it turns out that deficits are assets. Negatives are positives and vice versa. So the young violinist, and a good one, with

> whom I was taking private lessons at the time, understood somehow that I was not dumb, I was a studious nerdy little guy from high school and he thought maybe I'd be interested in the acoustics of music and so he got me a basic book on musical acoustics and then started to help me to understand what it was about the relationship between notes that made them into musical intervals, and what that had to do with the harmonic series and all these fundamental terms.[152]

This breaking down of music to its fundamental elements led to Conrad spending many hours with his ear pressed against the f-holes of his violin, focussing on the resonances he could hear and wondering how he could manipulate these resonances in new and interesting ways. Conrad suffered other violin-related shortcomings that he would later turn into assets, most importantly his inability to perform vibrato.

> I cringed at the whole prospect, couldn't mobilise it in my own hands and so there I was playing these garish, bare notes, and not very well, and it didn't sound like the recordings that my father had on his 78 rpm record player of Jascha Heifetz doing the Brahms Violin Concerto. It just didn't sound the same. It really, really did not sound like that. It could almost have been separate universes.[153]

Conrad's frustrations with such fundamental technical shortcomings led to him quickly losing interest in the Romantic era music he was fixated on and shifting his attention to the study of European early music, and in particular that of the seventeenth century. This was a music that fit in well with Conrad's fascination with the complexities arising from simple harmonic relationships and, importantly, as it is espoused by any vaguely historically-conscious interpreter of baroque-era music, is performed best with no vibrato at all. By this time he had moved to Harvard and would spend his days lounging in the many campus libraries pouring over scores by contemporary composers and by seventeenth-century composers such as Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber. His interest in European early music also coincided with his immersion in the avant-garde and his own reinvention as a composer of modern music. Through

[152] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author: Transcript, 2 (see Appendix 2)

[153] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 2.

the music of Baroque-era composers such as Biber, Conrad discovered *scordatura* tuning (literally 'mistuning' when translated from the Italian) and a whole new palette of sound opened up before him. This marked the beginning of a shift from equal temperament that has brought him to the open assault on this tradition of tuning that has defined his musical work since.

> So for example I have a tuning, in this case one of the most spectacular, which had an open fifth at the bottom, an open fifth at the top and a major third in-between. So it was a very, very careful major third, in tune major third harmonically adjusted in-between and carefully tuned, perfect fifths; the violin sounded like another instrument completely! It did things in my head and ears that were hard to understand from the ordinary perspective of standard performance technique.[154]

At this time Conrad spent hours practicing pieces such as Biber's *Rosenkranz Sonaten* (Rosary Sonatas also known as 'The Mystery Sonatas') at a snail's pace, often breaking it down to simply playing one double stop and attempting to play it as in tune as possible.

> And I began to realise that what I should do to approach these sonatas and sort of not learning them but you know, working at them, was to play them very, very slowly and in tune. And so I sort of slowed the tempo down by a factor of say eight, and then just bathed in the luxuriant timbral character...[155]

From here he began to discover the subtle nuances buried in the overtones and incidental frequencies created from the violin's natural resonance. Being unfretted the possibilities on the violin for manipulating the frequency range of a particular interval impressed Conrad greatly and he also began to discover the rhythmic possibilities inherent in the manipulation of certain intervals. Conrad also learned "that in playing combinations of tones very slowly and very much in tune and listening carefully, that there was a fount of detail that emerged sort of in what you might describe as the inner structure of the…composite sound".[156] He found this to be a completely unexpected result that accentuated "little rhythmic games that the instrument would

[154] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 3.

[155] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 3.

[156] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 4.

play with itself".[157] The violin is an instrument with a unique timbre all of its own that is neither a sine tone nor a square wave, nor is it a triangular wave, but rather, as Conrad pointed out:

> ...some kind of like idiosyncratic wave form which is not consistent. It's a variable mish-mash of upper harmonics in a complex of sound that refers to its own fundamental that refer to *its own* fundamental. And the interaction among two of these systems would produce tiny events shall we say, that normally passed unnoticed. But should you start to focus and even catch one or two of these things and try and sort of squeeze them, like some kind of fruit from which you're going to get an essence, that several very unusual things begin to happen.[158]

The first of these 'unusual things' that he began to experiment with was bow pressure. Conrad discovered that variations in bow pressure could manipulate unplayed strings, adding to the frequency range of a given interval or double-stop through complimentary vibration. Furthermore he found that the best way to achieve this was to use no vibrato at all, something that suited his technical limitations well.

> ...through the bow itself, in a note itself through the bow, if the notes are simply harmonically related and if the pressure and velocity of the bows is just right, that there comes to be an actual mechanical linking between the strings so that they drive one another ... and they lock. And when that happens, I realised – I experienced the fact that when that happens, the little tiny micro events that I could listen to would be sustained more let's say than they ordinarily would. If you want to get rid of all of that, the first and most radical thing you can do is start playing with vibrato (*laughs.*) But moving in the opposite direction takes you into – opens the door into this special place.[159]

From this new 'special place' Conrad felt that new spaces could be opened through further exploration, leading to an interest in long durations and open forms. Conrad was impressed by certain elements in his new approaches to performance practice, which he suggested "in terms

[157] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 4.

[158] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 4.

[159] Ibid., 4.

of process needs this kind of metaphor, almost like a travel metaphor".[160] Conrad's travel metaphor is one in which he reaches a door or gateway to a new system, where he sees that:

> harmonically structured combinations of tones can engage interactive combinatorial structures that are redirecting my attention in a way that I find..."musically"... satisfying. But, I'm still a long way from some other place that I can't quite get to except when I find that I work at this on a daily basis and stay with it and stay with it and just do it and do it and do it. And three weeks later I get to the end of a kind of tunnel where the space suddenly opens out and the little teensy things that I had started off trying to do have now – they're the same things but now they have a much bigger size somehow in my hearing and practice and the scope of interaction among the tones, among the strings and the hearing sensibility suddenly expands, just hops open into an almost magically reverberant and engaging space.[161]

To Conrad this new 'space' was better than anything he'd ever heard conjured by a violin. He had once and for all moved away from any attempt to sound like Heifetz and into a "timbrally defined territory" of a character Conrad suspected of being "animated by some almost metaphysically distant power source."[162] This new sound world came to Conrad with such intensity that he felt it had very little to do with 'ordinary' music at all, and fortunately for him he was not the only musician at Harvard who felt an aversion to the ordinary. During this time of introverted musical exploration, Conrad bounced ideas off fellow student and later close friend Henry Flynt, who along with La Monte Young – with whom Conrad had begun to correspond at this time – encouraged him to continue along this course of drone-based music. In 1960 and 1961, Conrad travelled throughout Europe, essentially taking a gap year which he spent largely hanging out in the vast music libraries of Germany, searching for scores, and in particular seventeenth-century *scordatura* scores as well as scores of modern composers, taking notes and absorbing as much inspiration from this as he could.[163] In a time before recordings of

[160] Ibid., 4.

[161] Ibid., 4.

[162] Ibid., 4.

[163] Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*., 63.

much of this music was available – so much of it is still unavailable outside an audience of in-the-know connoisseurs – such a journey was a necessary and seemingly powerful event for Conrad and one that would solidify his new ideas on violin performance and on music as a whole.

At this stage in Conrad's musical development he showed little interest in performing on stage and his practice remained an introverted and private process of discovery and experimentation: "I was in a situation which did not divide into receivership and performance. It's the same thing, I'm just receiving and playing and it's all just like an inner, it's an introspective practice".[164] This blurring between performance and introspective practice remained an important element of Conrad's work for violin, an ideal not unlike Flynt's brend that bore a desire for utopia and escape at its core. In the course of this period of immense inspiration and discovery Conrad also discovered Hindustani music through Flynt. In particular, much like La Monte Young before him, Conrad honed in on the drone of the tamboura that rang so ever-presently out of the background of Ali Akbar Khan's groundbreaking Western recorded debut.[165] This "magical" sound, introduced to Conrad by Flynt, the product of music based around long-durations and drones, was "like touching a fuse"[166] for him. From here he began performing music of this ilk and in 1962 began to work with his friends La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela in a new improvisatory collective known as the Theatre of Eternal Music or Dream Syndicate.

[164] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 6-7.

[165] Ali Akbar Khan, *Music of India, Morning and Evening Ragas* (United Kingdom: His Master's Voice, 1956), vinyl LP.

[166] Tony Conrad, Interview with the author, 7.

The Beginning of Eternity: Manhattan and the Theatre of Eternal Music

1963 saw Conrad move from Cambridge to New York City to join the Theatre of Eternal Music (TOEM) on a more full-time basis. This is a period of intense productivity for Conrad, during which he became heavily involved in the underground film movement centred largely on Jack Smith and his gang of bohemian outsiders. In this scene Conrad discovered a talent for film and participated in Smith's films, both as an actor and as a musician performing on the soundtracks to several unfinished films and the infamous queer proto-psychedelia of *Flaming Creatures* (1963).[167] These soundtracks also included performances by fellow Theatre of Eternal Music comrades, Angus MacLise, John Cale and Terry Jennings. Conrad appears on many private tapes that have been collected, and since commercially released, by Conrad and other surviving members of the Theatre Of Eternal Music. Most notably are recent releases of recordings made with Angus MacLise, *The Cloud Doctrine* (1963-1976)[168] and *Brain Damage in Oklahoma City* (1967-1970)[169] in which Conrad – and often times Conrad's then-wife, the underground film star and sometime Warhol muse, Beverly Grant – often appears playing his characteristic drone on various stringed instruments. During the early 1960s, Conrad and Cale also met Lou Reed through whom Conrad had his first chance at experiencing Rock 'n' Roll first hand as guitarist in The Primitives. Conrad composed several pieces during this time, including his work 'Four Violins' which he premiered in front of his Harvard classmates as a tape piece in 1964. 'Four Violins' is idiosyncratically Conrad, and displays how particular his vision for the violin was from the very beginning. Conrad has since elaborated on this period of development with his modern re-workings of the sort of 'dream music' he created in the Theatre of Eternal Music. These pieces, titled *April 1965, May 1965* and *June 1965,* along with *Four Violins* comprise the four-CD compendium, *Early Minimalism*[170], Conrad's largest musical

[167] Jack Smith, "Flaming Creatures," (UbuWeb Film, 1962-63).

[168]Angus MacLise, *The Cloud Doctrine* (Belgium: Sub Rosa, 2003), Compact Disc.

[169] MacLise, *Brain Damage in Oklahoma City*.

[170] Conrad, *Early Minimalism Volume One*.

undertaking to date. The 'dream music' that inhabits *Early Minimalism* is largely apolitical in character, however Conrad recollects in the liner notes to the compendium that *Four Violins* in particular held a political meaning to him. In 1964 Conrad was engrossed in the Theatre of Eternal Music, but the Pythagorean allusions present in the name and concept – Young's ideal of 'Eternal Music' – of the group bothered him somewhat. Pythagoras' 'Music of the Spheres' represents, to Conrad, a link to *ancien-regime* conservative Republican democratic thought, a music in service to the upper classes. In 1963 Conrad, standing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC, witnessed Dr. Martin Luther-King's iconic 'I Have a Dream' speech and was suitably moved. He recounts how this moment in his life affected his ideas on what he preferred to call 'Dream Music': "for my part, I preferred 'Dream Music' [over 'Eternal Music'], which was less redolent of a socially regressive agenda – only think of Martin Luther-King's 'I Have a Dream' speech, which I had heard, standing on the Lincoln Memorial steps a year before I recorded *Four Violins*".[171]

In 1966 Conrad made his most enduring mark on the arts with his structuralist film masterpiece *The Flicker*. Throughout the latter half of the 60s Conrad collaborated with Angus MacLise in some performances and recordings – this includes soundtracks to Jack Smith's films – and in various private sessions with MacLise, Cale and others. In 1972 Conrad assembled an ensemble to perform his multimedia work, *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain*, however, it is not until 1973 and a trip to Wümme, near Hamburg, in Germany that Conrad reappears prominently in the music world. Here he appears alongside Krautrock pioneers Faust on a recording of cult repute, *Outside the Dream Syndicate* (originally released on Carolina in 1973).[172] Its 'motorik' rhythms and industrial ambience would have a major influence on the nascent Industrial scene and has remained one of Conrad's most well known recordings.

[171] Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism Volume One,* liner notes, 36.

[172]Tony with Faust Conrad, *Outside the Dream Syndicate (30th Anniversary Edition)* (Atlanta: Table of the Elements, 2002), Compact Disc.

The Theatre of Eternal Music was the base from which Conrad began to solidify his ideas on music and violin performance. Conrad became involved with the group during his final year at Harvard in 1963, and it would transform his ideas on music entirely. To Conrad this form of music making represented a clean break from the traditions of authorship and composition. While based in Young's jazz upbringing and their collective love of Indian music, the TOEM was something entirely new to Conrad, a kind of "New York-based drone music"[173] in which he became deeply immersed. Conrad began to play a crucial role in the creation of Young's ideal of 'Eternal' music, helping Young with complex charts of frequency ratios upon which the group built their drones. As one of the group's principle drone-makers Conrad heralded an important development in their sound, the addition of the seventh harmonic. Initially Conrad's love of Biber had led to him suggesting to Young that they add a major third to their drones. In the traditions of avant-garde and jazz music the major third is largely taboo and did not appeal to Young, however, his love of blues lead to him suggesting to Conrad that he try the flattened seventh common to the blues scale. Through further mathematical exploration, Conrad found that a blue seventh was akin to the seventh harmonic in just intonation – the seventh harmonic is represented as the ratio 7:4 in just intonation tuning systems and sounds, in highly simplified terms, like a flattened minor seventh in the equal tempered system – and a new fundamental element to 'Eternal' music was born. Further steps were required to bring out the various tonal qualities of the seventh harmonic, the most important being amplification. In the early stages of the TOEM Conrad was forced to place his left ear as close as possible to his violin to hear the effects he so desired over the cacophony of the other players, but discovered that the purchase of a simple contact microphone addressed this shortcoming.

> So the thing is that Lafayette Radio, this little electronics hobby shop, had these contact mikes that John Cage used to use. So I put one of those on the violin and made the violin sound even

[173] Tony Conrad, Interview with author, 7.

