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Kuo Chia-chen

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## Music and Woolf

"All great writers are great colorists, just as they  
are musicians into the bargain."

Woolf, "Walter Sickert" 199

- 1 Virginia Woolf had an intricate relationship with music. She and her sister Vanessa had some music lessons in their youth: governesses were hired to teach them how to sing and play the piano (Bell 27). Although Virginia could not play any instrument nor professionally comprehend music (Bell 149), music became her lifelong interest. From her diary entries and letters, we know she was a regular concert-goer. She often attended several music performances in a single week, and her short story "The String Quartet" was inspired by the Schubert piano quintet to which she listened in Campden Hill, on March 9, 1920 (Woolf, *Diary* v.2 24). When attending musical performances seemed a distraction to her literary project, gramophone became a suitable substitute. The Woolfs usually listened to it after dinner and Virginia enjoyed the "snatches of divine loveliness" (*Letters* 286) that the music provided. Mozart and Beethoven were two of her favorite composers; Wagner did not win her favor. These composers' names and opuses appear in her works from time to time: Rachel Vinrace plays a Beethoven piano sonata which is assumed to be "unattainable" for women in *The Voyage Out*; a reference to Mozart's opera is utilized to criticize the patriarchal structure of society in *Night and Day*; and Woolf embedded her reprimand against Wagner's anti-Semitism through her account of *Siegfried* in *The Years*.
- 2 Since as early as "Street Music" (1905), "The Opera" (1906), and "Impressions at Bayreuth" (1909), Woolf's writing has dealt with music. In numerous essays, reviews,

diary entries, and letters, Woolf claimed the influence of music on shaping the aesthetics of her prose writing and the importance of the intermediary role that she had to play between music and literature. In a famous letter to Elizabeth Trevelyan, Woolf expresses her excitement that her friend has compared her work *Roger Fry* to music: "Its [*sic*] odd, for I'm not regularly musical, but I always think of my books as music before I write them" (*Letters* 426), and in a letter to Ethel Smyth, Woolf encourages Smyth to write on her own favorite composers just as she would like "to investigate the influence of music on literature" (*Letters* 450). Thus, in "The Narrow Bridge of Art" (1927), Woolf seems to envisage a new form of literature: "It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play" (18), and the writer who wants to compose the new style of fiction must have "the power of music, the stimulus of sight, the effect on us of the shape of trees or the play of color," so that he or she can represent "an extraordinary number of perceptions which have not yet been expressed" (23).

- 3 Yet, despite the seemingly mutually inspirational and flirtatious relation between music and literature, Woolf also found great tension, if not animosity, between them. As a writer aspiring to represent the transience of life through words, Woolf felt pushed by music to acknowledge how circumscribed she felt by words, and how mediated words are in comparison to the instantaneousness of music. In "Impressions at Bayreuth," Woolf admits "the difficulty of changing a musical impression into a literary one" (291). Since the sensation that music transmits is beyond the tether of words, "[w]hen the moment of suspense is over, and the bows actually move across the strings, our definitions are relinquished [*sic*], and words disappear in our minds" (291-92). In other words, since music is wordless, what troubles Woolf in this essay is "her inability to render music adequately by words" (Jacobs 243).
- 4 In this light, bearing in mind Woolf's sometimes delighted and sometimes agonized responses to music, many literary critics<sup>1</sup> have aimed to excavate the musicality inherent in her fiction. To them, *The Waves* (1931) offers a clear analogy between fiction and music. For example, as early as 1992, Robin Gail Schulze, in "Design and Music," argues the parallel relation between *The Waves* and Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone musical structure. In a 2000 essay, Melba Cuddy-Keane describes Woolf's fiction as a Schaefferian and Cagian chorus. And even more recently (2005), Elicia Clements suggests that *The Waves* is a truly Beethovenian symphony. However, most literary critics have confused musicality (a concept) with music (an art form), as Émilie Crapoulet argues, so that *The Waves* seems to be a product influenced by divergent musical composers and by different musical genres at the same time ("Voicing the Music" 80). In Crapoulet's demonstration, musicality in Woolf refers to "a new musical order" (87), and music as an art form shapes pattern and repetition, a rhythmic order which features in most of Woolf's prose writing (87). By examining the hidden pattern behind the "cotton wool"<sup>2</sup> in *Moments of Being* and several passages from Woolf's full-length novels, Crapoulet argues that there is "a musicality which transcends individual styles and pieces, and is essential to our understanding of the world in terms of pattern" (89).
- 5 However, if we carefully examine the examples of pattern and repetition that Crapoulet cites, we find that they correspond to those characters' perceptions and frames of mind. In other words, Crapoulet resorts to the musical analogy to argue to what extent Woolf's characters' streams of consciousness can *flow like music* and to what extent her writing is *structured like music*. Musicality in her argument refers to the writing order that Woolf

develops—the stream of consciousness—and, according to Crapoulet, this happens on the narrators'/characters' *conscious* level. Thus, in "Beyond the Boundaries of Language," an essay mainly focusing on Woolf's short story "The String Quartet," Crapoulet discusses the parallel relation between music and words by focusing on the narrator's *conscious and intentional* endeavor to verbalize this intensive musical experience and how this leads to her final despair, dismay, and dissatisfaction with words (210).

