THE PROCESSES

process that interests me most in the creation of digital media (not only for its pretty obvious pedagogical imperative but because of its shepherding function for those artists just beginning to find their way in an at-times unfriendly and desolate world), is outlined as follows:

1. **ANALYSIS** (of vocabulary elements) >
2. application of **CRAFT/TECHNIQUE** (to these elements) >, and
3. **SYNTHESIS** (of elements into a new form, process, or vocabulary)

While this process may be further specified for a particular synthesis (for example, see the creation of *pronbient music* described in *Case Study: Ghosts of Dolls*), it is perhaps most useful (like much of this text) as a *metaphor* for transformations that take place with the materials of digital media, and for the changes in *perception* an artist may have toward her materials, processes, and forms.

In the chart *(p.18)* we see all aspects of a production broken down to its essential vocabular elements, often accompanied (at least in the early part of the artist's career) with study and appreciation for how these elements were used in the past, and how particular vocabulary combinations have determined schools, trends, or styles, often inflected according to larger sweeps of chronology or geography.

The second part of the process is the application of craft and technique. Perhaps the foundation of craft is simply choosing one's vocabulary, or limiting the range of possibilities. Often overlooked in the Photoshopic world of millions of combinations of filters, layers, special effects, and various other manipulation tools, the *limiting of one's palette* is a time-honored pedagogy in the visual arts, and is applied famously to the process of music composition throughout Stravinsky's Charles Elliot Norton lectures, *The Poetics of Music* (1942) [5.1]:

The more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free.

—Igor Stravinsky, *The Poetics of Music (1942), p. 63. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA*

But while careful analysis and diligent application of craft may indeed produce competent work (symbolized by the red dot in the center of the chart), it does not guarantee originality, spark, spontaneity, or a meaningful and profound end result. Likewise, pushing the boundaries of one's craft, subverting intention or fusion with contradictory elements or sensibilities may also not produce the transcendent work, but it does require artists to work harder, go deeper, and maybe it will allow them a glimpse at something revelatory, if they are extremely lucky and conscious of what, exactly, they are experiencing. This final part of the process—condensed into the invitation to subvert, syncretize, and experiment—puts one on the tip of the entire spacy rocket (or dildo) shape in the chart:

PROCESS: I. ANALYSIS

In this text there are two meanings to take from the word ANALYSIS and I conflate them. One is pointed toward the process of production: break down the work, the subject of your inquiry (let's say, a film or piece of music or book) into its component (vocabular) parts. The other is pedagogical: *learn to see* what you're looking upon, learn how these works have been broken down in the past, and learn how to recognize when these collections of vocabularies (i.e., styles, trends, schools) shift.

Analysis of a work into smaller parts is the domain of a multitude of theories, approaches, and philosophies. If those texts are calling your name, attend to them. For the moment, I will present two approaches to the pedagogy of analysis: *creating timelines,* and *assembling your 'Backup Singers'.*

Timelines
When the object of your study is a single discipline, it's easy to make a chronological map of the key figures, centers of activity, and major works of that discipline. When your study is inter-, multi-, trans- or post- disciplinary, your task is to map multiple disciplines onto the same timeline.