> less Heifetz-like than ever before. Really rauncho. But then these sounds came rattling out of the instrument.[174]

More than another rebellion against the tyrannous presence of Heifetz, the addition of "rowdy"[175] Piezo pickups (a type of crude contact microphone that hooks into the bridge, picking up the signal through the bridge's vibration) brought Conrad's 'special place' under the microscope of amplification and brought an array of timbres to life that had previously been unexplored in violin performance. This new sound was quickly transferred to John Cale's viola when he arrived in the TOEM's ranks, and the industrial drones of Eternal Music were born. This Eternal Music had no composer: it was in and of itself, existing purely in the moment that the sound is created and continuing on in the vibrations inherent in the air and in human bodies. This resonated with the Eastern ideas of music that Conrad had been first introduced to by Henry Flynt and later exposed to in a much more profound sense by La Monte Young. Certainly it seems that through the TOEM, Tony Conrad discovered his own interpretation of the Nada Brahma (Sanskrit meaning roughly "sound is God"). If God is sound then no man or woman has the right to claim ownership over it. La Monte Young has contested this, stating that all work by the TOEM was composed by him, and him alone. Conrad and Cale continue to refute this to the present day, resulting in countless hours of recorded music remaining locked in Young's archives. For Conrad the anarchic equality present in the group was a tangible thing at the time that has lasted with him and is present in his current practice: "one of the things that was fascinating about our collaboration at that time was the way in which each of the participants had an extreme impact or contribution to the gestalt of the enterprise".[176]

Despite this desire to destroy the convention of the composer, Conrad still publishes works under the guise of being 'his' compositions (something which can largely be seen as a simple

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[174] Ibid., 8.

[175] Ibid., 8.

[176] Ibid., 8.

technical need in our post-modern ultra-capitalist culture) and it is these works that will be focussed on in the following analyses.

Motionless Digits: Analysing Early Minimalism

Four Violins 1964 is a recording that manifests itself somewhat as a prototype for Conrad's approach to the violin. It employs long sustained tones and what many Western listeners may find to be dissonant interval relationships, and it employs distortion and electronic elements. It is a piece that displays Conrad's early forays into tape manipulation and looping, as the 'Four Violins' are all performed by Conrad himself, and it seems likely, from the timbre of the violin, that he was making use of amplification and contact microphones or pickups. Conrad appears to have always had a preference for a harsh and distorted violin tone and his use of vibrato is non-existent, keeping in line with his preference for 17th and 18th Century performance practices, and with his desire to magnify even the most subtle changes in finger position – something that would be obscured by vibrato in the popular *bravura* style. *Four Violins* essentially consists of a build up of four double-stopped intervals, which eventually create one monumental drone replete with various overtones, beats and other frequency permutations that occur from the combination of particular intervals in Just Intonation. The rhythmic, and largely improvised, element of the piece stems from his changes in bow and bow-pressure. Bow strokes often become more frequent when beats are more prominent, as Conrad attempts to match the rhythmic pulse of the beats and add more intensity to the performance. This is an element of his performance practice borrowed largely from his experience in the TOEM, where Conrad and Cale would drone eternally with only bow strokes and subtle finger movements functioning as their improvisatory contribution. This glacial approach to improvisation remains a prominent feature in Conrad's practices, and was certainly his primary approach during the period in question. *Four Violins* was premiered as a tape performance at Harvard in 1964.

Four Violins, texturally and in terms of timbre, can best be described as white hot. There is a burning intensity to Conrad's playing that leaves no room for idle listening or distraction. The tone of the violin is highly distorted causing the overtones and pitch variations to bubble and soar above the violin's minimal intonations. Conrad clearly performs in a somewhat aggressive fashion, using whole bows of varying articulation and speed, an element that appears largely improvised. The piece begins in the lower registers of the instrument and by its mid-point employs more and more double stops in the upper register. These upper register elements are evident at all times as overtones resultant from the intervals performed on the D and G strings, and Conrad's shifts to the upper registers are clearly responses to these overtones. At times throughout the piece shifts in bow and articulation are glacial and almost imperceptible were it not for the primitive nature of the tape loops. Through these loops, beats, overtones and bow changes Conrad creates an ever-changing palette of rhythmic pulses that shift over time, creating a sense that rhythm barely exists at all within the overall structure of the piece. In some ways the piece brings to mind the work, some years later, of Terry Riley and his 'time-lag accumulator'. Like Riley's better-known works, *Four Violins* is a meditative work that exists within a dream-like space seemingly lasting well beyond its thirty-two minute duration. Indeed for Conrad, *Four Violins* is simply a snapshot of the 'eternal' or 'dream' music that he was creating at the time with La Monte Young, and is very much something that neither has a beginning nor an end. The time barriers set for the piece are only created by the switching on and off of the tape machine and amplifier – something which is audible at the beginning of the recording – leaving the listener to guess at how many hours longer Conrad may have continued playing after the tape ran out as the recording comes to an abrupt end. *Four Violins* is a clear example of Conrad's use of bow articulation and subtle shifts of finger-position in the left-hand which alter the pitch and resultant overtones of a certain interval or double-stop.

Four Violins represents one of many of Conrad's experiments with modern recording technology in the 1960s. The four violins in the piece are in fact Conrad himself, overdubbing on magnetic tape. It displays well his complex and precise relationship to intonation and

intervallic relationships as the piece was recorded with no playback available and yet contains perfectly formed double stops in just intonation. Double-stops are the most important element to Conrad's left-hand technique as he employs them almost constantly in all of his work. These double stops adhere to his ideas on just intonation and certain interval relationships, with a complete absence of major thirds and a prominent use of unisons and their various permutations. Along with these intervals is the ever-present and highly prominent presence of the seventh harmonic, a note that became a common part of Conrad's improvisations after Young asked him to perform a blue note in the TOEM. Therefore it can be said that Conrad's use of the seventh harmonic is derived from African American blues, an artform which is historically well-versed in what may be termed 'alternative' uses of the violin. Certainly in the early days of recordings made of blues musicians the violin serves as a precursor to the guitar in its use as an instrument that performs the solo line. One of Conrad and Flynt's great influences, Bo Diddley, was himself a violinist before moving onto the guitar at a later stage. The term 'alternative' or 'underground' can be applied to these blues violinists purely on a social level, as by simply being black these performers existed outside of mainstream American culture. In the 1940s and 50s, African American culture was an obvious way for middle-class white Americans to find a path to rebel against the status quo. White jazz musicians, such as sometime Ornette Coleman bassist Charlie Haden, adopted the styles of dress and lifestyle of many black jazz musicians – such as the use of heroin and cannabis and wearing of Zoot suits and other common African American street clothing – to break free of the stifling conditions of white American class-based society. Conrad himself can be seen in photos from the early 1960s dressed all in black and wearing horn-rimmed glasses, with long hair and cigarette in hand. This style of appearance was prevalent amongst white American artists living in the Bohemian enclaves of New York City's Lower East Side and it is in many ways the quintessential image of the young American rebel of the Rock 'n' Roll era that is archetypal to viewers today – however always with a "nerdy" side to it as Conrad confesses in his liner notes to *Early Minimalism.*[177] Like

[177] Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism,* liner notes., 16.

Conrad, the African American blues violinists of the early twentieth century used double stops to great effect, and like Conrad, these double stops were not played by those with traditional, conservative Western ears, and can therefore sound somewhat 'out of tune' or 'ethnic'. Similarly the double-stopped fiddling of bluegrass music is an undeniable influence on Conrad – via Henry Flynt's obsession it would seem – with Conrad claiming Biber and "the high lonesome sound of Bill Monroe"[178] as his main influences. This non-linear and anti-hegemonic blending of disparate influences is a tell-tale sign of Conrad's ideological agenda – the blending of the perfect intonation inherent in ancient court music and the rebellious cry of inherently working class 'American ethnic music', resulting in a subversive heterophony.

In his comprehensive study of Conrad, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate,* Branden Joseph quotes some passages from Conrad's article, 'Inside the Dream Syndicate', from the summer 1966 issue of *Film Culture.* A particular passage from this article illustrates well the detailed attention to finger position and bow-stroke that Conrad and Cale employed in their TOEM performances:

> ...infinitesimal control has to be used to get the precisely wanted range of interrelations. Variation by extremely minute degrees, as well in fact as rates of variation, spring flagrantly into vivid distraction, creating almost the need for a new kind of instrumentalist. It seems to take a new year of listening to begin to obtain the control that comes only with the self-corrective semiautomatic control of the tiniest beat-elements of the single instrument. The string fingerer fights to find the right spot to press a motionless digit for months before noticing the demands of the right arm for microscopic fingerboard digit-rockings, compensating periodically for the tiny variations in string tension with each change of bow.[179]

This suggests an almost primitive breakdown of the basic techniques of violin performance. A kind of Neolithic technique excavated from a time before the violin's invention and juxtaposed onto the modern machine with great care. A concert violinist will spend hours before a

[178] Tony Conrad, "Tony Conrad Myspace," MySpace, http://www.myspace.com/slappingpythagoras.

[179] Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*., 140.

performance simply on intonation, listening carefully to every note and every interval to ensure their purity, as is demanded by the expectations of the modern concert goer. Conrad takes this preparatory process and turns it into the performance itself, taking the very essence of the most basic technique and turning it into a microscopic world of colour and variation. The difficulty in obtaining this technique is only obvious once a player attempts it. To sit on a single tone for hours, only shifting the finger almost imperceptibly is a difficult task for any violinist trained in the bravura style. Ours is not a culture of sitting still and listening, but rather one of progress and constant change. Conrad's performance practice is the antithesis to the post-industrial technical institution that continues to dominate Western music, yet it is also the product of a scientific awakening and would be impossible without the same societal shifts that created it. Conrad takes violin performance and places it under an electron microscope, displaying the very fibre of its DNA. It is both a regression and a constant progression, both reaching back to our violinistic ancestors and ploughing forward toward a future yet unknown. This approach to violin technique can be seen throughout Conrad's output and particularly during the 1960s and 70s.

The pieces titled *May*, *June* and *April 1965* – also found in the same Table of the Elements Records collection *Early Minimalism* as *Four Violins* – are similarly composed to *Four Violins*, however these are recent recordings made with contemporary musicians and the recording technology available to artists in the 1990s. Nonetheless they reflect Conrad's practices of the 1960s and serve as a further example of the genesis of his unique approach to violin performance – albeit with the gift of hindsight offered to any musician who revisits old material later in their life. The most notorious extant recording of the TOEM or Dream Syndicate, as Conrad and Cale referred to it, is the Table of the Elements release *Day of Niagara*[180], a 1965 concert performance by the Dream Syndicate in New York City. Its notoriety has been heightened by La Monte Young's wholesale condemnation of its release, with Table of the Elements finally ceasing to re-press it after pressure from Young's lawyers.

[180]Cale/Conrad/MacLise/Young/Zazeela, *Day of Niagara*.

Day of Niagara is archival proof of Conrad's performance practices from the very year that the aforementioned solo pieces were composed, and the similarities suggest that Conrad's approach to violin playing was heavily influenced by, and an influence on, the Dream Syndicate and the work of La Monte Young. The lo-fidelity quality of the Dream Syndicate recordings, however, make it difficult to make clear observations on the subtlety inherent in Conrad's playing, therefore these modern re-recordings serve as an excellent basis to make clearer judgements on Conrad's earlier performance approaches.

May 1965, June 1965 and *April 1965*, all share a very similar aesthetic and combination of intervals and double-stops to *Four Violins.* The most obvious differences are the instrumentation and personnel with each of these pieces requiring performance by traditional string quartets or other combinations of bowed string instruments. At their core all of these pieces are dissonant to the Western ear and Conrad's use of amplification and distortion – both through processing the electrical signal and through different finger and bow techniques such as *sul ponticello* (bowing close to the bridge in order to create a distorted tone) and harmonics produced by differing levels of left-hand finger pressure – make them confronting listening experiences for the uninitiated. It is without a doubt that confrontation is a major part of Conrad's art. From his violin playing to his involvement in Flynt's Anti-Art protests and the infamously physical reactions of audiences to *The Flicker*, confrontation was an ever-present factor in Conrad's activities in the 1960s, and continues to be to this day. Conrad's demeanour in interviews is often somewhat obnoxious and satirical, reminding one of the punks that would follow him in the 1970s and humour is seemingly never far from his work. This combination of confrontation, rebellion, non-linearity and humour are all reflected in Conrad's radical democratic and profoundly anti-Pythagorean *weltenschauung*. As a radical, Conrad sees his violin playing as part of an attempt to overthrow the cultural hegemony started by Pythagoras' 'music of the spheres' which has led to the proliferation and dominance of the Western equal-tempered scale and the mass-consumer, globalised capitalist culture industry which largely spawned from the Industrial Revolution and the European Imperialist interests of those that put

it in motion. The sheer structural simplicity of Conrad's pieces from the 1960s and early 1970s, and the trance-inducing nature of their long duration, stand in direct opposition to the complex bursts of energy inherent in Stockhausen or the ponderous silences of John Cage. Conrad's music leaves no room for silence and is renowned for its room-filling effect, both through sheer volume and through the intrusive intervals whose beats and overtones create an impassable wall of sound. The seeming simplicity of this music leaves much to the listener's imagination, and its physicality makes them a part of the performance and no longer passive listeners. It allows the listener to search for melody and rhythm inherent in the most minute permutations, a radical music, which requires a democratic approach to listening where one must decide on elements to concentrate their listening. Once such a decision is made the experience can be rewarding or challenging, beautiful or ugly, oppressive or liberating all depending on what one chooses to take from it.

April 1965 is one of the more physical and rhythmic of the *Early Minimalism* collection. The recording features a performance by Conrad and a quartet of musicians on violin, viola, cello and double bass and, therefore, contains a much fuller sound than that of *Four Violins.* Throughout the work there is a rhythmic thrust from the lower strings that is also not present in the earlier work: at times the cello and bass grind away like a hurdy-gurdy or Scottish bagpipes. This brings to mind the work of another composer who used these instruments to similar effect in the 1960s, free jazz artist Anthony Braxton – giving the piece a very solid sense of even, forward motion. *April 1965* is relentless with repetitive, even, whole bows heavily permeating the violin parts, and certain riffs or *ostinatos* appearing from the lower strings out of the endless droning. As with much of Conrad's work for violin, the contact between bow and string evokes a sawing quality suggesting an ample application of rosin and, an immense amount of constant pressure from the index finger and fore-arm of the right hand. A high degree of stamina must be required to perform a work of this nature with its hour-long duration of constant bowing at high volume, both in the amplified and dynamic sense.