- 6 Crapoulet's arguments certainly lead us to further examine the relation between Woolf and music. The first concern is, if the influence of music on Woolf is as strong and violent as Woolf claims in her numerous writings, she must have been enveloped by its intensive influence and acted on by its strong sensations. Before she even could find the proper words to describe it, these strong and violent musical sensations must have taken place on the pre-cognitive level; otherwise, Woolf would not have claimed that when the music is played, "our definitions are relinquished [*sic*], and words disappear in our minds" ("Impressions" 291-92). Then, if Woolf still attempted to render music perceptible through words, what kind of transformation does writing have to undertake in order to catch up with the transient art of music, which vanishes at the moment when it comes into existence? Can we conceive of musicality, a writing style, not as the pattern and repetition that shape Woolf's stream of consciousness novels as Crapoulet argues, but as audience members' instantaneous experiences and synaesthetic sensations, especially when they are enveloped or whirled around by the strong sensations of music? If so, can "the musicalization of fiction" (to borrow the term coined by Aldous Huxley in *Point Counter Point*<sup>3</sup>) be achieved through a *short story* on music, given that the short story is a genre in which scope and length are necessarily limited?
- 7 The second question is: if the formal structure of Woolf's short story is thus fragmented, or to put it in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terminology, if it is "deterritorialized" into a multiplicity in order to contain diverse sensations, what about the characters and the narrator in the story, especially when the text is about their direct and personal musical experiences? Will not the audience member also be "deterritorialized" by the strong sensations of music? Will not the musicality of fiction which features in the form of expression as Woolf's writing style also permeate the content to the extent that the subject/audience member is passively acted upon by the strong affectivity of music?
- 8 This paper intends to answer these questions by using Woolf's "The String Quartet." I argue that the affectivity of music penetrates the narrator as audience member, and since the affective sensations that music unleashes are far beyond the tether of words, musicality—a writing style which now dispenses with the normal mediation of language—is also brought to light. Thus, the first half of this paper will take a short detour to discuss the philosophical concept of affect that Deleuze and Guattari put forward. Affect in their oeuvre refers to the body's capacity to affect and be affected and can also be further related to the concept of "becoming" which refers to the subject's condition of de-subjectification when he or she is transfixed by a non-human or trans-human force. The second half of this paper will examine how these conceptions of affect and becoming emerge in "The String Quartet" when the content is transformed to be expressive of the intensive affectivity of music whilst the form of expression partakes of musicality: it contains certain non-linguistic and pre-personal properties as fiction's affective style. I will argue that "The String Quartet" is—with Woolf's intent—a collage of diverse musical sensations. In other words, what I want to argue in this paper is that music is a possible sister art to influence Woolf's writing so that her fiction has been "musicalized" in order

to render the strong and violent musical sensations perceptible. Through the musicalization of her fiction, Woolf worked to transform her readers into audience members who seemed to sit in the same auditorium and to enjoy the same music with her.

## The Affectivity of Music

- 9 Brian Massumi, the English-language translator of Deleuze and Guattari's monumental *A Thousand Plateaus*, clearly defines affect as "an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act" (Massumi xvi). According to Massumi, affect is a prepersonal force and a non-human or trans-human intensity. When it is acting on the subject, he or she is "whirled around" for being passively "enveloped" by the strong affect. In Deleuze and Guattari, affect determines not only to what extent the subject's capacity to act can thus increase or decrease, but also how his/her body has been transformed from one state to another. In their conceptualization, "Affects are becomings" (*Plateaus* 256), with "becoming" being another term for the transformation of the body as such. More specifically, both terms designate not the transformation of the body, but the great intensity of force which triggers the deformation of the "organic" form of the body. Thus, this experience caused by affect is definitely real, not imaginary or hallucinatory.
- 10 Furthermore, becoming is always double. Just as Captain Ahab is becoming-whale, Moby Dick also experiences a becoming. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it is "becoming whiteness" (304) inasmuch as it is no longer a giant whale that Captain Ahab and the crew are hunting for. It has become a tremendous "white wall" ahead of them, announcing their final outcome. The symbiotic emergent unit of transformation formed by the double becomings is pushing our present infrastructure of knowledge about the body ever further, because "it is the set of the affects which are transformed and circulate in an assemblage of symbiosis, defined by the co-functioning of its heterogeneous parts" (Deleuze, *Dialogues* 70).
- 11 Deleuze and Guattari further expound the concept of becoming-music, and it has everything to do with music's transient nature. Despite its potentially lasting influence, music's materiality (the sound) vanishes into the air almost as soon as it comes into existence. Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, music maximizes the tension between life and death:
- Whenever a musician writes *In Memoriam*, it is not so much a question of an inspirational motif or a memory, but on the contrary of a becoming that is only confronting its own danger, even taking a fall in order to rise again: a becoming-child, a becoming-woman, a becoming-animal, insofar as they are the content of music itself and continue to the point of death. (*Plateaus* 299)
- 12 Thus, when the audience member is transfixed by the great intensity of music (i.e., when they are becoming-music), the transient nature of music rather brings to light the confrontation of music to its own death: music is becoming-molecular. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "The molecular has the capacity to make the *elementary* communicate with the *cosmic*: precisely because it effects a dissolution of form that connects the most diverse longitudes and latitudes, the most varied speeds and