If you are using interactive media to build your timeline, you have various roll-over buttons and drop-down menus at your disposal, plus links to fuller text or image descriptions of each historical 'node'. This can get as elaborate as you want, with multiple timelines traversing navigable 3D space, with links to additional media archives or other interactions. If you're using print media, color-coding helps.
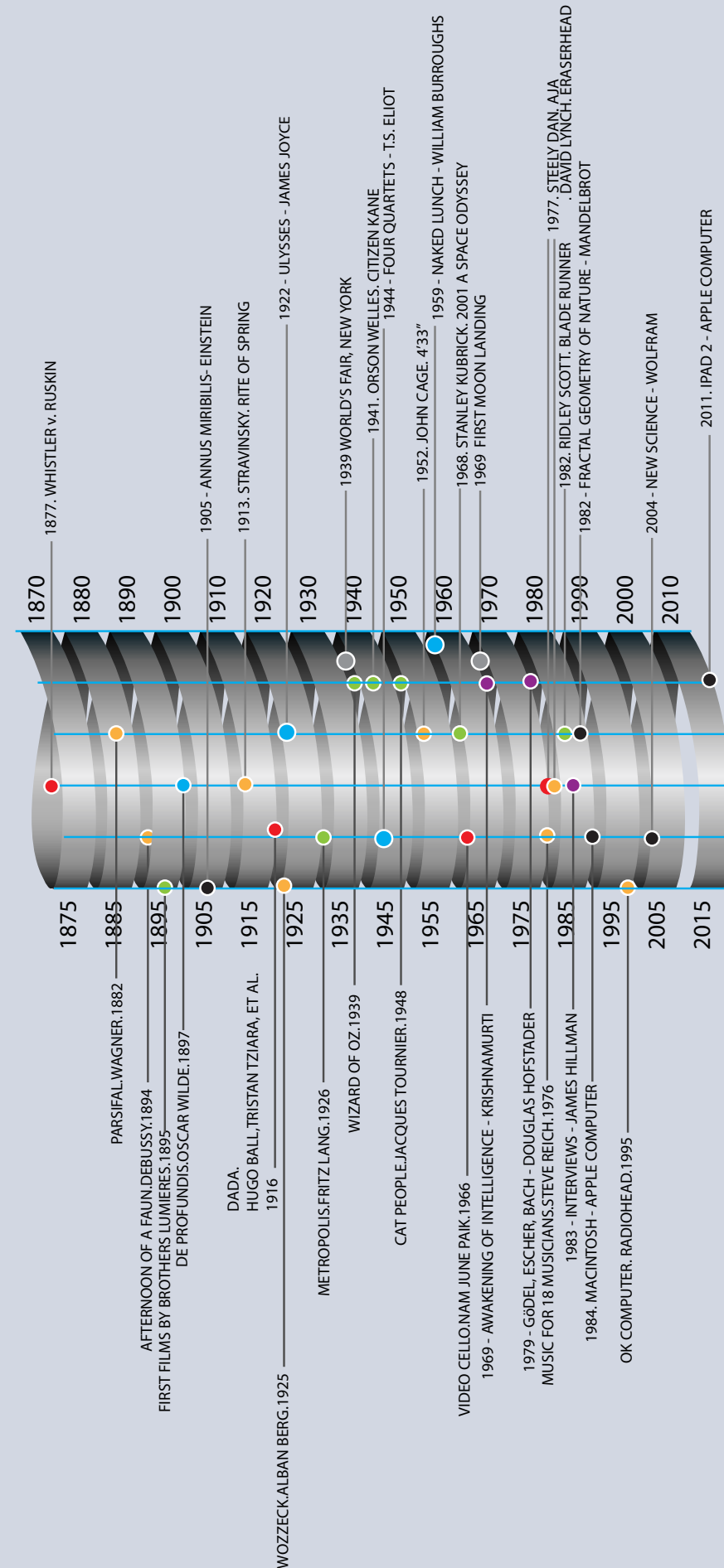
Making a timeline is almost always more instructive than looking at a timeline. The making-process forces you to determine the relative importance of a huge amount of material representing the evolution and growth of your particular object of inquiry.

Backup Singers
Taking the timeline in a more personal direction brings us to the second analytic process, assembling your own collection of *backup singers.* Who are My Backup Singers? (bold, below) They're members of the chorus of voices I've turned to for inspiration, solace, a good laugh, or the sporadic, infrequent practical solution. My backup singers tend to show convergent or syncretic approaches in their work, which may have initially startled me or knocked me off balance or even alienated me for a while. Some members of this choir have emerged only after I failed

miserably at a few projects, and finally was able to recognize their particularly graceful contributions.

Keith Haring was exploring a fusion between primal image systems and both high and low (read: commercial) forms of art. His body painting of **Grace Jones** as Voodoo Diva is a famous, and evocative example of a syncretic moment (photographed by **Robert Mapplethorpe**, another supremely unflinching visual thinker)[5.2].

The following trio of figures constellates for me notions of performance, architecture, sound, poetry, and technology. **Dada**—Hugo Ball, Tristan Tziara, Man Ray, etc. Here we have a famous portrait of Hugo Ball, one of the founding fathers of Dada, reciting his sound poetry at Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich around the time of World War I (where on Ebay can I get *that* hat?) [5.3].

Sound poetry—the sequence of spoken non-languages and protolinguistic sounds—erodes the meaning behind words and opens language to a broader sonic reality. This idea is visually echoed in the experimental typography of the Futurists, and later, in the visual text experiments of the *Lettrisme* movement.

Secondly, we have a character from the great **Serge Dhiagelev** production of *Parade* (1925). Story by

BELOW:
Selective 3D Spiral Timeline of Experimental Digital (or Proto-Digital) Culture

TIMELINE LEGEND
● HISTORY
● PHILOSOPHY
● MUSIC / SOUND
● CINEMA
● VISUAL ART
● LITERATURE
● TECHNOLOGY / SCIENCE

1877 - WHISTLER v. RUSKIN
1905 - ANNUS MIRIBILIS- EINSTEIN
1913- STRAVINSKY. RITE OF SPRING
1922 - ULYSSES - JAMES JOYCE
1939 WORLD'S FAIR, NEW YORK
1941. ORSON WELLES. CITIZEN KANE
1944 - FOUR QUARTETS - T.S. ELIOT
1952. JOHN CAGE. 4'33"
1959 - NAKED LUNCH - WILLIAM BURROUGHS
1968. STANLEY KUBRICK. 2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY
1969 FIRST MOON LANDING
1977 - STEELY DAN. AJA.
1982. RIDLEY SCOTT. BLADE RUNNER
1982 - FRACTAL GEOMETRY OF NATURE- MANDELBROT
DAVID LYNCH. ERASERHEAD
2004 - NEW SCIENCE - WOLFRAM
2011. IPAD 2 - APPLE COMPUTER