May 1965 consists of a primal drone accompanied by various electronic rumblings brought on by the intense contact between bow and string reminiscent of Conrad's use of an instrument he named the 'Limp String' on recordings he made with Angus MacLise in the late 1960s (Conrad continues to use a similar instrument in his recent live performances). The drones are once again relentless in this piece but are of a much less rhythmic nature than that of *April 1965.* In this case the personnel is more minimal, featuring Conrad and Jim O'Rourke – a sound artist who has worked with Conrad in various capacities since the early 1990s when these recordings were largely made – on violin and Alexendria Gelencser on cello. This piece seems to be a study in producing beats in the lower registers of the overtone series and is decidedly guttural rather than shrill in timbre. Distortion is once again a prevalent element and in *May 1965* this distortion becomes part of the overall drone much like it did in the lo-fidelity recordings available of the TOEM from the same period. This piece, more so than the others, brings the TOEM to mind and would not sound out of place as a backing track for a Velvet Underground track. There is much of John Cale's "jet engine"[181] sounds present in this piece, leaving one to wonder whether alterations were made to the bridge and strings of the instruments for this particular recording. *May 1965* sounds like the embodiment of Conrad's music of this time, a stoned yet ecstatic wall of whole bows and primal, minute shifts of timbre and texture. Intervallic shifts are rare as the bow takes importance over all other expressive qualities, shifting from intense sawing *marcato* strokes to lighter less pronounced strokes, however this music never reaches a state that could be described as *legato.* Bowing in close proximity to the bridge also seems to be of importance with this work producing intense physical rumblings that give the listener the impression Conrad's amplifier or speakers may not be able to take much more. *May 1965* is both disturbing and ecstatic in character, like much of Conrad's music.

June 1965 is the final in the *Early Minimalism* series to date and is in a similar vein to the others in the series. The instrumentation is further shrunk to simply feature Conrad and

[181] John Cale, *What's Welsh for Zen?,* 60

Gelencser and a shrill element is introduced once more to the series of intervals in use. This includes the use of open harmonics, particularly in the violin line and long periods of static soaring drones in the upper registers of both the violin and cello. While the former pieces are single movements, this piece has two distinct parts, with the first movement consisting largely of long static sheets of layered intervals that are largely open and quite consonant in nature, and the second largely continuing in this vein but growing in dissonant intensity towards its conclusion. The seemingly consonant sections are an example of the soothing beauty found in the perfect intervals one can create using a system akin to Just Intonation, with the violin and cello at times blending seamlessly into the spectrum of overtones with no beats or distortions within earshot. At times Conrad's playing resembles a perfect sine tone more so than a violin, with the occasional abrupt change of bow being the only noticeable shift within the music.

Conrad, like many of his colleagues in the New York scene, appears to have been greatly enamoured with the pure sound of sine tones created by ring modulators and synthesisers, and this fascination most prominently came to fruition in his 1966 piece *Fantastic Glissando*, a work which utilises sine tone generators in much the same way he would manipulate his violin. *Fantastic Glissando* is unsettling in nature, however, whereas *June 1965* is at times deeply meditative, bringing to mind the 'deep listening'[182] experiments of colleagues on the west coast of the United States such as Pauline Oliveros and the 'Fourth World' experiments of fellow sometime TOEM collaborator, trumpeter Jon Hassell.[183] The second movement introduces slight movements in the fingers of the left hand, which create audible acoustic beats of varying speeds depending on the slight shifting of the finger, a technique which permeates Conrad's work to this day. The second half of *June 1965* continues the glacial droning that is the cornerstone of Conrad's work and is at once trance-inducing, meditative, disturbing and deeply physical when heard at the proper (read: high) volume.

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[182] Sharon Stewart, "Listening to Deep Listening: Reflection on the 1988 Recording and the Lifework of Pauline Oliveros," *Journal of Sonic Studies* 2, no. 1 (2012)., 1.

[183] David Toop, "Altered States 2: Fourth World," in *Ocean of Sound: Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1995)., 167.

On the Side of the Machine: Analysing the Faust Collaboration

Perhaps the most physical of Conrad's works from this period is *Outside the Dream Syndicate.* In this recording the power of Conrad's drone is accompanied by the relentless mechanical rhythmic pulse of Faust. Once again, despite its harmonic stasis, there is little linearity in this music. While it is often described as a classic of so-called Krautrock music, *Outside the Dream Syndicate* does not sit comfortably within any genre description and was largely overlooked at the time of its release. Like much of Conrad's work the listener can take what they want from the album, and this is reflected in the myriad of underground music genres that place it in their annals of influence and inspiration, from the Industrial music of the late 1970s and 1980s, to the Drone Metal scene of today. Conrad's double-stops take on a new shade in these recordings, with his timbre appearing to be more electronically processed than in previous recordings and his often aggressive approach to bowing perhaps reflecting his need to compete with the dynamic power of a 1970s rock combo. This music is clearly influenced by marijuana and the lugubrious effects it can have on a performer's ears and physical being (see Appendix 2 for comments from Conrad on the benefits of marijuana).

Drugs were a large part of Conrad's experience in the 1960s and 70s from his experiments with ether, purchased at the hardware store near his and Cale's apartment in Manhattan, to the legendary reputation of the Theatre of Eternal Music for the consumption of hashish during rehearsals and performances. The music of Conrad and his cohorts during the 1960s is seen by many as proto-psychedelic, particularly the TOEM. The Dream Syndicate's performances were multi-media events, involving the magenta calligraphic light shows of Marian Zazeela and an eastern-inspired aesthetic that predates the multi-media events of Warhol and the likes of the Grateful Dead. Certainly there is little doubt in the listener's ears of the psychedelic nature of *Outside the Dream Syndicate.* It is an album that is druggy, disorientating but also mechanistic and dystopian without a hint of hippy utopianism, despite the idyllic

German countryside in which it was recorded. It gives the impression of being as much the product of lingering paranoia as it is that of hashish-induced lethargy.

Conrad's musical works are closely tied in with the birth of psychedelic music in the United States. Drug use has always been a part of the bohemian way of life, and with the Beats it first became a popular point of entry into the world outside of the status quo for many young white artists. Drugs had long been the subject of many African American songs before they reached popular use in the 1960s and, the misadventures of black Jazz musicians in the 1940s is the stuff of legend. In Conrad's milieu, as we found with the amphetamine-inspired works of Henry Flynt, drugs appeared to be a major part of music making:

> There was a scene going on which had to do with underground artists, and I'm talking about The Fugs and underground film and the drug culture in another incarnation, although the Fluxus culture was not completely isolated from the drug culture, there was much greater hostility to drugs in that environment than there was in the underground culture.[184]

Marijuana and hashish in particular are drugs whose properties are well suited to the playing of long-form music. Certainly under the influence of marijuana one can concentrate on a single tone, and the aural hallucinations that often accompany the high can greatly enhance the experience of harmonic beats and overtones. In India the consumption of *ladu* – a blend of hashish and almond paste – is popular amongst musicians and mystics, and whilst Pandit Pran Nath had a preference for whiskey, it is this legendary use of hashish that seems to have inspired the 'Theatre of Eternal Music'. Conrad has spoken at some length, in interviews, of his penchant for smoking marijuana and has spoken amiably of his musical experiments conducted under its influence: "I won't say that smoking pot had nothing to do with it because it was a way to indulge focus and sort of like encourage emersion and self-reverence".[185] By the time *Outside the Dream Syndicate* was recorded marijuana was, of course, a calling card of the counter

[184] Chris Hill, "Tony Conrad Interviewed by Chris Hill,"(1995)., 2

[185] Tony Conrad, Interview with the Author – Transcript, 9 (see Appendix 2)

culture with *Faust* being infamous for their copious imbibing of the controlled substance. Conrad himself recalled that "somebody must have been burning a pot field around where they were working"[186] as the haze of smoke in the farmhouse at Wümme engulfed the musicians making the event a hazy memory for all involved. Nonetheless, *Outside the Dream Syndicate* remains a lucid and forward-thinking album that was well ahead of its time.

The album consists of two side-long pieces, one entitled *On the Side of Man and Womankind* and the other entitled *On the Side of the Machine*. The names themselves invoke a kind of dystopianism – the battle between nature and the industrial machinations of the modern world. *Faust* are a group who historically have experimented with the interaction of man and machine, famously improvising on angle-grinders, cement mixers and other construction equipment – an action that would later be taken to new extremes by industrial troupe *Einstürzende Neubauten*. Conrad himself was no stranger to manipulating machinery, having been inspired by Biber to explore alternate tunings – something which requires physical alterations to the violin machine, particularly when looking at Biber's instructions in his *Mystery Sonatas* in which he asks the player to cross over the D and A strings in symbolic remembrance of Christ's crucifixion – and his own alterations to the violin body itself such as filing the bridge down to allow one to play on all four strings at once. Further, Conrad's experiments in film at this time generally involved highly physical alterations of the projector apparatus and even the film itself, such as cooking the film in a curry or running it into the projector via a bucket of casserole. Both Conrad and *Faust* used these devices as a means to express their mutual love of confrontation and absurdist humour and to reflect their concerns with the society around them. *Outside the Dream Syndicate* is the music of Bohemian outsiders observing a battle between man, woman and the machines that once served them. Machines that they now are slowly starting to resemble.

[186] Faust Pages, "Tony Conrad and Jean Hervé Péron: The Dream Syndicate," http://faust-pages.com/records/conrad.dreamsyndicate.html#Articles.

Despite the sometimes static and industrial nature of Conrad's violin playing, his is not a cold expression. The blistering heat of his violin tone and impassioned sawing of his bow technique betray a love of ecstatic music and ecstatic experience. Conrad is quoted as saying this of his experience with Cale in the TOEM: "we hungered for music almost seething beyond control – or even something just beyond music, a violent feeling of soaring unstoppably, powered by immense angular machinery across abrupt and torrential seas of pounding blood".[187]

Once again this imagery of flesh and machinery permeates Conrad's own descriptions of how he foresaw music to be. Much of his own writing on his music is filled with such impassioned visions of a new music that would "recapture art music to the social level of pop."[188] Conrad and Cale's desire for something "seething beyond control" can certainly be seen mirrored throughout the 1960s American counter-cultural movement; a movement in which young Americans broke free of the strictures of a sick society by fighting against the controlling elements placed upon them by an establishment built on slavery, both open and insidious. The idea of relinquishing control led to Conrad's view of the new musician's place in an eternal world of communal composition, which would lead, finally, to the death of the composer. Traditional bourgeois concepts of ownership needed to be challenged through music, and since the drone is a seemingly eternal musical device – and one that has existed in all the world's cultures in one shape or form since antiquity – it is the perfect platform from which to make this challenge. Who owns a drone? It is something that is seemingly impossible to claim as a 'composition' within the Western concept of composition and copyright. Drones neither consist of a form or a discernable structure that any one person could call their own. Certainly Conrad's style and technique are his own, but to lay compositional claim to a drone in his eyes, is patently absurd. The drone is owned by everyone and no one, and like an Indian *sadhu* for whom everything and nothing are his, it demands that those who play it relinquish such ideas of ownership themselves.

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[187] Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism*, Liner notes, 43.

[188] Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism*, Liner notes, 42.

The democratising nature of the drone fits in well with Conrad's ideological leanings. Ostensibly anyone with a voice or a collection of electronic equipment – including white goods and aquariums – can create a drone. The Dream Syndicate would tune to the 60 HZ cycle of the American electrical grid, first discovered as a basis for tuning after La Monte Young recalled his experiences as a young boy listening to the hum of electrical transformers near his home in rural Idaho. They would often use the filter motor from Young and Zazeela's turtle aquarium as the initial tone from which to base a drone.[189] This tone was naturally a direct voicing of the 60Hz cycle and soon became the tuning fork for the Dream Syndicate's monumental drones.[190] From this initial drone Conrad and Young devised an incredibly complex system of ratios with which to tune their improvisations. These ratios soon became the basis for both Young and Conrad's future work. Conrad's input into the creation of this system of ratios cannot be downplayed – although Young has done so in countless interviews and articles. It is obvious to any observer that such mathematical complexities became the norm in the TOEM after Conrad joined the group. This is hardly surprising, considering Conrad's experience as a mathematics student at Harvard. It is of no benefit to this thesis to go into depth on Conrad's theories and ratios for just intonation tuning, however, it can be simplified as a system rooted in ratios of prime numbers which represent different intervals and frequencies, including those that can occur outside the realm of equal temperament. Further, Conrad employs alternate, or *scordatura,* tunings such as tuning his violin to the 60Hz hum rather than the common Western (and certainly prevalently in the United States, Britain and Australia) concert pitch of A440.

It seems that Conrad rarely, if ever, tunes his violin to that which has prevailed in Western music since the Industrial Revolution. Rather, Conrad chooses to emulate his hero, Biber, by finding tunings that open out the violin's resonant qualities. For instance in Biber's *Rosenkranz Sonata V* the violinist is instructed to tune the violin to A, E, A, C sharp – as opposed to G, D, A, E respectively – which instantly opens the violin to new resonances and a

[189] Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*., 334.

[190] Ibid., 335-336.

rich tapestry of overtones that are otherwise unobtainable with conventional tuning. In a sense the *scordatura* tuning amplifies the complimentary effect of any strings that are not being bowed. For instance, in the above mentioned tuning, the combination of the octave A to A with the perfect 5th A – E creates a complementary drone that resonates profusely when the performer plays runs on the detuned C sharp string. This is not unlike the tuning of a Sitar where six of the seven played strings simply function as resonating strings, and the top string is often tuned to a 4th above the octaves and 5ths tuned below it.[191] Whilst the acoustic qualities of the modern violin make this need for resonance somewhat unnecessary in terms of volume production – which was largely the purpose of *scordatura* tuning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – it does open the violin to new properties in terms of incidental tones and overtones. This is amplified somewhat when the instrument is electrified, as the pick-ups react in various unpredictable ways to the new resonances pouring through the bridge.