slownesses, which guarantees a continuum by stretching variation far beyond its formal limits" (308-09).

- 13 Besides elaborating on how music can connect to the most delicate and minute particles of the world (with music's becoming-molecular) in the above quotation, Deleuze and Guattari make two more points clear. The first point is that the way to distinguish multiple affects is through the diverse relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness which constitute each of them. The second point is that the affective cartography constituted by "diverse longitudes and latitudes" will cause the dissolution of subject's self-consciousness, and the most extreme condition of self's dissolution as such has been envisaged as "becoming-imperceptible" by Deleuze and Guattari, since "The imperceptible, [is a] common characteristic of the greatest speed and the greatest slowness" (Deleuze, *Dialogues* 45). Put another way, Deleuze and Guattari attempt in their oeuvre to map out a possibility where there is no more the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" but the complete dissolution of the ego and the overall disappearance of even the first person singular, "I," in language. As they say, "To render imperceptible, not ourselves, but what makes us act, feel, and think... To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied" (*Plateaus* 3). Or as Laci Mattison writes, "For Woolf [and] Deleuze and Guattari, the 'I' paradoxically becomes a marker of imperceptibility" (568).
- 14 The "becoming-molecular of music" certainly reminds us of the analogy between writing and atoms in Woolf. In "Modern Fiction" (1921), Woolf encourages writers to record impressions on the mind as atoms because "[f]rom all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms" (154). In other words, a new writing style must emerge in contrast to the rigid styles of H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett, and John Galsworthy. The becoming-molecular of music as atoms falling on the mind of the becoming-music of audience members can only be captured in and by Woolf's newly experimental writing. We may call this new writing style "atomic writing," because as this term suggests, this writing style attempts to capture the affective moment when the audience members are "pierced" by strong musical impressions as atoms falling on their minds. In a diary entry dated November 28, 1928, Woolf writes, "what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity; to give the moment whole; whatever it includes... I want to put practically everything in; yet to saturate" (*Diary* v.3 209-10). Just as the becoming-molecular of music will bounce off from death or from the bottom, Woolf's intention to "saturate every atom" can be interpreted as creating resilience in her writing by satiating it with life force. Not unlike Ezra Pound and his famous dictum to "Make it new!," through her famous saying "On or about December 1910, human character changed," Woolf encouraged coeval writers to jump out of the boundary of genres and techniques set up by the Edwardian writers. Of course, Woolf's modernist project is not about music, but about writing, yet we discover in her numerous texts resplendent musical notes as atoms falling on and hitting audience members' minds. We can argue, then, that the instantaneous and piercing affectivity of music inspired Woolf to revolutionize writing.
- 15 In this light, and through a new attention to audience members' and readers' becoming-music and music's becoming-molecular, we can have a better understanding of Woolf's writing. From first-hand information about Woolf's nearly ten year experiment on the proper form for her writing ("Modern Fiction" was published in 1921 while her diary

entry is dated 1928), we know that music rather urged her to develop writing so as to express its molecular and instantaneous affectivity. Despite the diverse interpretations that literary critics have about the writing style that Woolf develops during this period,<sup>4</sup> we can still term this new writing style as “musicality.” It is an affective style which emphasizes how music’s strong and intensive force transfixes both the content and the form of expression in Woolf. As a writer, she not only has to record music as “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms” that her mind receives, but also to transform the formal structure of her writing, so that her readers of this short story can be transformed into audience members who were transfixed by and satiated with music in the same auditorium with her. In Woolf’s musicality as affective style, “content becomes expressive and expression becomes material” (Hughes 60). In this way of thinking, we can argue that, composed in this new writing style, the text will be nothing but an assemblage of diverse sensations, since content is the direct presentation of characters’ multiple becomings while the form is where the materiality of language and the erratic movement of the body are made present. To put it in a Deleuzian way, we can argue that both form and content in Woolf have been deterritorialized, and her job, as a writer, is to render music perceptible by words.