1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010

1875 1885 1895 1905 1915 1925 1935 1945 1955 1965 1975 1985 1995 2005 2015

PARSIFAL. WAGNER. 1882
AFTERNOON OF A FAUN. DEBUSSY. 1894
FIRST FILMS BY BROTHERS LUMIERES. 1895
DE PROFUNDIS. OSCAR WILDE. 1897
DADA.
HUGO BALL, TRISTAN TZIARA, ET AL.
1916
WOZZECK. ALBAN BERG. 1925
METROPOLIS. FRITZ LANG. 1926
WIZARD OF OZ. 1939
CAT PEOPLE. JACQUES TOURNIER. 1948
VIDEO CELLO. NAM JUNE PAIK. 1966
1969 - AWAKENING OF INTELLIGENCE - KRISHNAMURTI
1979 - GöDEL, ESCHER, BACH - DOUGLAS HOFSTADER
MUSIC FOR 18 MUSICIANS. STEVE REICH. 1976
1983 - INTERVIEWS - JAMES HILLMAN
1984. MACINTOSH - APPLE COMPUTER
OK COMPUTER. RADIOHEAD. 1995

Cocteau and Dhiagelev, choreography by Massine, ditzy music (from a jaded sophisticate's perspective) by Eric Satie, and stage backdrops and costumes by Picasso, which, for instance, turned the figure of the *schauspieldirektor* into a walking cityscape [5.4]. *Parade* was a pretty broad and rangy show, with archetypes of characters drawn from American movies.

Any collaboration that involves more than one strong creative personality is bound to have a heart that beats to a syncretic pulse.

Thirdly, another figure, this one made of TV monitors, electronics, neon, a satellite dish, and all sorts of circuitry. It's by **Nam June Paik**, and it's called *Global Man* [5.5]. TV was such a profoundly influential and ubiquitous force in culture and communications in the last century, and Paik was a brilliantly subversive artist in the medium of television, video, installations, and performances involving various manifestations of *The Tube*. The syncretic aspect here is the re-purposing and undermining of the cultural notion of the television. Paik yanks the technology away from its commercial usefulness and en-*souls* it, darkening it to achieve something more playful and humane. His *Global Man* is emblematic of the last century and prescient of the current one (but this century is creepier)*.

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* When I worked at The Coca-Cola Company from 1991 to 2000 (imagine that!), I would often walk past the set of Nam June Paik prints that hung on the 18th floor of the USA Building, stopping to admire them. No one who worked there had ever heard of Nam June Paik, and yet there he was, gracing the corridors in the belly of the corporate *beest,* laughing at not only us peons, his infrequent viewers, but also at the mail-robot that made its rounds on each floor every day, right in front of those prints.

And of course, **John Cage**. I turn to Cage for renewal and re-invention because of his balance of philosophy and production:

> *Our intention is to affirm this life, not to bring order out of chaos, nor to suggest improvements in creation, but simply to wake up to the very life we're living, which is so excellent once one gets one's mind and one's desires out of its way and lets it act of its own accord.* [5.5]

Next is the venerable, supreme Mad Scientist of the Player Piano, **Conlon Nancarrow**. Nancarrow began his music career as a jazz trumpeter in the 1950's, then moved to Mexico City, where he acquired two Ampico recording player pianos. His breakthrough development of multiple tempo-layers in his music danced around a delicate issue greatly amplified during the early MIDI era: the syncretics of human vs. machine limitations in performance, and perhaps the struggle of the imagination with the possibilities of unlimited technical choice [5.6].

Now, we come to **Orlan**. [5.7] Is identity, or identity-as-performance-as-art a syncretic system? Orlan transformed plastic surgery into art/spectacle, and her videos explore liminal spaces between the body and the knife, making us all a bit queasy. I've only seen her squirm a bit once, in her press conference at the Nexus Art Gallery in Atlanta in 1994, as she attemped to explain away the young slacker dude who said (to paraphrase), "well, we've all seen this sort of thing before for 20 years, if you've watched *Star Trek* at all."

Andy Warhol [5.8] engineered a great slow-motion car crash between consumer culture and high art, paving the way for the postmodern sensibility and pre-empting much originality in our contemporary digital age.

Maya Lin's great postmodern gesture, the Vietnam War Memorial [5.9]: there is no finer example of content as structure, information design as monument and ritual.

The **Goddess Tara** (upper right) is a master of *maya*, or the *Principles of Illusion*, possessed by shaman and women. The *Principles of Illusion* are 1) the ability to conceal, 2) the ability to transform, and 3) the ability to reveal. The syncretic invitation here is to take a complete and rich system of myth and turn to it as a jumping-off point for analytical and critical discussion and investigation. India has much to teach us.

And my final 'backup singer' is the arcane, mysterious charm of **alchemical texts and illustrations**. Because it is an exotic system of symbols, alchemy recommends itself to the curious, the scholar, the speculative artist. The *Music of the Spheres* image (lower right) [5.10] has always suggested to me what interface design from an earlier age might look like.

* * * * *

Backup singers change over time, as one develops broader and deeper interests. Or not.