In an interview with *Wire* magazine John Cale describes the tuning used most commonly by the TOEM:

> We were tuning to a 60-cycle hum, the third harmonic was 60 cycles tuned to the refrigerator, or to the hum of the amplifier system. In order to tune you had to hold one of the cables (makes low hum), then Tony would tune first and everybody else would tune. That meant that the key we were really in was ten cycles; alpha rhythm. Which is what the brain experiences in dream state.[192]

The manipulation of the audience's perception was an important part of the TOEM's aesthetic and this has stayed with Conrad throughout his career. Much of his art is aimed at bending, enlightening and expanding the audience's perceptions, and his violin playing is no exception. Various tunings and intervals can cause ecstasy or extreme discomfort in the listener and Conrad seems all too happy to manipulate both extremes of audience reaction in almost all of his works for violin. His pieces from the *Early Minimalism* collection stand as a testament to

[191] Ram 'Vir' Avtar, *Learn to Play on Sitar* (New Delhi: Pankaj Publication, 2004)., 48

[192]Edwin Pouncey, *"Inside the Dream Syndicate," The Wire: Adventures in Modern Music 2001.*, 44

this with long drawn out passages consisting only of what many Western ears might consider dissonant intervals. These passages can then be followed by periods of ecstatically beautiful, perfectly tuned consonant intervals in just intonation that bring the listener into a warm zone of meditation. The violin is the perfect instrument for such manipulative uses; it is an instrument that most Westerners associate either with immense beauty or immense ugliness when put in the hands of a child or an unskilled player. The old adage that bad violin playing sounds like someone 'skinning a cat' is known to most English speakers and Conrad seems to playfully enjoy evoking these very primeval sounds from the instrument. In many ways Conrad is one of the first violinists to openly embrace the uglier timbres of the instrument and use it as a vehicle for noise as much as sound. His violin playing is highly textural, rather than melodic, like the abstract expressionist painters that came before him. Once again Conrad's approach to tuning is inclusive – in terms of his use of an infinitesimal range of interval permutations – but based firmly in a set of rules, albeit a radical and non-linear set of rules. His tuning is as radically democratic as all of his art and is seemingly based on the election of sounds best suited to a particular piece.

Insubordinate Vibrations: Concluding Conrad

A radical approach to tuning is at the very core of Conrad's work and indeed his entire artistic practice. Through just intonation and similar tuning systems, Conrad is able to harness the unique abilities of the violin to capture, and manipulate, vibrations. Vibrations have a unique place in our world, as they are inherent in everything, our bodies, the air, the Earth. When an artist draws back all constructs and dabbles in vibrations, as Conrad has, they reach into the core of human relationships, into belief and social structures. Indeed Conrad sees the relationship between his musical practice and social and political constructs as being part of a project to bring justified attention to an alternative musical history. More than a direct and refined ideological stance Conrad, through engaging in a radical and revolutionary approach to violin

performance, has pursued a kind of revisionist crusade against the accepted norms of the way in which music interacts with social and political structures. As he states, "I think it's less – been less important to me to find a position for myself, honestly, and more intriguing to me to look at the meaningful social and political relationships that have inhabited musical thought over the course of the last 2500 years".[193]

Throughout the 1960s and 70s Conrad was aware that his practice was revolutionary and that it was both regaining old forgotten ground and carving a new path of possibilities for the violin.

> In the middle sixties, when all of this sort of stuff was going on and we had started doing some public performance, I had the feeling that because of the way in which I was using intonation and using what we can call, loosely speaking, microtonal interval relationships, and the way that I was using sustained tones and just done the whole thing, I felt that I had launched a kind of revolution if you will, revolutionary practice but revolution really isn't the right word there, because it's not a revolution unless it revolves something and this wasn't revolving anything. What it was doing was just, as it were, establishing a cultural reference site. A locus, a performance locus on a map of different practices, which was extremely distinctive within violin performance activity...[194]

After the *Outside the Dream Syndicate* sessions this interest in social and political relationships in musical thought began to take more and more of a prevalent position in Conrad's artistic agenda. He "began to take an interest in the western tradition and how that was linked to instrumental practice"[195] and dug further into the forgotten world of Heinrich Biber, 'mistuning' and the social structures and pressures that forced Western music to go in the direction it went. Western music, like much of Western culture, is linked intensely to power and to power struggles. The orchestra is a reflection of Western military hierarchy, and indeed is

[193] Tony Conrad, Interview with the Author: Transcript, 13 (see Appendix 2)

[194] Tony Conrad, Interview with the Author: Transcript, 13 (see Appendix 2)

[195] Tony Conrad, Interview with the Author: Transcript, 13 (see Appendix 2)

based on the military system of rank and that of military bands in particular.[196] The concept of subordination and, more importantly, a cheerful embracing of *insubordination* litters Conrad's work from the late 1970s to the present. Even in the 1960s Conrad was insubordinate to the hierarchies placed by Young on the Theatre of Eternal Music, to the point that he could no longer be a part of something that did not embrace a complete dismissal of one power structure integral to Western music: the almighty power of the composer. The composer is important to Western music, because ownership is important to Western culture, and to the capitalism it gave birth to. Conrad's musical vision stands in abject insubordination to this and continues to this day. In 1995 Tony Conrad decided to take on Pythagoras himself, to critical acclaim, with his album *Slapping Pythagoras.*[197] He is now taking on the duty of indicting Lully, the Seventeenth-Century Italian largely responsible for the modern orchestra. Like Flynt, Conrad is a protest artist, a revolutionary and an antagonist, and so much of this is expressed through his violin and his unique, inimitable performance practices.

[196] Conrad, *Early Minimalism Volume One*., booklet, 35.

[197] Tony Conrad, *Slapping Pythagoras* (Atlanta: Table of the Elements, 1995), Compact Disc.

Chapter 6: Theory – The Manifesto of the Radical Violinist

In order to clarify the theoretical basis for this thesis, and most importantly, to present these theories, and my findings, in an easily accessible fashion, I present them here in the form of a manifesto. Each section is preceded by a declamatory heading, which summarises an aspect of a new set of approaches to the violin that I have formulated as a result of my research. This method of presentation is appropriate on two main levels: firstly, it is a creative way to present dense theories in a way that fits in with the themes of this thesis; and secondly it works as a kind of homage to the underground, my own personal way of paying credence to an approach to life and music that has influenced me greatly. This manifesto presents itself in the style of Henry Flynt (despite the fact that, in more recent years, Flynt wrote scathingly of what he terms "the Manifesto Artists"[198]), Conrad and their contemporaries in the underground. Further, it defines a future manifestation of Underground Violin Performance Practice, what I term Radical Violin Performance. Manifestos have been useful in the arts for centuries, and naturally even more useful to political theorists and revolutionaries. Art movements such as Futurism (*The Art of Noises* manifesto by Luigi Russolo[199]), Fluxus (several manifestos were drafted by various members of the organisation, most prominently George Maciunas), the Situationist International, Black Mask and more chose the manifesto as a way to present their conscious blending of art and a strong political idealism based primarily in socialist thought. For these groups the revolutionary manifestos of Marx and Engels, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, and other socialist revolutionaries served as the basis, both ideologically and stylistically, for their own works of this ilk. I too have taken this stylistic, and, to a certain extent ideological, blueprint to formulate this 'Manifesto of the Radical Violinist' so that it may be used to explicate clearly the theories already investigated in this thesis, and present a new theoretical approach to violin

[198] Henry Flynt, "Against "Participation": A Total Critique of Culture - 1998 Thoughts for the Next Draft," *Philosophy*(1998), http://henryflynt.org/aesthetics/againstp98thoughts.html.

[199] Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christopher and Daniel Warner Cox (New York: Continuum, 2004 (1913)).

performance. This is not intended to be a pedagogical tool, as individuality of expression is at its core, but rather as a guide for violinists and other instrumentalists to begin to formulate their own unique performance practices and ultimately subvert the traditions of violin performance practice as we know them today. In a world of immense change and many challenges, I see it as important for instrumentalists to use their instruments as tools of protest and agitation, and I believe that the lessons learned from underground violinists and their theories are indispensable to the twenty-first century violinist. In a time where the relevance of our discipline is often brought under question we must take charge and use what we have to criticise the establishment and make ourselves useful to our fellow citizens and to our environment.

Underground Violinists must be radicalised and part of an Underground resistance centred on insubordination to all forms of authoritarian power. The Underground Violinist is also the Radical Violinist.

The Underground Violinist is radicalised and is a radical in one sense or another. Like the anti-Nazi resistance of World War II, the Underground Violinist is part of a wider insubordinate resistance against the status quo, forces of conservatism and the systems of authoritarian control that promote the homogeneous hegemony of imperialism, capitalism, and consumerism. Underground Violinists address all of the standard Webster dictionary meanings of the English word 'radical':

1. of or relating to the root: proceeding directly from the root...
2. of or relating to the root or origin...
3. *marked by a considerable departure from the usual or traditional.*

It is perhaps this third definition that most thoroughly defines the Underground Violinist's radicalism, but this departure is rendered impossible without the first two. In order to most effectively create something that represents a departure from the usual or traditional the

Underground Violinist must first know their roots. As Jacques Derrida said in his 'Spectres of Marx' (1994): "...a radicalisation is always indebted to the very thing it radicalises".[200] Only through true familiarity with these root elements can the Underground Violinist truly challenge and make a clearly defined departure from them.

Henry Flynt needed to get deeply in touch with his North American folk roots in order to take them away from their traditions and into something 'other'. Tony Conrad needed to spend a year travelling Europe and pouring over scores in order to truly familiarise himself with an alternative history to his Western European roots before taking their most base elements and magnifying them into something new. Chris Karrer of Amon Düül II was all too familiar with his nation's roots and the great failure of the dreams of Beethoven and the early Romantics became the thread that Krautrockers picked up on again to create a future music. Takehisa Kosugi took the roots of his nation and region, blended them with Western technology and a Rock 'n' Roll sensibility, that he was in so many ways far removed from, to help forge the avant-garde of Japan with such seminal ensembles as Group Ongaku and Taj Mahal Travellers. Through the experience of tradition the Underground Violinist embraces insubordination towards and, ultimately, the rejection of said traditions and authoritarian structures. Through this process the Underground Violinist is also the *Radical Violinist*.

Underground Violin Performance Practices are heterogeneous and embrace heterogeneity in culture.

Dziga Vertov – whose works and ideas have already been touched on briefly throughout this thesis – proposed, in his manifesto, a break from everything that came before the events of October 1917 and the revolution that would change the world forever. Like many other Soviet artists, at least in the earliest days of the Soviet Union, Vertov took a Lenin-inspired stance

[200] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994)., 92.

against art itself. His films were montages based around documentary footage of daily life, epic stories without story lines showing the glory of the working classes and their prosperous new world of Communism. These films were propaganda in essence, but they were more than that, and they influenced a whole new generation of artists in the West during the 1960s. For Vertov, an Internationalist in every sense, homogeneity was of no interest and he proposed that 'film' as an art be destroyed and replaced with the utilitarian *Kino-Eye* (a neologism of Vertov's combining the Russian for cinema and the English for eye), a mechanical eye that sees things for what they are, an agent for the truth. Instead of art, Vertov strove to create *Kinodelia* (another neologism): "the rhythmic unity of heterogeneous themes".[201] Heterogeneity is at the very root of underground violin performance and is a defining characteristic of its development. In a world that still largely prizes homogeneous ideals of culture (even in so-called multicultural Australia the populace still largely prizes a form of superficial Australian-ness as a core value that all new-comers should adhere to or else face the silent barrage of polite bourgeois 'tolerance') heterogeneity is no less relevant or powerful than it was at the dawn of the Soviet Union as a symbol of anti-Capitalist defiance. Homogeneity is profitable, is the product of authoritarian control, and is born out of cultural and social hegemony, in this case the hegemony of formula and ultimately of monopoly/monotheism/mono-culture. Formulaic music is perfect for profit, consistency and reliability creates an ease in the consumer that parts them from their hard-earned money almost sub-consciously. Heterogeneous music is not profitable. Complex and unruly, it stands up against hegemony and is not conducive to formula, it confuses and challenges the consumer and can cause often violent reactions. Underground Violin performance is a truly heterogeneous practice, and there are many common wellsprings from which its practitioners have drunk draughts of inspiration. The Underground Violinist embraces freedom of form, diversity of source material – an open-minded attitude to musics foreign to one's own tradition is encouraged –, ambivalence to commercial motivations, and is therefore ultimately anti-Capitalist.

[201] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (London: University of California Press, 1984)., 10.

Soviet street poet Vladimir Mayakovsky's adoption of colloquialisms is a worthy analogy to apply to the Underground Violinist's practice. By taking elements of the popular musical languages of the time, Underground Violinists invoke the same cries of "vulgarity!" from the violinistic institution that Mayakovsky so damagingly received from the Stalinists.[202] The colloquial, being mercurial and heterogeneous, is the enemy of hegemony, more often than not attracting the wrath of censors. Mayakovsky did not survive the censorship of his work, but the spirit of this "vulgarity" lives on in the heterogeneous practices of Underground Violinists. American blues, Country & Western, Jazz, Rock 'n' Roll, Romanian gypsy music, Japanese *eleki,* English 'Beat' Rock: these are some of the many sources making up the street-level, colloquial (and some might say punk) sound-palate of Underground Violinists. In the twenty-first century context, the Underground Violinist may wish to embrace the working class, underdog soul of underground Heavy Metal (as I have done), or the incisive repetition of cutting-edge underground Hip-Hop, and subvert their own violinistic tradition – whether this be jazz, bluegrass, classical, tango and so on. This heterogeneous melting pot of ideas is indeed *required* in order to make truly radical Underground Violin music. The lack of so-called 'purity' in this heterogeneousness can be seen as a symbolic rejection of the notion of 'purity' espoused by classicists, folklorists, and in its most extreme form, Fascists. The cold, clinical, virtuosic and pure superman (*übermensch)* of the Nineteenth-Century bravura style is thus rejected and replaced with the emotive, flawed, noisy and heterogeneous *Under*man (*untermensch*) of the futuristic radical Underground Violin style. Like the definition of the term 'radical' suggests, the Underground Violinist proceeds directly from heterogeneous roots, thus marking a considerable departure from the traditional.

[202] Herbert Marshall, "Chronology," in *Mayakovsy*, ed. Herbert Marshall (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965)., 69.

Underground Violinists are manifestations of Marx's spectre – haunting the hegemony of Western culture.