## Musicality as Affective Style in “The String Quartet”

- 16 Compared with other ambivalent or even controversial short stories collected in *Monday or Tuesday*, “The String Quartet” rather aroused many of Woolf’s friends’ and coeval critics’ positive appraisals. In her diary entries, Woolf was delighted to know that Lytton Strachey’s response to “The String Quartet” was “marvelous” (*Diary* v.2 109), and she was even thrilled to record that T. S. “Eliot astounded me by praising Monday & Tuesday! This really delighted me. He picked out the String Quartet, especially the end of it. ‘Very good’ he said, & meant it, I think” (*Diary* v.2 125).
- 17 Yet undeniably, “The String Quartet” remains unknown to many contemporary readers and by extension, it receives less critical attention than her more famous short stories. However, there are still some critics who have pointed out how music has provided Woolf with a possibility to imagine something different. For example, Crapoulet argues that in this short story, Woolf suggests a better world can be envisaged through music, for it can help to create a “new way of seeing things which is the very essence of the musical experience” and “to determine the creative modalities of a consciousness which can itself shape the world differently” (“Beyond the Boundaries” 211). Peter Jacobs claims that “a nourishing sense of unity and belonging” is created through “the eery world of art” (*sic*, 244), while Werner Wolf argues that music provides a sense of positivity when “society [is] forcing so many distractions on the individual and detaining him from more essential things” (155). In other words, a sense of unity and rebirth can be envisioned through the above literary criticism on “The String Quartet”: music provides a pacifying comfort to counterbalance the agony and trepidation prevailing in society. Yet, as argued earlier, I want to demonstrate that Woolf tries to render the strong affectivity of music in “The String Quartet.” It is a short story composed entirely in and by musicality as an affective style: the affectivity of music is so strong and intensive that it has transfixed the narrator/audience member and permeated Woolf’s formal structure.
- 18 Before the commencement of the musical performance, the narrator’s stream of consciousness is still logical and well-organized: she<sup>5</sup> looks through the room to observe



the traffic outside, which is "weaving threads from one end of London to the other" (132), and her thoughts are randomly and freely associated with public current events (the Treaty, the weather, the housing, the influenza), and with her own private affairs (the leak in the pantry, the glove she left in the train) (132). Just as a pebble dropping into a pond causes many ripples, one thought sprouting in the narrator's mind arouses other relevant but still unimportant thoughts. Even she admits the pointlessness of her rambling thoughts:

If the mind's shot through by such little arrows, and... no sooner is one launched than another presses forward; if this engenders heat and in addition they've turned on the electric light; if saying one thing does, in so many cases, leave behind it a need to improve and revise, stirring besides regrets, pleasures, vanities, and desires —if it's all the facts I mean, and the hats, the fur boas, the gentlemen's swallow-tail coats, and pearl tie-pins that come to the surface—what chance is there? (132)

19 With this string of chaotic thoughts in the narrator's mind and with other audience members' mumbling conversations, the whole auditorium is congested with cacophony: "It becomes every minute more difficult to say why, in spite of everything, I sit here believing I can't now say what, or even remember the last time it happened" (132). It is a room full of meaningless babble.

20 Nevertheless, no sooner is the music played than the narrator is pierced and acted on by the strong affectivity of music. With four short and rapid-fire words and an exclamation point—"Flourish, spring, burgeon, burst!" (133)—we know to what extent music has transformed and transfixed the narrator. Suddenly, she is becoming-fish right in the very beginning of the first movement:

The pear tree on the top of the mountain. Fountains jet; drops descend. But the waters of the Rhone flow swift and deep, race under the arches, and sweep the trailing water leaves, washing shadows over the silver fish, the spotted fish rushed down by the swift waters, now swept into an eddy where—it's difficult this—conglomeration of fish all in a pool... (133)

21 For *Crapoulet*, it is Schubert's "Trout" Piano Quintet "which obviously provided Woolf with the idea of the fish and the river narrative" ("Beyond the Boundaries" 207). As shown earlier, *Crapoulet* contends that the relation between words and music is parallel, and the short story is "an indication of the narrator's dissatisfaction with her own expressive and linguistic powers and her failure to verbalize the intensity of her experience of the music" (210).