(Following page—More potential BACKUP SINGERS for you to consider for your own chorus of voices.)
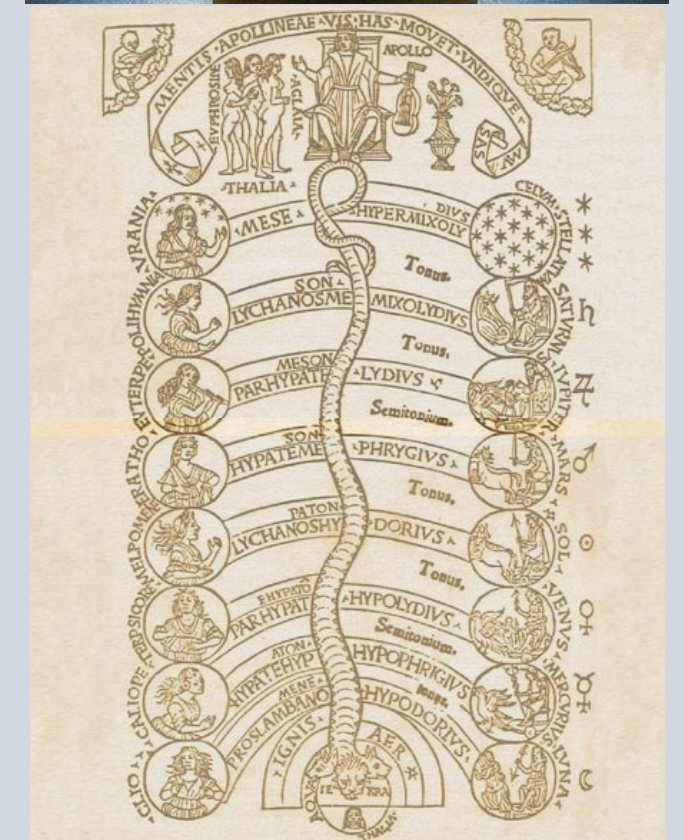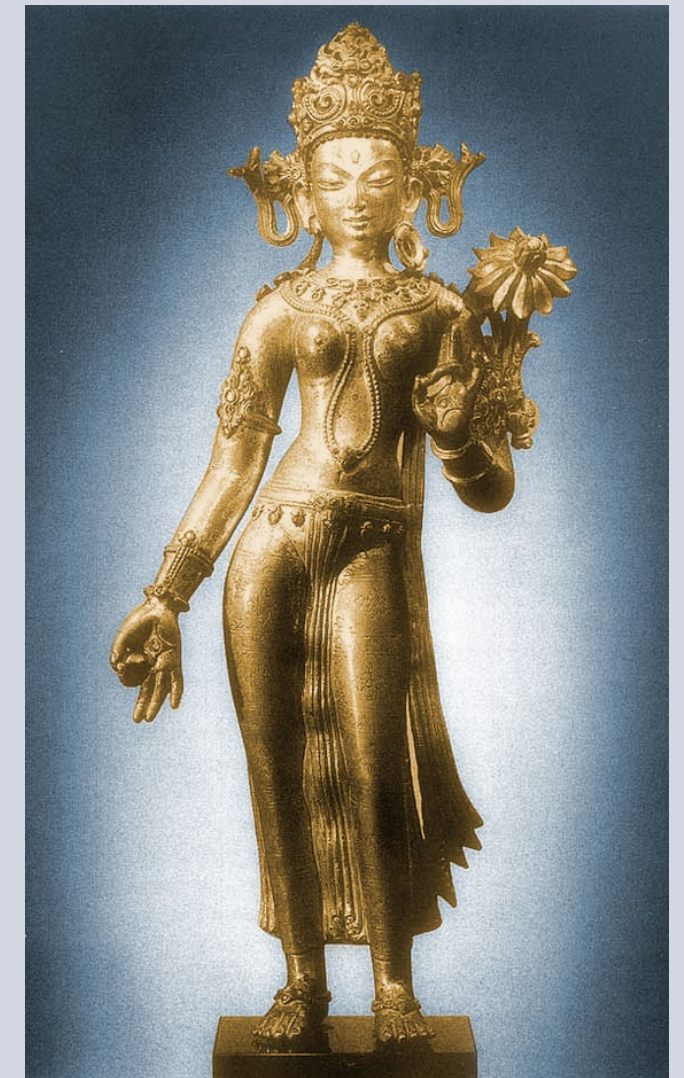
KATHY ACKER · BELA BARTOK · PIERRE BOULEZ · SAMUEL BECKETT · BERNARDO BERTOLUCCI · LUIS BUNUEL · THE BEATS (ESPECIALLY WILLIAM BURROUGHS, BUT NOT FOR THE USUAL REASONS) · ROBERT BURTON · JEAN COCTEAU · HENRY COWELL · CAMILLE PAGLIA · JAMES HILLMAN · HITCHCOCK · FRITZ LANG · EL LISSITZKY · ROBERT MOOG · ITALO CALVINO · VICO · MATT GROENING · IGMAR BERGMAN · AKIRA KUROSAWA · PETER GREENAWAY · MADONNA (FOR HER VIDEOS) · KUBRICK · T.S. ELIOT (FOR FOUR QUARTETS) · THE SIX POSTMODERN DAVIDS (HOCKNEY · MAMET · LYNCH · CRONENBERG · BYRNE · LETTERMAN) · (NEEDS TO BE EXPANDED TO FURTHER INCLUDE MORE GREAT WRITERS · INVENTORS · GRACEFUL DANCERS, ATHLETES · GENIUS MONEYMAKERS · HERETICS) · SERVETUS · VESALIUS · SCHOLARS · STANDUP COMICS · MADMEN · MADWOMEN · PAUL RAND · SAUL BASS · JOHN WHITNEY · LE CORBUSIER · I.M. PEI · RENZO PIANO · FRANK