Hauntology, as proposed by Jacques Derrida in his volume 'Spectres of Marx', can be seen throughout the work of Underground Violinists. In 1994, when Derrida completed this work, he showed a prophetic sense of the state of Marxism in the post-modern world, claiming: "At a time when a new world disorder is attempting to install its neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism, no disavowal has managed to rid itself of Marx's ghosts. Hegemony still organises the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony".[203]

In this case the hegemony is the institution of Western violin performance practice as posited by the Twentieth-Century pedagogical institutions of Carl Flesch and Ivan Galamian, undeniably a product of the precedents of the neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism Derrida refers to. It is important to note here that what is meant by Western violin performance practice is not the description of geography, but that of a tradition based in Western aristocratic artistic hegemony. This tradition has been taught to students all over the world and is an inevitable part of almost any violinist's (an Irish fiddler or Middle Eastern musician would not refer to themselves as a 'violinist') upbringing. All Underground Violinists display a reaction to this tradition, whether it is Takehisa Kosugi employing techniques and sonorities from Indian music, and his own Japanese musical traditions, to Australian violinist Jon Rose using elements of the great Australian colonial institution of Cricket to make unimaginable noise.[204] A certain autochthonic attitude and an autodidactic or intuitive approach to appropriating new techniques is a useful tool for the Underground Violinist to embrace. By taking on the guise of the autochthon the Underground Violinist can easily subvert, or unlearn, the strictures of their

[203] Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*., 37.

[204] Jon Rose brought out an album in 1987 entitled *Forward of Short Leg* which is comprised of punky, No Wave pieces featuring wild violin improvisations. Each of the pieces is named after an element of the game of Cricket, arguably Australia's national sport. Jon Rose, *Forward of Short Leg* (Germany: Dossier, 1987), Vinyl LP.

tradition and the power structures that imposed them. As an aristocratic art form, traditional violin performance practice – what from now on shall be referred to as 'classical' violin performance practice – is part of the Imperialist culture that gave birth to the Capitalist hegemony we now live under. The hegemony of classical violin is haunted by many spectres – the spectre of jazz (the legacy of slavery), the spectre of Irish fiddle (the legacy of colonial brutality), the spectre of Gypsy fiddle (the legacy of our shared nomadic past), the spectre of Yiddish fiddle (the spectre of genocide and lost cultures) – but it is the specifically Marxist spectre of Radical Underground Violin that constitutes the most direct revolutionary action against this performative status quo.

Underground Violinists must embrace elements of Futurism: science, elegance and violence.

Throughout this thesis an element of Futurism has been discussed, one that runs deep in the ideology and practice of what has been termed Underground violin performance practice. This is a "*real* Futurism, science, elegance and violence"[205] as the New York Anarchist, post-Situationist underground group Black Mask declared in their 1966 retrospective article 'Flower Power Won't Stop Fascist Power'. Henry Flynt had some involvement with Black Mask (aka Black Mask Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers) member Ben Morea, often visiting him and discussing politics and ideology with him during his later days as a member of the WWP in the late 1960s.[206] Black Mask were an intense and violent group who eventually alienated much of the art scene, but there is a similar spirit of aggressive activism present throughout the lifestyles and works of all early radical Underground Violinists. The Futurists of Italy whom inspired the Black Mask group expressed a violent desire to attack the very fundaments of bourgeois society

[205] Black Mask, "Black Mask & up against the Wall Motherfuckers: Flower Power Won't Stop Fascist Power - the Story of a Small, Underground 1960s Revolutionary Group in New York City," *Black Mask & Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers*(1966)., 2.

[206] Benjamin Piekut, "20 East Broadway, Ben Morea Loft, 1 of 2," in *Henry Flynt in New York* (YouTube, 2008).

that lead to Filippo Marinetti's (1876 – 1944) influential, and largely abhorrent, *Futurist Manifesto* and to an unfortunate alliance with fascism in the years that followed its publication in 1909. Futurism embraces the death of the old, the glorification of the new, of youth and rebellion. There is an element of Nationalism attached to Futurism that inspired the vulgar ideology of National Socialism, but it also inspired the other side of the political spectrum, leading Communists to embrace many of its tenets and ideals. The great Soviet anti-art poet Mayakovsky whose ideas and writings so influenced the young Henry Flynt, declared himself a Futurist in direct opposition to the Mussolini-adoring Italians. The violent rejection of the past is inseparable from Flynt's philosophy and he continues to discard his own previous ideas on a regular basis in order to build on them and keep them relevant. Like Flynt, all Underground Violinists should embrace this Futurist-inspired process of critique and deconstruction. Like the name of revolutionary Japanese playwright Shuji Terayama's[207] 1970 play *Throw Away the Books, We're Going Out in the Streets* Underground Violinists, too, should take to the streets and gather new experiences in order to write a new outlaw culture on the blank pages of society's future.

Mayakovsky's writing aimed at a truly proletarian expression, making use of the language of *now* and of the streets and, according to Flynt, his work was given full approval by the so-called "hard Left" in the 1960s.[208] Mayakovsky was a ComFut, a Communist-Futurist who wrote poetry in a direct and vernacular way that has struck true with the works and aims of Underground Violinists. As a Futurist he held the new above all else and rejected all past forms of art. He sought to pull art down from its pedestal and bring it to street-level, to the level of the people. Furthermore, Mayakovsky rejected the Futurism of the Italians, as his Futurism was born of a truly revolutionary spirit, and a great desire for an assertion of his unique self in a

[207] Terayama enlisted the compositional genius of J.A. Caesar, a *futen* or outlaw Japanese youth who lived an ascetic's existence on the streets of many of Japan's cities throughout the 1960s. Caesar's work shares similarities to Toshi Ichiyanagi and Takahisa Kosugi in its blending of underground Rock music with Japanese traditional sounds and instrumentation. For more information on this topic read Julian Cope, *Japrocksampler.*

[208] Flynt, "Marxist Art Roster."

society which offered him "no future and whose brutality and incompetence he condemned with all his humanity".[209] The Underground Violinist too, seeks to be only his or herself even if this is in direct confrontation with his or her host society. For the underground violinist the rejection of the traditional values of violin performance is paramount as these traditions represent a herd mentality and a practice rooted in the conformist military discipline of European feudalism. The preservation of the empire of the past is no longer their goal, thus replaced by the creation of new sounds, a *future music*. The industrious side of human nature is embraced by the underground violinist. When a new sound cannot be reached through new techniques, they will reach for technology, old and new, to enhance their palate. As much as they will search back into the past for inspiration they will look at the *now* and peer into the future. A traditional violinist will reach for new notations, mutations of the old to create something perceived as 'new', but an Underground Violinist will reach for a piece of string, tie it to their bridge, and see what comes out of it. There is an element of the peasant fiddler in this playful deconstruction, hard at work building his own violin so as to sound like no one else. It is hard to imagine that such an image would not have been appealing to Mayakovsky, a man who made up his own words in order to express a "sonofabitching"[210] revolutionary view of the future. As he saw his future utopia crumble in the hands of tyrants he took his own life in 1930, yet his spirit haunts the future music of underground violinists and their actions.

While never openly engaging in any violent actions, Flynt, Conrad and other Underground Violinists of the 1960s engaged in public protests at cultural centres, and centres of the establishment. Flynt's protest was full of violent and destructive imagery – 'Demolish Lincoln Centre', 'Demolish Serious Culture', 'Down With Art', 'The First Cultural Task is Publicly to Expose and FIGHT the Domination of White, European-US, Ruling Class Art'. These slogans were worn on sandwich boards by Flynt and his protesting cohorts, including

[209] C.M. Bowra, "Foreword," in *Mayakovsky*, ed. Herbert Marshall (London: Denis Dobson, 1965)., 13

[210] One of many of Mayakovsky's hybrid swearwords, this one translated as such from the Russian by Herbert Marshall in his compendium of Mayakovsky's works entitled *Mayakovsky.*

Conrad, and they are full of violent declamations – "fight", "demolish", "down with" – representing a cry for the destruction of the old guard and its replacement with a new culture (or in this case no 'culture' as we know it, at all).[211]

Another Underground Violinist who engaged in similar actions, at the same time but on a different continent, was Takehisa Kosugi. As a member of Group Ongaku, Hi-Red Centre and other groups, Kosugi took part in infamous happenings such as 'Dinner Party on the Anniversary of the Defeat of World War II' which caused a massive stir in the post-war conservative, newly Americanised Japan, by simply highlighting Japan's defeat in a war everyone was keen to pretend never happened.[212] All of these Japanese action groups held connections to Fluxus, and all of them embraced a similar Dada-inspired, Anarchic, Futurist and Socialistic worldview and agenda.

Similarly in Germany, classically-trained "free-jazz"[213] violinist Chris Karrer, as a member of the infamous Amon Düül commune in Munich, created a Futurist vision of a world in space with Amon Düül II, and like the Japanese, the German legacy of fascism gave them good reason to look, often violently, to the future. Amon Düül's infamy came largely from a couple of former members, Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader, and their violent terrorist rampage through Europe that ended in many deaths and eventual suicide all in the name of the infamous Red Army Faction, and of a new society. Amon Düül II's music looked to space and to science fiction for inspiration, as had Flynt's, and undoubtedly Kosugi's (who worked as a composer for the hit Japanese sci-fi cartoon *Astro Boy*). Science-fiction's obvious Futurist links need not be proven further here, and the drive for new technology and new horizons that so often occupies the pages of science-fiction novels is echoed in the Underground Violinist's embrace of technology and yearning for new and original sounds.

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[211] Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*., 189-195.

[212] Julian Cope, *Japrocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'N' Roll* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007)., 53.

[213] Julian Cope, *Krautrocksampler: One Head's Guide to the Great Kosmiche Music - 1968 Onwards* (United Kingdom: Head Heritage, 1995)., 60.

Technology and electricity in the way that it was brought to the violin, in the 1960s by Underground Violinists, opened the instrument to one essential Futurist element: noise. Strange and unpredictable sounds could be brought forth from the violin through the magnifying glass of pick-ups and microphones, and the signal these magnifying glasses produced could be altered by stomp-boxes, amplifier-settings and synthesisers. Science-fiction indeed found its way into violin performance and in the case of Amon Düül II and British space rockers Hawkwind, even became an obsession and a utopia from the increasingly dystopian failings of flower-power and the hippy movement. Utilising echo effects, wah-wah pedals and other psychedelic musical tools, Hawkwind's Simon House could use his violin to take the music into outer space and beyond. Karrer had a similar approach to his violin and both groups used the technology at their disposal to create truly cosmic and utopian music that was equally a transcendence, and a fist in the face of, the establishment. These strange noises and effects have a precedent in the musical instruments experimented with by the Futurists, and the Italians in particular.

Marinetti's Futurist colleague Luigi Russolo famously invented strange instruments to invoke the sounds of the Futurist metropolis that he called *intonarumori*. These devices created noise, and this noise was added to music in several startling compositions for *intonarumori* and orchestra. John Cage took this embracing of noise even further by making atmospheric and incidental noise the performance itself in his *4'33".* Underground Violinists, just as Russolo and Cage had done before them, embrace noise and none more so than Tony Conrad. Noise is an integral part of his practice, and his violin has since influenced an entire genre of music by the same name, that continues to evolve side-by-side with Conrad himself.

The Underground Violinist must radically embrace these elements of Futurism in order to create fresh and vital music. For too long the violin has been an instrument of aristocratic beauty, or of paternalistically protected folk traditions. It is a living tradition that must look to the future in order to free itself of the past. The violin must be a part of the solution, not the problem, and become an instrument for social change by embracing these Futurist elements in both a metaphoric and literal sense. Let it be said that Nam Jun Paik said more about the world

smashing a violin in his *Violin Concerto* than Jascha Heifetz (famous American World War Two-era concert violinist) ever did with his brilliant technique! The simple act of deconstruction or destruction can say a lot to a society obsessed with progress at the expense of progressiveness. When not destroying a violin the Underground Violinist can make a similar statement through modification; through the radical embrace of technology. The great altar of the immaculate Stradivari need not dominate any further. What sounds 'better' is subjective. Is not a scream as effective as a dulcet tone? If the Underground Violinist so chooses, they may remove varnish, file down the bridge, add extra strings, place microphones on, and plug into all manner of things, the immaculate altar of the violin and recast it anew. Through the imagery of violence, the embracing of technology and science, and the fearless rebellion of youthful experimentation (and this can be embraced at any age) the Underground Violinist resembles the Futurist, and the better they are for it.

Underground Violinists must embrace <u>electricity</u>.

As stated above, technology must be embraced by the Underground Violinist. The Underground Violinist should enhance their technique with the technological weapons that are available to them. If there are devices that are not available the Underground Violinist can seek other means of sound manipulation through building their own electrified instruments, amplifiers and modifications. Amplification is absolutely integral to the practice of Underground Violinists as electricity and humanity are inseparable. The unity of man and machine is an important symbol for the Underground Violinist (evidence of this can be found most brazenly in the Tony Conrad and Faust piece 'From the Side of the Machine' [1972]). The violin itself is a machine: to extend it with modifications and amplification is to embrace a vision for the future that is now becoming a reality, the unity of humankind and technology. The technological utopia yearned for by the Underground Violinists of the 1960s and 70s could be easily expressed through the magnifying effect of the *piezo* pick-up and blasted back out in an

unrecognisable form through synthesisers and analogue FX pedals. Furthermore, the distorting effects made available through amplification aids in the aforementioned agitation, for the unique signal that the violin creates can cause as much discomfort as pleasure in the listener when placed under the microscope of the amplifier. While not an element that must always be used by the Underground Violinist in all of their work, electricity is indispensible and it must be used as an extension of technique – a purposeful and overdriven assertion of their ideas and personal expressions.

Underground Violinists are Acognitive Realists.

The Socialist Realists of Communist societies favoured diversity over formalism, and so do Underground Violinists. In 1932, Alexander Fadeyev wrote: "according to the Marxist-Leninist view, the true realism of art is creative work which comes as close to historic truth as possible, and is able to represent the trends indicating the real lines of development in the struggle waged against outdated forces".[214]

Historic truth is at the absolute core of Conrad and Flynt's work. In particular, Conrad's project has been a lifelong search for truth, a kind of yearning for historical justice to be served. Conrad explores the idea that history should have gone a different way and that, had the more interesting trends in violin performance of the Seventeenth Century been perpetuated then many of the systems of control inherent in Western music may have never been. Furthermore, Conrad seeks justice in just intonation, as should all Underground Violinists, using it to negate the imperialist power structures inherent in the Western classical violin canon. Equal temperament represents the imposition of power on something which should ultimately remain free: sound. This imposition is as a cultural bi-product of the Western notions of efficiency and order that is inherent too in our class systems and corporate hierarchies. In this sense Flynt has used non-

[214] Cultural Theory Panel attached to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, "Of Socialist Realism," in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972)., 241.