22 Yet I want to argue that when the narrator is being enveloped and whirled around by the strong and vigorous rhythm of the first movement, only the strong affectivity which is violently acting on the narrator remains. In other words, the narrator is no longer a Cartesian thinking thing because she is forced to move and vibrate erratically along with the rhythm of music. And if this intense musical experience happens on the pre-cognitive and pre-linguistic level, neither comparison nor analogy/parallel can be drawn to render it. Put another way, Woolf does not imagine a similarity between the narrator and the fish; instead, the narrator is *becoming-fish* in this movement. Although the narrator is not "physically" transformed into a fish, the strong affectivity unleashed by music has still inaugurated her body's capacity to act and to feel: by fluctuating with the rhythm of the first movement, the narrator is "sensationally" becoming-fish as if to jump along with the melody in a river. Such a strong affectivity can explain why most literary critics agree that the difficulty of verbalizing musical experiences is the main theme in this short story (Jacobs 243, *Crapoulet* "Beyond the Boundaries" 211). It is because this is a moment of



affectivity: "It [the material of art] provokes fear or desire in the ones who are involuntarily drawn into it, and constituted by it as no longer viewers or readers" (Hughes 71).

- 23 Moreover, in the first movement, instead of becoming just "one" particular fish, the narrator is involuntarily drawn into a "conglomeration of fish all in a pool" (133) which shares a similar affectivity with music. For Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast with "Oedipal animals" as family pets and "State animals" as national myths (*Plateaus* 240), there are "pack or affect animals" (241) whose undomesticated wildness signals the violent intensity they cause. In the first movement, the narrator is becoming-fish as if to jump, splash, and dive with other fish in the river, and the great intensity of being involved in a pack of fish reaches a certain degree of ecstasy. Deleuze and Guattari thus say, "Virginia Woolf experiences herself not as a monkey or a fish but as a troop of monkeys, a school of fish, according to her variable relations of becoming with the people she approaches" (239).<sup>6</sup> In other words, since "every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack. . . . It is at this point that the human being encounters the animal" (239), then in this musical cartography weaved by strong affectivity, the narrator is becoming-fish as if to jump and dive along with other fish in the river of melody. And if affect as becoming is always double, then the narrator is becoming-fish whilst the school of fish are becoming-sonority: in the first movement, the leaping and splashing of the fish is transformed into the diverse jumping of the notes in the melody. With fish "leaping, splashing, scraping sharp fins" ("The String Quartet" 133), we know these fish are churned topsy-turvy by the strong current: "such a boil of current that the yellow pebbles are churned round and round, round and round" (133). Yet while they are "free now, rushing downwards, or even somehow ascending in exquisite spirals into the air; curled like thin shavings from under a plane; up and up. . . . [sic]" (133), we cannot distinguish whether the words are meant to describe the jumping of the fish in the current or the melody which is sprinkled with convivial notes. It is because "affect is not a personal feeling, nor is it a characteristic; it is the effectuation of a power of the pack that throws the self into upheaval and makes it reel" (*Plateaus* 240).
- 24 In further contrast to the fast and vigorous first movement, the pace in the second movement becomes rather slow. If this movement is the low point in the whole performance, Woolf creates two "becomings" of the music to strengthen the extent to which her narrator is completely drawn into the intensive affectivity of music and is fiercely pierced by it. Such a de-subjective condition has been announced in the beginning of this movement: "The melancholy river bears us on" ("The String Quartet" 134). Thus, the first becoming happens when the music is becoming-river because it shares the same frequency as the waves: the wave of sounds has been transformed into the wave of the river. On the one hand, the whole movement is composed by the slow and tranquil rhythm of the river so as to present the melancholy melody of "sorrow and joy" (135), while on the other hand, despite its seemingly tranquil surface, we still can *feel* that this river has a very rapid current underneath (perhaps with some dangerous vortexes). In order to achieve this contrast, Woolf embeds several very short but powerful words and phrases into some long and complicated sentences so as to create a sensation of collision, as if these short but strong words were the splash of sounds that something, like a stone in the river, creates while hitting the riverbed or bank. As the narrator says, "For me it [a wraith in the river] sings, unseals my sorrow, thaws compassion, floods with love the sunless world, nor, ceasing, abates its tenderness but deftly, subtly, weaves in and out

until in this pattern, this consummation, the cleft ones unify; soar, sob, sink to rest, sorrow and joy" (134). In other words, by creating the sounds and rhythm of the river, the narrator has been immersed into the wave of the music and has been drifted along to fluctuate with it. Especially the last eight words—"soar, sob, sink to rest, sorrow and joy"—not only make us oscillate with the wave of sounds by using many occurrences of alliteration, but the syntactic rhythm also makes us *feel* that the current beneath is about to surge and disrupt the tranquil surface of the river.