GEHREY · FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT · EDWARD TUFTE · EVA HESSE · OTTO SCHLEMMER · HANNAH HOCH · GEORGE HERRIMAN · WINDSOR MCCAY · BILL GRIFFITHS · KATE BEATON · ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG · GEORGE HARRISON · JASPER JOHNS · ROY LICHTENSTEIN · BJORK · KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN · MARY SHELLEY · FRANK O'HARA · NIRVANA · JIMMY SMITH · MILES DAVIS · ORNETTE COLEMAN · RASHAAN ROLAND KIRK · FREDERICA VON STADE · JIMI HENDRIX · HARRY PARTCH · CHARLES IVES · KENNETH GABURO · DONALD MARTIN JENNI · WILLIAM HIBBARD · PETER TODD LEWIS · RICHARD HERVIG · JOHN RICHARD RONSHEIM · JOHANNES BRAHMS · ANNIE LENNOX · JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH · CLAUDE DEBUSSY · REINHOLD PIPER MARXHAUSEN · C.G. JUNG · OSCAR WILDE · JEAN SIBELIUS · DAVID FOSTER WALLACE · TAKASHI MURAKAMI · RIMBAUD · RANIER MARIE RILKE · WERNER HERZOG · RABELAIS

PROCESS: II. CRAFT

The Hazards and Application of Craft in the Age of Digital Media

Because digital life and culture seems to be an ever-sprawling, unstoppable virus, I am proposing *LIMITATION* as the most general distillation of craft in our age. All the case studies in this text are inquiries into taking the enormous possibilities of digital media and limiting the choices of techniques one applies to images, sounds, and texts.

Displacement distortion is the process of using one image to distort another. My twist is that I like to use an image to distort itself. Limitation is central, since only one filter is used (displacement distortion), as well as some of the standard tools of Photoshop (multiple layers and partial opacity). A displacement distortion image will retain the overall form of the original image, and add a level of strange yet organic distortion to the edges, almost extruding them but feathering them at the same time. You can go into individual distorted layers and edit each one slightly (using the dodge/burn, smudge, or sharpen tools) to alter the image in your own idiosyncratic way. Multiple layers of slightly different images at partial opacity is what gives Photoshop imagery a painterly glow.

Let's not stop there. Applying the process of displacement distortion to sound via techniques like convolution (see *Practicum: SoundSalads and Sound Hacking with Free Sound Software*) also results in an ambience that resembles the original, but stretches its timbral impact. This is most apparent in the convolution of human vocal convolutions, which take on mechanical, robotic qualities—sound cyborgs! [5.11]

Finally, applying an analog of this process to text, we might consider creating algorithms that take a sentence structure and distort it / displace it with multiple embellishments or featherings by inviting a broader vocabulary to populate the parts of speech in the given structure. I had one student attempt this with the phrase, "We are such stuff/As dreams are made on; and our little life/Is rounded with a sleep" using an algorithm I created in the interactive media environment Processing (page 50-51). Deconstructing The Bard in such a way extends—digitally—how he perhaps embraced the malleability and flux of English in his day. This exercise reminded me of the idea of an infinite number of monkeys coming up with *Hamlet*: another metaphor for our internet.

Take one technique—like my way of using displacement distortion, a process using a "map" of something to distort itself—and work it over, apply it both practically and conceptually (how would an idea displace/distort itself?), and paint one picture, write one book, sing one song, many, many times.

PROCESS: III. SYNTHESIS

Many are the approaches to synthesis. We shall investigate three: *The Subversive*, *The Distributed*, and *The Syncretic*.

SUBVERSIVE APPROACHES

Contemporary digital descendents of Man Ray, Tristan Tziara, Hugo Ball, and Marcel Duchamp have futher subverted useful technology by asking it to function in ways in which it was never intended, thus extending technology's meaning, and our experience of it.

Illegal art practices are well documented and include major genres such as urban graffiti, media appropriation, and mashups [5.12]. Significant contributors to the urban graffiti sphere often cross-pollinate their efforts with infusions of cinema and performance/intervention—they include Graffiti Research Labs [5.13], Banksy [5.14], and Blu [5.15]. Media appropriation artists doing battle with corporate lawyers from the likes of Disney, Warner Brothers, EMI, and Sony include Negativland [5.16], Todd Neely [5.17], and DJ Danger Mouse [5.18].