Western approaches to instrumental practice in order to express class struggle, and indeed all Underground Violinists should be conscious of the social dimensions of their work and actively criticise, through their practice, the power structures that govern and shape it. Flynt seeks justice for the working classes in his music by embracing street-level popular music, ethnic music and vernacular styles. For him, as for all Underground Violinists, the truth lies in the hands of the people and not in the hands of the Culture Industry taste-makers.

As artists with backgrounds in mathematics, both Flynt and Conrad aim to take the myth out of mathematics, removing its abstract constructs and their false interpretation of reality. Underground Violinists reject cognition and mathematical logic and reflect reality as it is, in the present, through their works. Through the search for truth and justice against the status quo of myth and positivism, the Underground Violinist deconstructs and critiques cognition to get to an expression that reflects reality and real experience. Furthermore, as part of this cognitive deconstruction, the Underground Violinist aims for an autochthonic (self-taught, autodidact) practice that breaks free of logical progression (working hard piece by piece to have an excellent technique for instance) and holds dear a form of autodidactic progression. The Underground Violinist must gather their influences and, in a sense, *brend* their way to a new form of expression. The Underground Violinist should take more from reality and real-life experience than from the isolation of the practice room. This will enhance their practice and should be approached with Flynt's concept of Acognitive Culture in mind – it should be born from pure experimentation and recreation, and not as 'work' in the Capitalist sense (labour in exchange for social and financial acceptance and remuneration).

While making a living from Underground Violin practise is desirable it should not be the driving force of the Underground Violinist's work. Indeed desire, in the Capitalist and materialist sense of wanting what one does not have at the expense of others, is anathema to the Underground Violinist. The Underground Violinist should take inspiration from the very real experience that can be gleaned from the ascetic life. As a *sadhu* Pandit Pran Nath owned everything and nothing, travelling the streets of Hindustan with only his shirt on his back and an

otherworldly voice. In Japan, the underground youth took the hippy movement to extremes with the advent of the *futen*, inspired by a cartoon character that lived a humble life on the streets. The *futen* scene gave birth to some of Japan's most radical underground musicians. The Beats and their *On the Road* lifestyles too should be an influence, as the act of seeking experience should always fuel the Underground Violinist's taste for expressing the truth and the real. Perhaps most important are those artists in the deep underground of major Western cities who chose to turn, in the spirit of the Situationist International, the streets, alleys and disused spaces into a utopia, somehow miraculously creating great works in the direst of financial situations. Flynt and Conrad both lived this way in Manhattan for many years and it should be a state that no Underground Violinist should fear.

Work, play, spirituality and ideology, blend together in the practise of Underground Violinists. This *brend* should not be used only as a tool for introspection, but as a way to find reality and truth in sound by first embracing a just, ethical and autochthonic culture and way of life. Through cognitive nihilism the Underground Violinist is able to become a voice of reality through creating sounds that call into question the validity of the processes we normally attribute to making art or music. An Acognitive Culture is the ultimate goal of the Underground Violinist, and an anti-formalist diversity borrowed from Socialist Realism (the ideal and not the unfortunate historical reality that suggests most Socialist Realist work ends up being diluted through a sea of party bureaucracy and censorship) is a healthy channel through which to funnel the music of this new culture.

Too long has the violinist been the slave of form and formality – both in terms of the overbearing prominence of the Sonata and Concerto, and through the stifling demands of the Western concert hall respectively – and only through the emancipation brought about by an intuitive, street-level practise can the Underground Violinist truly become liberated. Through breaking with form, embracing the diversity of reality and critiquing fundamental ideals of cognition and experience, the Underground Violinist becomes an Acognitive Realist.

Underground Violinists can NOT be genre/market musicians. Their techniques must embrace and reflect the Diversity of reality and NOT the Hegemony of tradition.

Perhaps ironically, this manifesto, in its guise as part of a PhD thesis at a major Australian tertiary institution places it in direct opposition to one element of Underground Violin performance, its inherent anti-establishmentarianism. Underground Violinists must perform in a way that defies pre-determined genre specifications as are so often created by academics, and worse still by corporations, for the sake of ease of comprehension and consumption. Genres create pockets where institutionalisation can creep in and ultimately corrupt. This manifesto does not seek to create a precedent with which to institutionalise Underground Violin performance practice, it rather simply seeks to create a part of a platform from which all violinists can begin to break free of the chains of market-driven art.

It is but a suggestion, and the very nature of Underground Violin performance makes it far too amorphous a concept to ever properly be caged in the genre-definition construct. As a radical practice, Underground Violin performance can both be firmly derived from its roots and represent a direct and decisive break from the tradition that these roots represent. Flynt is a perfect example of this, as his music was an extension of his own native roots music, but through embracing a heterogeneous outlook and broadening his musical influences his music ultimately broke from these roots and sprouted roots of its own. Indeed it is hard to ignore the heterogeneous nature of Flynt's native music, since the numerous roots of American folk music make it difficult to define as a single genre in the first place. Similarly Conrad has strong roots in Western European art music, citing seventeenth-century violin music as a major influence on his work; however, these roots are intertwined with a love of noisy modern technology and a complete rejection of Pythagorean harmonic theory. Once again a deeply heterogeneous practice is born.

In their article 'Of Socialist Realism' (1965), the Cultural Theory Panel attached to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party quoted this from one of their

1962 articles: … the canonization of certain genres, forms and attitudes, artistic processes and modes is alien to socialist realism. Socialist realism is characterised by diversity.[215]

While committing oneself to the outdated style of Socialist Realism is hardly the aim of the Underground Violinist, such a quote is useful in outlining an important element of one of the most radical artistic approaches during the 1960s, diversity. If Socialist Realism embraces diversity and therefore heterogeneity, then the Underground Violinist certainly practices an art not far removed from the Socialist agenda. Indeed, Flynt was very much a Socialist and would no doubt still declare himself in allegiance with many of its tenets. Conrad, too, embraces a revolutionary approach to art defined by an interest in radical democracy, utopianism and community activism. The Underground Violinist cannot be defined by genre, because their practice embraces diversity in the same way that Socialist Realism embraces diversity, as a reflection of a diverse, heterogeneous, international community.

Underground Violinists embrace DIY methods of production and presentation where necessary.

The DIY or Do-It-Yourself ethic of the underground is crucial to the artistic practice of the truly radicalised Underground Violinist. Whether it is for the purpose of recording or for live performance, the guerrilla tactics of DIY presentation are needed when one's work sits in such opposition to the status quo. As explored earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2), underground musicians in New York City utilised unconventional spaces such as lofts and galleries as places to perform and present recordings to the public. In New York City community arts hubs began to spring up out of this scene and venues such as The Kitchen, which still exists today, served as the sites where new recordings by Henry Flynt and projects such as Tony Conrad's *Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain* were aired or performed live. These artist-run community spaces are centres for the development of new artistic ideas all over the Western world with the Zodiac

[215] Ibid., 241.

Café in Munich serving a similar purpose to The Kitchen for groups like Amon Düül II in West Germany during the 1960s and 70s. Zodiac was a psychedelic free-zone where local and visiting musicians and artists could get together, get high and make cutting-edge music for hours on end. Japanese Underground Violinists didn't have such well-known hubs to present their work in, so the underground took its music to the streets, to galleries and to the wild outdoor festivals that seemed to happen monthly throughout the 1970s. Taj Mahal Travellers were regulars on the Japanese free festival circuit when they weren't too busy playing performances to forests, or to the ocean, even using pieces of the environment around them as instruments. British Underground Violinists such as Simon House had a similar experience, with the wild anarchic festival circuit in the UK being the way of life for Hawkwind even to this day. Such an attitude to performance is an integral part of the Underground Violinist's practice; without it they may not have the opportunity to present their work. More importantly, it challenges the accepted ideas of where violin performance should be presented. The stuffy confines of the Capitalist culture halls are no place for the Underground Violinist.

DIY recording methods are also highly important to the Underground Violinist. As will be extended upon in the next declamation, the Underground Violinist embraced the new recording technologies made available to them. In the 1960s and 70s Conrad, Flynt and Kosugi all committed large volumes of work to tape, some of which presumably have not been released yet to the public. This method of production is in part necessity and in part convenient. For Conrad and Flynt it was simply the norm in their milieu to hang out, play and make recordings in one's loft. These recordings were then shared around, played to visitors or at parties, played to audiences at gigs, in political lectures, as soundtracks to underground films or pressed into flexi-discs and sold accompanying underground magazines such as La Monte Young's *Anthology*, George Maciunas's *Fluxus* or other radical publications such as *The Situationist Times.* For Kosugi recording was easy and convenient, as his work composing the electronic soundtrack to *Atom Boy* gave him access to a wide variety of cutting edge recording equipment and synthesisers and other electronic devices. Furthermore, the rush to record truly Japanese

new sounds, and the visionary leadership of record label men like, Polydor boss, Ikuzo Orita, meant that figures with ideas as 'far out' as Kosugi could record their music and have it published widely on vinyl LPs via major record labels such as Sony/CBS.[216] During this period artists such as Kosugi had absolute freedom in the studio and a very hands-on approach to recording their works, which would most likely not be possible today.

The DIY approach is integral to the Underground Violinist's creative freedom. With minimal outside input the Underground Violinist's vision can be distilled onto the recorded medium and presented untainted by market restrictions and expectations. This too can be said for DIY performances where audiences often paid nothing to attend, and the event was more about the experience of sharing sound and ideas than paying bills and promoting goods. The Underground Violinist must embody this community spirit and *freedom*. To reach this, DIY is the only way.

Underground Violinists must ultimately use their music as a weapon against 'moribund capitalism', a radical subversion of the descendents of Imperialism.

"Moribund capitalism – that is how Lenin described imperialism."[217]

-Ernst Fischer

The Underground economy of DIY recordings and performances ultimately negates capitalism and empowers the musicians to live beyond the legacy of imperialism. Historically, those inhabiting the Underground have been labelled 'drop-outs' and it is true that the Radical Underground Violinist must drop out from the apathy of consumerist culture and embrace a practice that addresses the community and environment in a positive and ethical fashion.

[216] Cope, *Japrocksampler*., 200 – 201.

[217] Ernst Fischer, "Symposium on the Question of Decadence," in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972)., 231.

Those Underground Violinists for whom a more widespread distribution of work was enabled during the 1960s and 70s were also part of a milieu that emphasised the exchange of ideas through the recorded medium over any financial aspirations. Hawkwind are still renowned for their collective lack of regard for the business side of the music industry, and a group as anarchic and politically extreme as Amon Düül II can hardly be accused of pandering to the teenybopper market.

For the Underground Violinist the recording is a sonic piece of utopia, a simple and newly-available device for documentation, and for some a tool for agitprop. For the Underground Violinist who is truly radicalised, a recording forms the perfect platform to attempt to distribute the idea of a new society and to agitate – in both a literal and intellectual sense – the listener. For Flynt and Conrad agitation is an obvious part of their work. For Kosugi who made recordings playing to the sea or to fishermen working on their nets as a member of Taj Mahal Travellers[218], the agitation is more passive but the ecological and political themes that such actions present are just as obvious. The brazen agitprop of the Krautrockers and Hawkwind is the stuff of legend with various performances involving all manner of provocative and illegal behaviour. Ultimately, through the medium of performance and recording, the Underground Violinist must call into question the validity of authority and the systems of control that insidiously give it its power. The means of production are different for each Underground Violinist but the goal is the same for all: producing a PRODUCT is of no interest. Underground Violinists are in opposition to what Marx called "commodity fetishism".[219] They ultimately use their music as a weapon against 'moribund capitalism', a radical subversion of Imperialism and the hegemony of Capitalism.

[218] Taj Mahal Travellers, "Taj Mahal Travellers on Tour 1972," (YouTube, 1972).

[219] Meredith Tax, "Introductory: Culture Is Not Neutral, Whom Does It Serve?," in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts*, ed. Lee Baxandall (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972)., 23.

Concluding Statement of the Manifesto of the Revolutionary Radical Underground Violinist

The Radical Underground Violinist must use their instrument as a weapon against hegemony. They must use their instrument as a weapon against oppression and complacency. The Radical Underground Violinist must embrace "science, elegance and violence"[220] and take their sounds to and from the streets. They must stand tall on their own two feet and use their practice as an expression of insubordination to the established power structures and their corrupt systems. The Radical Underground Violinist must then subvert the traditions and norms of their own traditions as a reflection of a desire to subvert all staid and crooked traditions. They oppose homogeneity and embrace heterogeneity and a love of diversity in life as well as practice.

The Radical Underground Violinist must haunt the Capitalist hierarchy as a living spectre of Marx, holding them to account through a musical critique of their unacceptable crimes and haunting the hegemony of their dominant Western Imperialist culture. Radical Underground Violinists are harbingers of the electric revolution in instrumental practice, making use of electricity as a microscope held up against the raw capabilities of the violin for creating unique and powerful sound.

[220] Mask, "Black Mask & up against the Wall Motherfuckers: Flower Power Won't Stop Fascist Power - the Story of a Small, Underground 1960s Revolutionary Group in New York City.", 2.

The Radical Underground Violinist must eschew logic and embrace cognitive nihilism, pairing it to a streetwise realism based in true lived experience and reminiscent of the theory of Socialist Realism, thus becoming Acognitive Realists. The true Revolutionary Radical Underground Violinist embraces DIY means of production and presentation in the face of corporate apathy, ultimately subverting the Capitalist means of production and becoming a fist in the face of moribund capitalism. In the bristling words of Henry Flynt:

THE FIRST CULTURAL TASK IS PUBLICLY

TO EXPOSE AND FIGHT THE

DOMINATION OF WHITE, EUROPEAN-U.S.

RULING CLASS ART![221]

Radical Underground Violinists of the world, stand up, take your instruments and your intellects and help build a culture in opposition to the powers that are degrading our disadvantaged fellow humans and making our planet uninhabitable!

Key Recordings by Underground Violinists:

This section provides a guide to key recordings by Underground Violinists:

- Takehisa Kosugi, *Catch Wave*, Sony/CBS (1975)
- Takehisa Kosugi/Michael Ranta/Toshi Ichiyanagi, *Improvisation Sep. 1975,* Iskra Records (1975)
- Tony Conrad, *Outside the Dream Syndicate*, Caroline (1973)

[221] Flynt, "Action against Cultural Imperialism."