25 The second becoming in this movement is the becoming-fabric of the music: the flow/river of the music is further transformed into a firm and solid fabric or net in which the narrator, as a musical note, is becoming thread or yarn that is tightly spun on the musical score.<sup>7</sup> In this short story, Woolf uses several sewing-related verbs to indicate how the narrator has been "woven" into the whole musical performance. As the narrator says, "[sorrow and joy are] Woven together, inextricably commingled, bound in pain and strewn in sorrow—crash!" (134). When the song reaches its lowest point in this movement, the narrator is immersed into the music as if she were lying and watching the falling of rose leaves above. As argued earlier, if the extent of affect is determined by the relation of movement and rest, speed and slowness, here we have a spellbound narrator *in rest* who is in contrast to the falling leaves *in movement*. As she says, "Falling. Ah, but they cease. One rose leaf, falling from an enormous height, like a little parachute dropped from an invisible balloon, turns, flutters waveringly. It won't reach us" (134). This contrast suggests that the great tension of music is waiting to be unleashed after this moment of delicate suspension. We can also argue that a contrast between heaviness and lightness is used to maximize this dynamic moment: the (almost) weightless rose leaf is dragged down by the whole gravity of the earth. Perhaps the narrator is sensitive enough to notice that the great climax of the third movement is about to come after this momentary suspension, so she murmurs to herself: "Very strange, very exciting" (134).

26 In the third movement, we have an exciting elopement narrative. The narrative's first half is an ordinary dialogue between the lovers, but the rhythm in its second half is accelerating so as to demonstrate how desperate and anxious the lovers are when their secret is discovered. There are several words starting with "s," and words ending with "-ing" or "-ly," with the potential to create the effect of a musical rhythm or a musical wave in this paragraph. As the narrator says,

The gentleman replies so fast to the lady, and she runs up the scale with such witty exchange of compliment now culminating in a sob of passion, that the words are indistinguishable though the meaning is plain enough—love, laughter, flight, pursuit, celestial bliss—all floated out on the gayest ripple of tender endearment—until the sound of the silver horns, at first far distant, gradually sounds more and more distinctly, as if seneschals were saluting the dawn or proclaiming ominously the escape of the lovers... [sic] (135)

27 We have to read this narrative with bated breath. The first reason is because it is composed of so many rapid-fire words. The second reason is because the dashes and ellipses are used to make us glide swiftly along with the sensations that the narrator feels. The third reason is because of numerous occurrences of alliteration (so, scale, such, sob, celestial, sound, silver, seneschals, saluting) and two types of rhymes (one of which ends with "s": replies, runs, words, bliss, gayest, horns, sounds, seneschals, lovers; the other with "-ly" and "-ing": lady, witty, culminating, meaning, gradually, distinctly, saluting, proclaiming, ominously) are used to emphasize how the narrator is pierced and whirled away by the strong affectivity of music.

- 28 Without any further delay or hesitation, we are then forcefully drawn into the finale. To continue the fast rhythm and dynamic sensations in the third movement, there is a "chaosmos" where everything is dissolved and mixed up together in the fourth movement. In Deleuze and Guattari, chaosmos is the combination of "chaos" and "cosmos," referring to a temporary order that art helps to establish. When "[f]rom all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday" ("Modern Fiction" 154), art becomes a protective umbrella, so we will not be harmed by the chaos directly from which those atom showers emerge. And since this umbrella is not entirely intact—there are certain fissures on it, we can still have a peep at what is out there in chaos. As mysterious yet attractive as chaos is, art, as a chaosmos, becomes the only mediation in-between. As Deleuze and Guattari say, "Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes ... a chaosmos, a composed chaos—neither foreseen nor preconceived" (*What Is Philosophy?* 204).
- 29 Thus, in this chaosmos of the fourth movement, all of the sensations that the narrator had in the previous movements (the becoming-fish, the interweaving of river and the wave of sounds, and the dangerous escape) are molecularized to become fractions of the chaosmos created by the string quartet: "The green garden, moonlit pool, lemons, lovers, and fish are all dissolved in the opal sky, across which, as the horns are joined by trumpets and supported by clarions there rise white arches firmly planted on marble pillars. ... [sic]" ("The String Quartet" 135). Not just the images but also the sounds, like the horns, trumpets, clarions that the narrator had previously heard and "Tramp and trumpeting. Clang and clangor" (135) that she hears in this movement are also dissolved and mixed together. No sooner are all the sounds and images molecularized and commingled indiscernibly than a deserted city emerges. Regardless of its "Firm establishment. Fast foundations," only "Confusion and chaos trod to earth" so "Leave then to perish your hope; droop in the desert my joy; naked advance" (135). For Werner Wolf, this paragraph is "a triumphant note," indicating "a climax of meaningful positivity" of music (157), while for Crapoulet, this image rather signifies how inadequate Woolf is in the face of words and how insufficient words are to describe this musical experience ("Beyond the Boundaries" 210). Nevertheless, I want to argue that this seemingly negative image of a deserted city in a barren desert rather indicates the extreme dissolution of the narrator's self-consciousness. In this paragraph, the organic body of the narrator has disappeared; she is somehow transformed into an enormous eye, shuttling back and forth in this deserted city and observing it as a whiff of hot air. We can notice her transformation, or more precisely, her deformation especially in the following sentences: "But this city to which we travel has neither stone nor marble; hangs enduring; stands unshakable; nor does a face, nor does a flag greet or welcome... Bare are the pillars; auspicious to none; casting no shade; resplendent; severe" ("The String Quartet" 135).
- 30 In this short paragraph, the narrator does not "visit" the city as a tourist; instead, her body has been molecularized or shrunk into becoming an enormous eye. Unlike other human perspectives embedded in this short story, this nonhuman one is rather close to that of a camera, zooming in and out with a perception and consciousness of its own. This is especially the case in this sentence: "Bare are the pillars; auspicious to none; casting no shade; resplendent; severe" (135), we are not sure who sees this vision for we cannot consolidate the origin of this perspective, nor can we ascertain whether words like