SUBVERTING GOOGLE, TWITTER

2011: Artist-engineers have repurposed some of the best-know web applications, often by using the software development kit (SDK) as a starting point. *Twittervision*, David Troy's deconstruction of

SUBVERTING URBAN AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ENVIRONMENTS

the micro-blogging mainstay Twitter revealed a real-time global theatre of the absurd, as Tweets from around the world

popped on the screen as they occurred. (*Note: Twittervision died in September 2009—now, just go to Facebook Live Map*).

2018: Actually, Twitter, Facebook and other social media have been subverted, brilliantly and deeply, to create a forum for fake news and bot-driven misinformation. Undermining objective, scientific truth and propagating xenophobia and hate—undercutting democracy and the rule of law—were not what I had in mind when I wrote about 'Subverting Social Media" what seems like many years ago. But, it happened. Like 9/11,
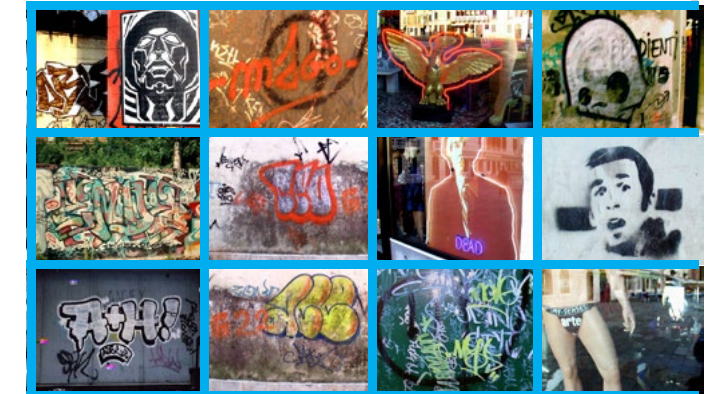
this is a moment when art and expressive media seem to be less relevant and take a back seat to the surreality of the present moment, but if you believe in the meaning and power of these creative, alchemical insights realized through media, performance, and idea, then you must continue your work, develop internal strength. and persist in crafting your vision, for this moment shall indeed pass.

Or, maybe not.

cal utterances or *microsongs* [5.31]. The subject of the film was the collection of words searched: *funk, freak, party, graffiti, street art, sticker art, iaght, yo, pimp, playa, skateboard, DJ, breakdance, b-boy, hiphop, body art, tat, tattoo, wack, kronk, urban, urban art*. Since the film was made entirely of appropriated content, Lawrence Lessig has called *PROJEK IAGHT™* "Derivative but totally thought-provoking—just as every great thought gets provoked" [5.32].

SEARCH ENGINE CINEMA

A technical knowledge of SDK programming environments is not always necessary to subvert the technology. The author's database film *PROJEK IAGHT™* [2005] used Google, Yahoo, and Flickr image search engines to collect and montage 6,300 images into a 3 1/2 minute digital film (30 images per second), complete with a soundtrack of pop songs each temporally compressed into five-second musi-

the western orchestra: the energetic young musicians simply performed individual orchestral parts which they submitted to YouTube. The parts were then composited to match the well-crafted, but not ground-breaking, modernist concert score [5.21]. Perhaps the work would seem more *Eroica*-like if it were not burdened with that name.

ALTERNATIVE PROJECTIONS: Alternative projections re-map the ubiquitous two dimensional world of digital media to three dimensions. While mostly used in intimate, interior art installations, alternative and multiple projections can activate architecture and outdoor settings, providing an epic canvas for digital artists like *Apparati Effimeri* [5.22].

Daniel Shiffman's wall for *Filament @ Tyneside Cinema Launch* [5.23] expands the temporal possibilities of multiple screens by simultaneously displaying every frame of a 50-second clip from the film *Run Lola Run*, each on a separate screen. The effect is oddly calming, as image sequences ripple vertically and horizontally across strips of screens, as if a massive pre-cinema visualization apparatus based on the zoetrope or praxinoscope were resurrected in the digital age.

DISTRIBUTED SYSTEMS

(MULTIPLE SCREENS, DISTRIBUTED CONCEPTS, MULTIPLE NARRATIVES, UBIQUITOUS SMARTPHONES)

YOUTUBE VIDEO WALLS [5.19]: A relatively new development in experimental digital media is the utilization of the digital object as part of a distributed performance or viewing system. Applying simple principles of division of labor to YouTube, recent artists like Darren Solomon have restrained visual and musical vocabulary to achieve a neo-minimalist ambience. His clarity of design in *In B-Flat* avoids the usual sonic and visual saturated chaos when multiple random videos are played together [5.20]. Tan Dun's highly over exposed marketing excursion *Internet Symphony, Eroica*, in contrast, failed to use digital means to break through the conceptual framework of

In grad school, I was interested in creating a type of music where each instrument was creating its own rhythmic world, unrelated to any other instrument. I learned how to do this with notation in the very complex music of Elliot Carter, and how to achieve this with non-human players (in the work of Conlon Nancarrow's player piano studies)[5.24]. But I had no clue how to do this with live performers, at least without complicated notation and many hours of rehearsal time.