- Henry Flynt, *You Are My Everlovin'/Celestial Power (psychedelic version),* (1980, Reissued on CD by Locust Records, 2001)
- Henry Flynt, *Nova'Billy,* Locust Records (1974, Released 2004)
- Taj Mahal Travellers, *Live Stockholm, July 1971*, Drone Syndicate (United States: 2000)
- Taj Mahal Travellers, *August 1974*, Nippon Columbia (1975, reissued by P-Vine Records in 2001)
- Taj Mahal Travellers, *July 15, 1972,* CBS Japan (1972)
- Group Ongaku, *Music of Group Ongaku*, Hear Sound Art Library (Japan: 1996)
- Hawkwind, *Doremi Fasol Latido,* United Artists Records (United Kingdom: 1972)
- Hawkwind, *Hall of the Mountain Grill*, United Artists Records (United Kingdom: 1974)
- High Tide, *Sea Shanties,* Liberty/United Artists (United Kingdom: 1969)
- Amon Düül II, *Phallus Dei,* Liberty (Germany: 1969)
- Amon Düül II, *Yeti*, Liberty (Germany: 1970)

Chapter 7: Conclusion - The Underground Violinist as the Radical Violinist: The End is Just the Beginning

This thesis set out to answer the question: in what ways do the performance practices of underground violinists during the 1960s and 70s in New York City – and to a lesser extent those underground violinists present in other scenes throughout the world – reflect the revolutionary ideals and philosophies of their creators, and do these practices thereby liberate the violin from established traditions and norms? Furthermore – and as a direct result of attempting to answer this question – this thesis proposed a new and radical way for violinists to approach their practice in a way that is relevant to the challenges of the Twenty-First Century. From Underground Violinists we have seen the birth of the Radical Violinist and a future for the instrument that challenges all perceived norms and traditions. Despite the unconventional nature of many of its paths of enquiry and the methods in which I approached them, the thesis has ultimately resulted in a triangulation of sorts – an oddly traditional way to tackle such an anti-traditional topic. Through the intersection of musical analysis, discourse analysis and critical theory, this thesis has answered these questions, and addressed the challenge of proposing a new approach to violin performance practice.

Each chapter of this thesis has attempted to address the work of individual musicians in light of their own ideals and practices, and in light of the work of their contemporaries and their specific milieu. Firstly, it was important to address the very concept of 'underground' itself, and how this concept has been approached in the already established discourse on underground culture. After taking a brief respite to discuss methodology, it was then necessary to paint a picture of the underground of the 1960s and 1970s, its precedents and its antecedents, with a specific focus on the scene in Manhattan. This established a core sociological basis for the analysis of the works of two of Manhattan's underground violinists, Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt, utilising a modified form of Jost's Style Portrait method that so effectively paints the picture of the musician as a living entity amongst a community of other living, breathing,

creating beings. It is important to note that at no point was this thesis intended to be a comparative study, and I took painstaking measures to make it clear that, while these artist's works are full of parallels, their individual ideas are unique, and that this uniqueness is integral to the very core of underground violin performance practices. From this base of largely new and unexplored analyses, I proposed, via the suitably revolutionary platform of the manifesto, a new radicalised and socially conscious approach to violin performance: Radical Violin Performance Practice. It is hoped that the ideas outlined in this manifesto will serve as a tool for interested musicians to carve their own revolutionary paths in the pages of history. While this thesis is now drawing to an end, it is important to outline a loose lineage from the heyday of underground violinists to the current era of radical violinists in order to prove that these practices are not simply another retro rehashing of old ideas, but rather a part of a living culture that continues to evolve What follows is a kind of chapter within a chapter, firstly declaring the death of the underground violinist and their rebirth as the radical violinist before exploring my own experiences as a performer in this vein, and how it is I came to write this work.

The Underground Violinist Becomes the Radical Violinist

Through radicalisation, resistance, diversity, subversion, hauntology and socialism, a futurist view, a transcendence of the market and ultimately a truly individual approach to practice, the radical underground violinist laid a firm ground for a new way to approach the instrument. As the final decades of the twentieth century rolled on the world changed and so did the definition and boundaries of the underground. For the underground violinists of the 1960s and 70s the means of production and presentation were limited by the financial expense of self-producing music, and by the lack of networks for distributing underground music. It was still crucial for the underground violinist to establish a relationship with a record label in order to have their work published. For Henry Flynt this resulted in his work not being published in any sort of widely available format until the early 2000s. For Tony Conrad this meant that his only

published recording until the early 1990s was his work with Faust for Carolina records. After the musical year zero of 1977 and the Post-Punk revolution of DIY album releases and small independent record labels it became easier for underground musicians to produce and distribute their work. From here endless variants of musical styles and subcultures morphed and mutated and underground violinists such as the Manhattan No-Wave entity Boris Policeband – a mysterious individual who used to perform Ramones-inspired solo electric violin miniatures accompanied by static announcements from a police CB radio scanner – began to publish work, on their own, or through other small independent labels.

The 1980s were a quiet time for the underground violinists, with Conrad producing very little music publicly and Henry Flynt ending his work for violin in 1984. Other underground violinists continued to work more visibly than in the past, however, with Simon House touring the world in David Bowie's band and producing strange trance records, while Kosugi continued to prolifically record with various musicians and compose music for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in New York. Chris Karrer and Amon Düül II also continued into the 1980s but to less and less success and with less and less violin. The violin made its presence known in the British Industrial music underground at this time with artists such as Throbbing Gristle featuring the heavily treated, Conrad-inspired violin of Genesis P-Orridge.[222] Industrial music then spawned the Neo-Folk movement, which consisted of bands obsessed with romantic and neo-classical sounds and thus featuring violinists and other classical and folk instruments. Many of these musicians toured constantly and reached a level of success that transcended previous notions of the underground and what it means to be underground. However, the radical element remained undiluted, and therefore it is more appropriate to call these later-era underground violinists, 'radical violinists' and eschew the term 'underground violinist' altogether.

[222] Indeed in recent years Conrad and P-Orridge have even collaborated on several occasions, culminating in an album entitled *Taking Issue.* Tony/Genesis Breyer P-Orridge Conrad, Taking Issue (United States: Dais Records, 2009), Vinyl LP.

A brief overview of the underground movements of radical violinists during the 1980s is required here in order to outline their significant links to the underground violinists of the 1960s, and in order to display the continuing relevance of subversive violin practice during the last thirty years of musical upheaval and change. In the wake of punk, many musicians ensconced in the world of avant-garde and improvisatory music seemed to embrace the DIY ethic more than ever. One such musician is the arguably radical, Alabama-based violinist LaDonna Smith. In the mid-1970s she, along with guitarist Davey Williams, formed Transmuseq and its label home Transmuseq Records. Much of Smith's work of this period and into the 1980s falls more into the free jazz/free improvisatory territory of the extended techniques world, but there are moments of pure radical violin bliss in her demented electric No Wave-styled violin contortions. Smith represents a continuation of the DIY ethic in violin practice, and a radical love of noise that continues to be a part of her work to the present day.

Another 80s radical violinist, Laurie Anderson, is best known for her 1984 hit *O' Superman*, however she is also known for her radical innovations in technology, and in particular her mutations of the violin. Using magnetic tape, instead of horsehair on her bow, she created strange MIDI soundscapes utilising the cutting edge computer technology of the time, and she continues to do so today. Anderson brought further elegance and science to the futurist pallet of radical violin performance and, as an example of one of her many links to Manhattan underground violinists, is now married to one of the Velvet Underground, Lou Reed.

In Australia the radical violinist Jon Rose brought a rebellious punk cry to his instrument, playing all manner of unique and strange sounds, in various ensembles, and with his well-known violin-based handmade instruments and other violin-like discoveries. Rose continues to create new and stunning sounds including his works for bowed fences, catalogued and recorded during his travels around Australia's outback with his partner Hollis Taylor, together bowing the giant fences that span thousands of kilometres throughout the red centre of this country. Taylor is another example of the radical violinist of the 1980s, extending the vernacular language of the United States in a way similar to Flynt, and exploring Eastern-

European concepts of rhythm and structure in her *Unsquare Dances*. Taylor also has a long history exploring alternative tunings, winning prestigious awards for her *Trail Mixes for Five Scordatura Violins.* In recent years she has focussed on the songs of birds, and in particular the distinctive call of the Australian pied butcherbird, bringing a crucial and timely link from the suffering environment to her practice as a violinist. I was able to study briefly with Taylor, and the ideas she gave me in a series of all-too-brief lessons and workshops in 2004 gave me much to ponder on. Such an experience was almost certainly a corrupting step, encouraging my inevitable drift away from traditional practices. My own practice will be explored in more detail, following an overview of the radical violinists who came to the fore during the period in which I underwent my initial musical training and first became aware of underground music: the 1990s.

During the 1990s, or what I'll dub the era of 'alternative' music – which in effect was the era in which I became consciously aware of popular music – the violin seemed like a very uncool thing to play. The devastating beauty of John Cale's viola on Velvet Underground and Stooges records, now considered classics, was still overlooked as bands like My Bloody Valentine and Spiritualized attempted to reproduce the drone with guitars instead of strings. There was one band in particular that was the polar opposite of this however, and that was Australia's Dirty Three. In the mid-1990s, the Dirty Three were at their peak, I was in high school and unfortunately unaware of their existence; however, they have since become a crucial influence on my practice as a violinist. The wild and extraordinarily creative Melbourne scene of the 1980s and early 90s had given birth to them, and their distinctive blend of violin, guitar and drums-based rock famously drew the attention of Nick Cave, who enlisted violinist Warren Ellis to his Bad Seeds band and helped make the Dirty Three internationally renowned.

The violin playing of Warren Ellis is undoubtedly radical on several levels. While the Dirty Three's music does not contain any overt political references, the anarchic freedom inherent in Ellis's practice speaks for itself. His practice is informed by the post-punk raucousness of the drug-fuelled Melbourne music scene of the 1980s, and while now a

consummate performer and showman, earlier performances suggest a kind of wilful abandon more in line with the punk aesthetic than anything else. His performances have been known to involve entire audiences sobbing from his soulful phrases, to violent outbursts ending in broken amps and even bloodshed.[223]

However, perhaps the most radical thing about Ellis's practice is his success. While not a mainstream figure by any stretch of the imagination, he is well known and respected amongst die-hard music fans the world over, and it is hard to find an independent music fan in Australia that hasn't heard of him. The simple fact that a rock band that is often free-form and led, not by a vocalist, or even a guitarist, but a violinist is singular in this current era, and therefore thoroughly subversive. Furthermore Ellis fits very much into Australia's proud history of working class subversive artists. Hailing from Ballarat – the Victorian town in which Australia's most famous revolutionary uprising, the Eureka Stockade, occurred during the gold rushes of the late 1800s – he displays the same sort of dishevelled honesty that reminds one of well-known rebels like Bon Scott, Paul Kelly or Archie Roach.

Ellis's violin shares some similarity to that of the underground violinists, often resting on prolonged drones, tonally (although perhaps accidentally so) ambiguous, and full of glissandi and scatter-shot bowstrokes. It is unknown to me whether Ellis is aware of Conrad, Flynt or Kosugi, but he almost certainly is aware of Cale, thus linking the time-travelling tendrils of the Manhattan underground to the Melbourne underground of the 1990s, and more recently, the Sydney Opera House.

Other cultural situations made for different variations in the radical violinist's spectral appearance throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s. In the United Kingdom, for instance, and indeed in the EU in general, radical violinists developed ideologies that are at odds – yet oddly similar in many respects – with their underground forebears. English violinist Matt Howden is the perfect example of a new underground ideology that is mostly associated with the Industrial,

[223] The Dirty Three's music speaks for itself. See the Discography (pg. 181) for recommended Dirty Three recordings.

Neo-Folk, Gothic and Black Metal sub-cultures that emerged to some prominence in the 1990s, Heathenism and/or Paganism. The Heathen and Pagan scenes are a complex sea of contradictory camps that sit way beyond the scope of this thesis, but they roughly range from extreme right-wing revolutionaries hell-bent on the dominance of the white race, to characters like Howden who believe in a radical link to nature and to European soil that is not based in race politics, but rather based in extreme environmentalism and a sentimental longing for post (or perhaps pre)-industrial Europe. Indeed neo-folk music is often also called 'post-industrial' or 'apocalyptic folk' music, suggesting that it would be the music made by the survivors of mankind's own self-destruction.

There is much in common with Howden's violin playing and that of the underground violinists. It is minimal, trance-inducing, and is based around loops (digital rather than tape). Howden also embraces multimedia elements in his performances, working with filmmakers and using lighting and projections to enhance his solo appearances. With the new technologies afforded by digital loop stations and effects pedals Howden is able to create washes of symphonic violin and percussion – all created by tapping on the body of the violin and even rubbing his stubble-covered chin on the bridge – over which he sings deeply Romantic lyrics devoted to nature, the Goddess and the occult. Tattooed prominently on his left forearm – which faces the audience as he plays his violin – is a sequence of runes making a tree-like shape, a clear statement of his radical interest in Europe's pre-Christian roots. Neo-folk musicians are also generally fiercely DIY, and Howden is no exception. He produces and sells all of his own works via his website, touring regularly and ostensibly making a decent living out of his work in the process.[224] This way of connecting with his fans as consumers fits in well with his radical ideals, as Neo-Folk artists' work is produced and distributed in a fashion not dissimilar to the Slow Food movement, encouraging customers to buy locally made products by producers who proudly display their indigenous origins right down to the very region from which they hail. As a Sheffield man, Howden's work as Sieben (his primary solo project) is full of references to this

[224] TheNetineti, "Niezła Kiecka - Sieben [Matt Howden]," (YouTube, 2009).

specific geographical place, the hearth and home so important to Heathen and Pagan ideology.[225]

This love of one's own land can evoke a variety of taboo images in the Western listener and I needn't explain the reasons why here. There is little more subversive in the twenty-first century than a love of folk and a romantic attachment to soil. This is not to be mistaken with patriotism or nationalism, but more a kind of tribalism based in distant divisions of land and culture long shattered by successive wars and imperialist expansion. At a time where corporate greed fuels the death of cultures, ecologies and even entire species, it is perhaps no surprise that artists and musicians in the underground are embracing ever more extreme ideologies with which to haunt the current capitalist hegemony. Therefore it is no shock to find another radical violinist lurking in the depths of the Heathen underground, Meri Tadic. Tadic, who performs under the pseudonym *Irij*, walks a similar path to that of Howden. Indeed these musicians both perform at the same festivals and their work is sold from the same shops and mail orders, and often distributed through the same small independent record labels. Tadic also performs as part of the highly successful Pagan Metal band Eluveitie, playing violin and singing epic and operatic vocals. In the confines of Eluveitie she creates violin parts that work as part of the traditional element crucial to Pagan Metal, playing largely upbeat lines of stereotypical Celtic fiddling. As Irij she creates something far more radical. Her work in this guise is a Flyntian extension of the music of her native region, the Balkans. While Eluveitie represents the kind of Pan-Europeanism that has more in common with the Eurovision song contest than anything else, Irij involves minimalist vignettes of an ideal of home, of an idea of culture that is personal and thoroughly subversive.[226] To feel a link to the land, to nature and to strongly feminine and matriarchal symbolism is deeply radical and linked to the roots element of the word itself.