“resplendent” and “severe” are used to describe the pillars, or the solemn effect they create. In other words, this is a nonhuman landscape into which the narrator is involuntarily drawn, so that she no longer has an organic body nor does she possess any individuated self-consciousness. This inhuman and imperceptible perspective is close to the Deleuzian notion of “a fourth-person singular”<sup>8</sup>: it is impersonal (not emanating from, nor can it be consolidated by any specific subject) and it is infinitive (with a tremendous power lurking beneath the verb). According to Deleuze, it is “a becoming in itself which constantly both awaits us and precedes us, like a third person of the infinitive, a fourth person singular” (*Dialogues* 65). Such a fourth-person singular perspective further connects us to a similar Woolfian comparison: walking in the winter when the shops are closed and when her protective shield has been discarded, the narrator in “Street Haunting” is also transformed into “a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye” (22). This eye, which can only squirm with its own “wrinkles and roughnesses” (22), indicates that the vigilance of the narrator’s receptivity has enlarged and reached its most extreme degree of all. Once again, analogy no longer prevails. Transformed into a pure receptive organ, the becoming-eye of the narrators in both stories manifests the complete dissolution of their ego.

- 31 In this light, we might reach the conclusion that, in this short story, Woolf tries to envisage a condition in which the subject is no longer the master of his/her own; rather, s/he has to vibrate with, and to become with, the music. Thus, when the narrator is continually being pierced by the affectivity of music, the states she experiences are no longer the slow-paced free associations that she previously had (from public affairs to personal matters), but the ones in which she is being tossed around dizzily in such a rapid-fire assemblage of images, sounds, and thoughts. So in the first interval, the narrator starts muttering or stammering: “But the tune, like all his [Mozart’s] tunes, makes one despair—I mean hope. What do I mean? That’s the worst of music! I want to dance, laugh, eat pink cakes, yellow cakes, drink thin, sharp wine... Hah, hah! I’m laughing. What at?” (“The String Quartet” 133). With the accelerating rhythms and tempos of the music which sweep her away, she appears to wake up from her dream when someone talks to her in the second interval: “No, no. I noticed nothing. That’s the worst of music—these silly dreams. The second violin was late, you say?” (134). And when the performance is over, after being drawn and whirled around by the violent and synaesthetic affectivity of music, the narrator is stunned so much so that she is “eager no more, desiring only to go” (135).

## Conclusion

- 32 With the deformation and multiple becomings of the narrator, Woolf has successfully rendered music perceptible in this short story. The four movements in “The String Quartet” can be compared to a kaleidoscope within which multiple sensations like multicolored confetti fall apart and are recombined. Different rhythms and themes in each movement form a continuum of variation in this string quartet. The result is that the listening narrator has to vibrate along with the music, and the text is fragmented in order to record “the incessant showers of atoms” falling on the narrator’s senses. In other words, the short story is composed of and assembled by fragments. In Woolf’s musicality-as-writing, there is “no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the

accepted style" ("Modern Fiction" 154). Only the string of sensations consecutively sewn by the affectivity of music remains.

- 33 Furthermore, if we put this short story in a broader picture, we can see how the atomic writing that Woolf developed in this period prepared her for the later stream of consciousness novels; i.e., musicality as an affective style which features in how the audience member is transfixed by the strong affectivity of music is transferred and further used in Woolf's novels in order to capture the evanescent yet entrancing moments of affectivity. We just have to bear in mind that the length of time is not the point, but the intensity within is. Not only is Mrs. Dalloway's walk an act of weaving into the city of London as if she were a thread or a yarn, but the intensity that this walking emits *in one day* is just as strong and fierce as Orlando's four hundred years of life. In like manner, since the six characters in *The Waves* have their own distinct personalities, the novel as an assemblage is thus constituted by six different rhythms and variations. In other words, musicality in my argument rather points out that the text, whether it is a poem, a short story, a novella, or even a play, already is an assemblage of multiple and diverse sensations. Even though the text as such is loosely structured, what we can discover in it is where "content becomes expressive and expression becomes material" (Hughes 60).