One afternoon in the early days of the 1980s, I was in my favorite coffee house in Iowa City, Sheep's Head Cafe, where I would often have a lunch of a cup of their fantastic tomato soup and an espresso. Two students sat on opposite sides of the room, each listening to music on a Sony® Walkman, and both humming two completely different songs. I realized then that if performers *didn't* listen to each other— one foundation of conservatory music training is to *ALWAYS* listen to what other members of an ensemble are playing—then they could perform some complex work made up of very different pitch and time vocabularies. I began using multiple Walkmen as a way to structure my work. I would use them to provide a click track for instrumentalists, and as a "pitch track" for vocalists. This approach changed my relationship to *control* in music. While

I was extremely specific with regard to a player's horizontal activity (i.e., the succession of events, pitches, texts, theatrical, or gestural activity), I had no control over the *vertical* alignment of these events (harmonic, simultaneous, layered structures).

Due to differences in the Walkmen tape speed, I had to think of harmonies as clouds or tendencies, rather than as discrete, predictable events. "Clouds" could also describe the varying density of activity, ranging from chaotic multiple layers of intense rhythmic activity (players executing several tempi simultaneously), to delicate hocketing with one another on slower, identical tempi that were nicely fucked up from that charming +/- 6% difference in tape speeds I found among my various cassette machines.

My interest in multiple organizations of time facilitated by portable click tracks—first on cassette tapes, then on CDs, and most recently on iPods. mp3 players, and mobile phones—has preoccupied

me since 1983 with my flute quartet *Energy Levels* [5.25]. It was a guiding structural element in my first (chamber) opera *sound chaser/soul chaser*™ (1986), in *Cyborg Symphony*™ (1996), and in a number of smaller works, primarily for vocal ensembles. It is also at the structural heart of my second opera, *ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY*™ (2005).

In **FONS CHYMICAE VERITATIS** (1992), roughly translated as "*the fountain of chemical truth*", a 17th-century alchemical text by '*Philaletha*' was combined with a personal text, *Roger's Story*. When I worked at the UI Clinical Research Facility as a

dietary assistant, I prepared meals for test subjects. One subject was Roger, a man in his 50s who had survived an encounter with *herpes encephalitis*, at the time considered usually fatal. He survived and was completely functional, but the disease left him with a 42-second memory span. He would recycle his story, with variations, every 42 seconds. In the performance work, I tried to render that story as best I could, and spoke it after the alchemical text was sung. *fons chemicae veritatis/Roger's Story* (1992) was performed at a concert at Georgia State University, and is included in my *Cyborg Symphony*™. Later, I took the entire nine-minute work and digitally expanded it to 38 minutes, combining it with an **electronic rhythm**

WHATEVER'S NEXT—IN TECH, IN CULTURAL OR AESTHETIC PRACTICE—TURN IT INTO A PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE!

track to produce *Manatua* (2004). The title is Samoan for *remember*.

On the recording of *fons chemicae veritatis/Roger's Story,* you'll hear the six voices singing rhythmically identical tracks (except when they all diverge rhapsodically), but variations in tape speeds create the feathering of rhythmic activity. The pot is further stirred by a very gradual accelerando (from ♩ = 66 to ♩ = 208) over the course of the first five minutes.

REQUIEMETTE™. In 1996, I wanted to write a requiem, a mass for the dead, as many composers have, although I wanted to combine passages from the Latin *Missa defunctorum* text with passages from alchemical texts found in *Musaeum Hermeticum.* As a result, interesting juxtapositions of liturgical, familiar Latin text (*Dies irae, Requiescat In Pace, Lux aeternum,* etc.) occur with texts that approach similar themes of death and transformation through the symbols and metaphors of alchemy:

> *O our heaven! O our water and our Mercurius! O dead head or dregs of our sea! …And these are the epithets of the bird of Hermes, which never rests.*— (Translation, C.G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis,* p. 510. Bollingen Foundation, NY: 1963)

Most Requiems from the 18th through the 20th century—Mozart, Berlioz, Brahms, Verdi, Fauré, Benjamin Britten—last between 40 minutes and up to almost two hours. My requiem is so short—about nine minutes, so I called it *Requiemette™* (and, yes, there's Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles,* which is more concentrated: a handful of short movements totaling about 12 minutes).

The first performance was part of the *Art in Odd Places* in Atlanta, in a program that was called *Poets on Rooftops.* A number of spoken-word artists presented their work—simultaneously—from rooftops on a series of buildings in Little Five Points.

Requiemette™ was sung while all these poets were literally shouting from the rooftops. I think from street level it probably looked like the marketplace scene out of Monty Python's *Life of Brian.*

PARADOXA™(1998) [5.26] is a simple choral work for six to eight singers. Musically, it's entirely canonic, with once more a hairpin form resulting from a gradual accelerando-ritardando. In PARADOXA™ as in *Requiemette™,* the note-to-note pitch decisions are easy: a three- or four-note melody is repeated for each word in a phrase, the number of pitches used each time depends on the syllable count of the words. The Latin text is drawn from an inscription on the allegedly ancient tombstone of "Aelia Laelia Crispis" from Bologna, Italy, known as *The Enigma of Bologna:*

> *(Here lies) Aelia Laelia Crispis, neither man, nor woman, nor maid, nor young boy, nor crone, nor chaste, nor whore, nor virtuous, but all …*

ARTICLES OF SPACE™ [April 2001] (19 minutes) and **MEMENTO MORI™** [October 2001] (11 minutes) are both portable CD-based performance works for six vocalists and electronics [5.27].