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[225] Matt/Sieben Howden, *High Broad Field* (EU: Iceflower/Trisol, 2006), Compact Disc. This album is largely inspired by the landscape surrounding a village in an area of moorland just outside Sheffield called High Bradfield.

[226] Irij/Meri Tadic, *Irij* (EU: Ahnstern, 2009), Compact Disc.

Heathen radical violinists like Howden and Tadic are European roots radicals who, like the Krautrockers before them, seek out a new/old musical style free of Americanisation and corporate globalisation. Like Flynt they seek an autochthonous expression of a specific culture, class and people that is not necessarily swathed in tradition, but rather a radical departure from it, by pushing its symbols and nuances into something other. Like Conrad, their music represents an alternative history of European culture, one before capitalism, and the systems of power that created it, removed a healthy diversity and replaced it with a marketable and controllable homogeneity. The ideals of heathen radical violinists are not those of the vulgar nationalism often fallen into by elements of their sub-culture, but of a lost diversity in Europe broken down by monotheism, monarchy, ministers of parliament, Murdochs and most importantly, monoculture. My own practice embraces some of these values, while openly courting socialism and a more internationalist stance, and displaying a conscious influence from Flynt and Conrad.

Tony Conrad, who never ceases to produce work year in year out, has received growing interest in his work since the early 1990s and this has led to musicians – myself for instance – picking up the threads of his Early Minimalism and taking it in new directions. The premiere examples of this are those musicians who have worked with Conrad, such as C. Spencer Yeh whose work on the violin is very similar to that of Conrad's. As a member of the noise rock group Burning Star Core, Yeh has brought the violin into even more extreme levels of noise production than ever heard before, and his collaborations with Conrad on albums such as *Musculus Trapezius* (Pica Disk, 2010)[227] show a startling progression of Conrad's idiosyncratic style.

Another artist for whom static, distorted drones in the Conrad vein is important, is Eyvind Kang, a violist who has recently worked with the Drone Metal group, Sunn o))). Kang's arrangements for Sunn o))) and his own solo works display a rich vein of Manhattan

[227] Tony/C.Spencer Yeh/Michael F. Duch Conrad, *Musculus Trapezius* (Oslo: Pica Disk, 2008), Compact Disc.

underground heritage, evoking the open plains of America's west in a way that reaches into the minimalist heritage of La Monte Young and Conrad and brings it forward to the future with his own distinct radical style.

Another violist who derives their style directly from the Conrad anti-tradition is Genevieve Heidek. As a member of the viola and drums duo Hanged Up she has brought the viola into radical new territories while sounding heavily influenced by the underground violinists. Indeed most recently Hanged Up have teamed up with Conrad himself, releasing a collaboration on the subversive Canadian label Constellation[228], known for releases by radical Yiddish groups such as Black Ox Orkestar and Thee Silver Mount Zion, both of whom feature the violin prominently in their arrangements (not to mention the viola work of Heidek herself). There are many more violinists, and other bowed string players, worthy of mention here, however, for the sake of brevity (see the Discography section of this thesis for further recommendations) I will move onto something more personal: my own practice.

My own project, The Scrapes, which consists of myself on the violin and Ryan Potter on guitar, while being seemingly 'out-there' music often stocked in stores in the psychedelic section, has been received by a dramatically diverse group of listeners, therefore making our work an interesting case study for the practices of the contemporary radical violinist. Our work is a perfect example of the increasingly opaque meaning behind the term underground. The Scrapes is a duo of electric guitar and electric violin, there is no drumming, very rare percussion, no beats or vocals, and very few samples. Our fan-base is small and spread out across the globe and we have trouble gathering large audiences and conventional media interest for our performances and album releases, yet our albums have received critical acclaim by underground luminaries and webzines both nationally and internationally. These are signifiers of serious underground credentials. Our work is released via our own label Planet of the Scrapes, or via other small cottage record labels, most recently the San Francisco based All Is

[228] Tony/Hanged Up Conrad, *Transit of Venus* (Montreal: Constellation, 2012), FLAC.

Number Records. Our recording process is entirely DIY and we often make use of unconventional spaces, such as warehouses, for performances and recording sessions. Furthermore we count one of the gurus of the underground as a fan, Julian Cope, whose writings on underground music, *Krautrocksampler* and *Japrocksampler*, have been referenced throughout this thesis. However, we have toured Australia several times with financial support from the Australia Council for the Arts (the Australian Federal Government peak arts funding body) and both of us have tertiary degrees in music. Our music has even been aired on more conservative radio stations such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Classic FM, and on the popular national youth music station (equally conservative at times in my opinion) Triple J. We, in a sense, stand with one foot in the gutter and the other in the academy, Cope once declaring that our music sounded "as though John Cale's The Academy in Peril was the coming rage".[229]

Our outspoken radical political views, and our insistence on breaking with most accepted notions of music business protocol make us outsiders from almost all scenes here in Australia, but our contacts in the cultural establishment have meant we have presented to a diverse audience at government-sponsored events. There are complex cultural reasons for much of this that are specific to Australia, our welfare state and our relatively small and thinly spread cultural institutions being major points, but it is also a product of wider developments. The Internet is of course largely to blame, as it has created new lines of communication between mainstream people and underground people that has never previously existed. A music fan can now have a pop star like Lady Gaga, and an underground degenerate like G.G. Allin stored on the same iPod, all accessed for free on file-sharing sites and eccentrically eclectic music blogs put up by private citizens as a past-time which, in recent years, has turned into something bordering on a profession for some (check out the extraordinary Mutant Sounds[230] blog for a

[229] Julian Cope, "Address Drudion: December 2011ce," *Head Heritage*(2011), http://www.headheritage.co.uk/addressdrudion/149/2012.

[230] Mutant Sounds, "Mutant Sounds," http://mutant-sounds.blogspot.com.

prime example). Cultural lines are blurring, but one thing is for certain, a truly radical stance will always keep one on the margins and away from mainstream attention. This is why my work in The Scrapes fits well as an example of the contemporary radical violinist and therefore worthy of mention here. My underground credentials are compromised by my mainstream professional requirements – as a professional musician performing at functions, weddings and so on – and my need to pay rent and eat in an incredibly expensive society, but my personal ideology and creative output is imbued with subversive, underground and ultimately radical ideals which are reflected in my creative practice.

These radical ideas did not appear from nowhere. They have, in one form or another, been with me since I first became politically aware in my teens, and they have been refined prior to, and during, the process of writing this thesis. I was introduced to the Velvet Underground by a friend who lent me a copy of their post-Cale album *Loaded.*[231] Unfortunately it didn't do much to my Beethoven and Black Metal addled mind and I gave it back to him declaring my dislike of its poppy, saccharine-sweet melodies. Now comprehending that I wanted the hard stuff, my friend lent me his copy of *The Velvet Underground and Nico,* and after a number of listens it sunk in and had a tremendous effect on me. Hearing that album ultimately led to me trying to find out where Cale's strange viola playing came from, eventually leading – via declarations of love and influence from Sunn o)))'s Stephen O'Malley, whose work I've been a fan of for many years – to the discovery of Conrad.

At around the same time (ca 2005), I had become a regular reader of Julian Cope's *Head Heritage* blog, and in particular the treasure trove of obscure album reviews stored in his 'Album of the Month' section. During my retromanic psychedelic searches on Cope's site, I came across an odd album entitled *I Don't Wanna* by Henry Flynt and the Insurrections. As I read the article I learned of Flynt's association with the Velvet Underground and with Tony Conrad, and I learnt furthermore that he too was a violinist. During this period I became aware

[231] The Velvet Underground, *Loaded* (New York: Cotillion, 1970), Vinyl LP.

of Table of the Elements releasing their essential CD collections of home recordings made by John Cale and Tony Conrad and I found them to be extremely inspiring artefacts. Recorded Records, Bo' Weavil Recordings and Locust Records followed by opening the flood-gates on Flynt's voluminous archives of recorded work. From here I dug up all I could of Flynt's and Conrad's work, and my growing obsession with other 1960s and 70s psychedelic artists, such as Hawkwind and Amon Düül II, led me towards the eventual creation of this thesis. My generation's obsession with "Retromania" as Simon Reynolds has recently discussed in his book of the same name[232], has largely led to a rebirth of interest in artists such as Conrad and Flynt.

The Internet is a powerful tool for digging up all manner of knowledge on obscure music, and so many of my generation and the ones that follow, now have at our fingertips the ability to check out any of our favourite artist's recommendations and dig back deep into music's past. I would never have connected so deeply with Conrad or Flynt if it weren't for the online spruiking of their work by musicians I admire such as O'Malley and Cope. The linearity of time created by the Internet has opened a treasure trove for anyone who wants to search hard enough, and has brought much belated recognition to artists such as Conrad and Flynt.

Conrad is now a hip artist, performing at all manner of festivals alongside a diverse number of bands and artists who are often more than half his age. Furthermore, he seems to be producing more work than ever, collaborating with contemporary musicians and artists, and with other underground greats of his vintage, such as Charlemagne Palestine and Japanese noise musician Keiji Heino. Much of this growing interest has been brought about by the burst in popularity, via Sunn o)))'s success, of the Drone Metal scene. Drone Metal artists such as Sunn o))) and the band that most inspired them, Earth, have helped open many a young metal fan's (myself included) ears and minds to the sounds and ideas of La Monte Young, Conrad and other early minimalists. This spruiking of obscure figures by popular artists is part of what Reynolds

[232] Simon Reynolds, *Retromania* (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

describes as the "the rise of the rock curator"[233], a new trend in the twenty-first century propagated by festivals such as All Tomorrow's Parties (ATP). ATP enlists popular artists, such as Nick Cave in Australia's case, to curate their festivals, selecting the artists that inspired and influenced them and inviting them to play alongside contemporary artists. This sort of curatorship has led to the unfortunate modern trend of re-formations by any and every obscure act ever, but it has also led to some long-deserved recognition, by the wider public, of underground artists that have never stopped working and have inspired, and continue to inspire.

This thesis, and my interest in the practices of underground violinists, was in effect born of the times, and while seemingly a strange topic to pursue for a young violinist from the suburbs of Brisbane, Australia, it makes perfect sense when factoring in these broader issues. Indeed there is no sense of retrogression, reformation or recapitulation in looking at the work of any of these radical underground violinists as most of them are still working today, and if they are not still playing their violin then they were so far ahead of their time, like Flynt, that we are only now catching up (or they have sadly passed on). Flynt and Conrad have worked tirelessly in the shadows for decades, and their recordings and writings are indeed a platform for the liberation of violin performance practices – and the practices of any musician or artist for that matter – from the shackles of our collective past. These shackles are bound to us through chains linked together by tradition (primarily Western), capitalism, hegemony and homogeneity. Conrad and Flynt have shown, to we violinists and indeed any musician, a way to subvert the links, thus breaking the chains of an unjust and corrupt set of ideals born from the cruel and parasitic aristocratic traditions of so-called European art music. Conrad has shown us that our ideas of tuning are not necessarily equally-tempered at all, but rather ill-tempered instruments of hegemony, best overridden by the justice of just intonation and a reconnection with the primal drone abandoned by sycophantic court composers four hundred years ago. He, too, has challenged the ideas of ownership at the very core of our modern Western capitalist world,

[233] Ibid., 129

declaring himself a grave keeper at the tomb of composition[234], thus opening a radical door for all violinists to enter if they so dare. Beyond this door the newly radicalised violinist finds a creative freedom unfettered by the illusion of owning sound, something surely as free of ownership as air, and a gateway to a diverse and heterogeneous world of musical practice. Flynt has given us a strange but rewarding world of philosophical ideas, and a treasure-trove of tradition-bending violin music that seems to still require further unveiling in the form of future CD releases from his seemingly voluminous archive of recordings. His, and Conrad's ideas are in many ways inseparable, but Flynt's intense radicalism is unrivalled in the world of violinists. Through his practice we have learned that the violin can be used as a vehicle for protest, and as a voice for the class struggle that still goes on today in an increasingly complex and difficult world. Through their violin practice Flynt, Conrad, and the underground violinists laid the groundwork for the birth of the radical violinist, and we all have much to learn from them: hopefully this thesis has served as the first step toward a new, diverse and subversive practice that builds upon these early foundations.

[234] Tony Conrad has been quoted as saying this about the works of the Theatre of Eternal Music: "This was a total displacement of the composer's role, from progenitor of the sound to gravekeeper at its gravesite." Brian Duguid, "Interview with Tony Conrad,"(1996), http://tonyconrad.net/duguid.htm.

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Appendix 1: Certificate of Ethical Clearance

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This certificate generated on 25-09-2012.

This certificate comfirms that protocol 'NR: Revolutionary Violin: An exploration of violin performance practices in the New York City underground 1960-1968, and its reverberations in today's underground.' (GU Protocol Number QCM/08/10/HREC) has ethical clearance from the Griffith University Human Research Ethics Commitee (HREC) and has been issued with authorisation to be commenced.

The ethical clearance for this protocol runs from 21-05-2010 to 01-03-2012.

The named members of the research team for this protocol are:

Dr Donna Weston

Mr Adam Cadell

Prof Bill Duckworth

The research team has been sent correspondence that lists the standard conditions of ethical clearance that apply to Griffith University protocols.

The HREC is established in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct on Research Involving Humans.* The operation of this Committee is outlined in the HREC Standard Operating Procedure, which is available from www.gu.edu.au/or/ethics.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries about this matter.

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