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## NOTES

1. On the subject, see the recent essays in Adriana Varga's collection *Virginia Woolf & Music*, released after this article's submission.
2. In *Moments of Being*, "cotton wool" refers to those banal "moments of non-being": "A great part of every day is not lived consciously" (70), argues Woolf. For her, great writers such as Jane Austen, Trollope, Thackeray, Dickens, and Tolstoy are capable of portraying both moments of being and moments of non-being clearly, while she humbly claims that she can only do one moment at one time (70-72).
3. For Huxley, "musicalization of fiction" designates how the musical elements, like themes, modulations, and variations, can shape the structure of fiction. According to Vanessa Manhire, Huxley "is interested in the technical elements of composition, the formal and structural attributes of music which can be studied and translated into the medium of literature" (7). Some literary critics have sought to investigate this brand of musicalization/musicality of Woolf's fiction. For example, Emma Sutton argues in "Putting Words on the Backs of Rhythm" that



rhythm has charted Woolf's fiction since its very early stages, and Crapoulet ("Voicing the Music") elaborates on the concept of musicality in terms of pattern and repetition.

4. The writing style that Woolf develops and the short stories published in this period are generally acknowledged as the prefatory experiment to her later and more mature stream of consciousness novels. Regarding which art form inspired Woolf to proceed with such a writing experiment, some critics focus on the deep connection between Woolf and painting (Roe, Gillespie), while some others turn to connect Woolf with cinema (Hankins, Tissen, Marcus). I join those who seek to demonstrate that music is among the most important forms of inspiration for Woolf.

5. While Woolf does not clearly identify the narrator's sex, for convenience's sake, I will use the singular female pronoun throughout this essay.

6. Derek Ryan builds a strong connection between Woolf and pack animals. Not only is "a troop of monkeys" connected to Woolf's personal life (and the alternately singular and plural childhood nickname, the Apes), but Ryan also argues that the fish assemblage which emerges in *The Waves* indicates how the life of these six characters have been mingled together, when Bernard describes himself and his friends as "'only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle' in the 'cauldron' of life" (540).

7. Woolf likes to use the imagery of thread and fiber to indicate how delicate and transitory affectivity is. For example, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, there is a paragraph describing how vulnerable and passive Septimus Smith is when he is attacked by anxiety: "It was the heat wave presumably, operating upon a brain made sensitive by eons of evolution. Scientifically speaking, the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fibers were left. It was spread like a veil upon a rock" (59). So it becomes understandable that not only are Woolf's characters becoming-thread/yarn/fiber stitched into the affective sensations, but her writing which is to render present these sensations is also transformed into a textile/assemblage to weave/contain diverse threads/becomings together. As the narrator in *A Room of One's Own* says, "fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible; Shakespeare's plays, for instance, seem to hang there complete by themselves" (38). Furthermore, in Carrie Rohman's "A Hoard of Floating Monkeys," by investigating Woolf's oft-neglected children's story about Nurse Lugton, Rohman argues that sewing is just as creative as writing and that both of the art forms have to be regarded as the unfolding of life's potentialities.

8. According to Jason Skeet, Deleuze adopts this term, "fourth-person singular," from Lawrence Ferlinghetti's novel *Her* to manifest the degree to which this is an inhuman and imperceptible perspective: "and now in the fog a permanent hole, a hole I knew, the seeing-eye of the fourth person singular that saw everything and understood nothing, yet still saw, the eye that saw and understood everything but myself, not able to see that in which it was itself imbedded" (qtd. in Skeet 493n9).

## ABSTRACTS

Cet article utilise la nouvelle "The String Quartet" de Virginia Woolf pour avancer que, selon Woolf, la musique n'est pas une simple distraction. La musique lui inspire non seulement une révolution de la structure formelle du langage, mais crée également un environnement de l'affect (une sensation non-humaine et dé-subjective) qui subjugué le public. Cet article s'appuiera sur la

conception de l'affect de Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari pour démontrer la manière dont le membre du public/narrateur est pénétré par la forte affectivité de la musique, à tel point que la structure formelle est fragmentée en une multiplicité afin de traduire la musicalité. En d'autres termes, avec la forte affectivité de la musique dans "The String Quartet", Woolf atteint la musicalité en tant que style d'écriture affectif. Ce style d'écriture ne cherche pas à étudier dans quelle mesure la fiction peut être structurée comme de la musique (comme dans la « musicalisation de la fiction » d'Huxley), mais plutôt la façon dont le contenu est transformé afin d'exprimer l'affectivité intensive de la musique alors même que la forme d'expression produit certaines propriétés non-linguistiques et pré-personnelles. Il s'agira ici de montrer que la musicalité est corrélative à l'« écriture atomique » de Woolf, que cette dernière expérimente dans cette nouvelle.

## AUTHORS

### KUO CHIA-CHEN

Kuo Chia-chen is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Tamkang University, Taiwan. Her articles on Virginia Woolf and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze have been published in several academic journals.