Articles of Space™ was written for an exhibition of the same name curated by Leon Johnson for Western Oregon University at Monmouth in April 2001. The sextet of performers chanted from a number of "holy books," including works by Kathy Acker and Derrida; books for young readers like *Herbie (the Love Bug) Goes Bananas* and *The Vanilla Ice Story;* and more conventional revered texts like the *Tao Te Ching* and *The Upanishads.* The vocalists chant phrases (sentences or any clause articulated with punctuation) from their texts. They are free to sing as many or as few phrases per section as they desire, with the length of time between phrases also left to their discretion. A variety of textures, from very sparse to very dense, is the desired result, but this

is one work where I have not explicitly engineered this intention.

Pacing is extremely important: not everyone needs to be singing all the time. Each phrase begins with a held tone (the *incipit*), its length determined by the small number in italics below the pitch. After the incipit is held as long as is specified, the remainder of the phrase is chanted syllabically.

memento mori™ is a re-working of *Articles of Space™* except for one crucial difference: instead of drawing from a variety of texts for the verbal content of the piece, the performers chant the names of the victims of the 9/11/01 terrorist attacks. Subsequent to the premiere performance, conceptual casualites such as *irony*, *tolerance*, and *nuanced public discourse* are included among the victims.

memento mori™'s only performance to date was a rather somber one held at the Northwest ElectroAcoustic Music Festival in Portland, Oregon, only weeks after the young millennium's first defining event.

Below, Articles of Space/Memento Mori condensed score, and tempi in pulses per minute assigned to each vocal pitch.

cybersyncretics

Le Sacre, Antheil's *Ballet Mechaniqué*, and maybe Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* forming the most recognizable jewels in that particular crown), to several decades, as in the American Blues tradition. Artists within a specific style confront contradictory elements, and a hybrid evolves.

It's a very old idea: the rectilinear lines were drawn in Cartesian thought, separating mind and body. We see those same lines blurred, erased, or redefined in that great Kundalini yoga notion of the *subtle body*, as well as in the conversations and literature around virtual reality, artificial reality, and more prosaic distractions, such as object-oriented programming. That which is distinct, formal, structured, needs to bend, rust, decay, transform. Syncretic processes may sound a lot like the more august idea of the *dialectic*: two opposing elements melting into a synthesis. I propose there are ususally many more than two contradictory elements involved in a syncretic process in experimental and digital production, and the end result may not be a synthesis as much as a shaky co-existence. If the confluence of elements creates something new and challenging, something indeed rich and strange, then the syncretic moment has transformed beyond mere mix and mash-up. Or: perhaps a mix or mash-up that really **works** is in

A *syncretic* system is one made up of two or more foundation systems that are, at their core, contradictory. Voodoo is a good example of a syncretic (belief) system because it's a fusion of Caribbean and West African beliefs and Roman Catholicism. In this volume we are colliding physical/analog systems—bodies, paint, wood, stone, audible sound, printed texts—with virtual, digital ones, through the many, fecund wastelands of software. I maintain the ongoing discourse between digital / analog art and culture qualifies as an emerging syncretic system.

We see a syncretic accommodation of contradictory systems in how vocabularies *change*—the visual grunge look is upstaged by digital minimalism, and what develops is some kind of hybrid of biology and geometry. In sonic vocabularies, the half-life of a musical style or school is a volatile proposition, from a few years for early 20th-century primitivism (with

possession of that syncretic, alchemical moment. The successful mix is *BOTH* all-devouring Blakean monster and cute, plush, stuffed Sanrio® animal toy.

For contradictory beings, ideas, or things to occupy the same space/time often requires them to change and metamorphose. They can arrive at a transformative moment by applying subversive approaches or distributed systems-thinking to technology, aesthetics, and high-art intentions, good taste, cultural heritage, and core notions of what it means to be human or humane, while perhaps jettisoning any entrenched, unexamined ideas (such as belief systems). This process can result in *perspective* for its author.

When we subvert or shake up our sensibilities, or multiply a phenomenon and turn it into a distributed system, we can help reveal the secret hidden, inner dimensions and life of that phenomenon.

Syncretic processes are varied, insidious, at times sneaky, often flavored with arrogance, ever guided by the undiagnosed personality disorders of whichever muse holds court. As intuitive and unpredictable components emerge, volatility becomes a focal point, the most immediate and discernible outcome of multiple contradictory systems we attempt to invoke in our experimental voodoo quest. All my various recipes/case studies explored in this text present speculative approaches for finding those pivotal opening-moments: little imperfections that perfect the whole, like that last note in Louis Armstrong's *West End Blues* (1928) played on a cymbal that breaks as it's being struck [5.28].

Following page top "Passing Bird" (2014) [5.29]
All others, SkyRon™ playing The Kombo
in "DisTonea™" (2016) [5.30]