

devise an acceptable semiotic theory. If he does, there should be important modifications to, and extensions of, some of his central concepts. For instance, his notion of semanticity, and in particular his notion of the cognitive, would require recasting. Again, there seems to be something analogous to duality of patterning in music, although he claims that this is a feature peculiar to languages. Music also seems to possess weak grammaticality, and in some cases, it might be said to feature displacement.

Of course, it is not fair to an author to comment on the book that he has not written, but it is perhaps fair comment to remark that the title of this book promises more than it delivers. Within its limitations, none the less, it is first rate.

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*Language, Music and the Sign: A Study in Aesthetics, Poetics and Poetic Practice from Collins to Coleridge*. By KEVIN BARRY. Cambridge U P 1987 pp 244 £25

TO BEGIN with, this book is an attempt to fill a gap, it sets about improving our understanding, if you like, of that period in which aesthetics came self-consciously into being by thematizing the significance of the theory of music to eighteenth-century signifying processes. On these terms it might be read as supplementary to the work of John Barrell and Hans Aarsleff: the discussion of painting in Barrell, the investigation into semiotics in Aarsleff, or even the consideration of both on the part of M. H. Abrams, do not, it is suggested, provide us with a sufficiently complete picture of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century aesthetic theory. An exploration of the treatment of music in Rousseau, in Thomas Twining, in James Harris and others, will effectively serve to give us a fuller appreciation of both poetics and poetic practice from Adam Smith to Samuel Taylor Coleridge. But as much as this work endeavours to bring into view the importance of the discourse on music, it sets about effecting a change in contemporary hermeneutics, in going about enhancing our familiarity with a given period, the book at the same time proposes the necessity of a re-reading of poetry from Collins

and Cowper to William Wordsworth. Critical excursions into the literary practice of the period are best conducted through the lens of, or at least with a consciousness of, eighteenth-century musicology and its theorization of the 'empty sign'.

Music—for Twining, for Harris, for George Webb—is characterized by a certain distance which interposes itself between meaning and intention, between notation and its reference. Bringing theory to the phenomenon of music, Twining and company are upsetting the notion of mimetic concordance between symbol and symbolized, a concordance which otherwise (with the possible exception of Adam Smith) goes unchallenged in the aesthetics of the period. In resuscitating the efficacy of these insights, in filling out the edges of his archaeological exposé, Barry is targeting the neo-Coleridgeanism of Wimsatt, Abrams and Wellek, he is challenging the viability of a critical adherence to an interpretative methodology grounded in specularly.

The importance of this book cannot be contested. It handles over a century of material with economy and acumen. Its argument encompasses a wealth of speculation from Addison's proposition of a determinate relation between the sign and its referent in 1726 to Horne Tooke's etymological treatises of the 1780s and Dugald Stewart's contextualism of the early 1800s. In the process, Barry manages to produce an excellent reading of Cowper's 'On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture' and an original chapter on Coleridge. The virtues of the work's encyclopaedism, however, make its omissions all the more noticeable. A thirty-page chapter on Wordsworth makes little use of the 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* or the 1802 emendations to the Preface; the implications of the linguistics of the *Essays upon Eptaphs* are not touched upon, there is no mention of the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface of 1815*.

Exclusion, of course, is a charge which is always difficult to avoid. In bringing it, it is hard to seem more than pedantic. The real difficulty with this book lies elsewhere. In making an incision into a debate which broaches the demands of historicism, of deconstruction and of humanism, the book does not make the reader conversant with its own particular re-

commendations. The Conclusion elaborates a continuity between the British national debt and eighteenth-century aesthetics, but we are left wondering whether this amounts to polite gesturing, a good-mannered genuflection in the direction of history, or whether a programmatically historical reading is being retroactively prescribed. Is Barry cataloguing a workable homology, or establishing a causal relation? Again, where does his pronounced admiration for Agnes Fletcher leave him *vis-à-vis* Paul de Man's allegorizing of Romanticism? What is given in literary representation? Is it possible to philosophize the literary if we abandon the representationalist paradigm? *Language, Music and the Sign* encourages these questions, but it shies away from sign-posting solutions, or even from hailing their inscrutability.

We are left with a problem: are we to take it that critical practice is to be legitimated by its subsumption under established premisses borrowed from a separate discursive practice, which the employment of musicology would encourage us to believe? Or is it that critical insight is inevitably accompanied by theoretical blindness, as the championing of the 'empty sign' might lead us to suspect? Or is it, again, that history is the 'text' through which all cultural artefacts are to be construed? Still, if the book leaves us in the dark with regard to its own allegiances and theoretical prescriptions, it nevertheless manages to disturb Romantic orthodoxy as it makes its appearance in the rearguard of contemporary British and American literary theory, and it manages to do so without shrillness or self-importance. The work is timely and impressive and certainly manages to convince us of the significance of an area which has for too long been ignored.

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*Schoenberg and the New Music* By CARL DAHLHAUS. Translated by Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton. Cambridge U.P. 1987. pp. 305. £30.

THIS COLLECTION brings together twenty-eight of Dahlhaus' essays from a variety of sources and dates (1964–84). Only one, 'Schoenberg and Schenker', has appeared in English before. Although the subjects covered are various, an

effort has been made to arrange the essays into a reasonably coherent order. The opening group investigates the notions of newness and of the avant-garde, of popularity, progress and the problem of genre, each primarily from a historical point of view. A substantial central grouping deals with Schoenberg himself; there are subsidiary essays on Webern and Schreker and, perhaps surprisingly, on Scriabin, and the final six pieces are given over to matters ostensibly concerning post-war music, although in terms with which readers of Dahlhaus' earlier *Foundations of Music History* will be abundantly familiar.

The consistency of the collection derives from Schoenberg, however, whose anxieties and preoccupations pervade even those essays not explicitly devoted to him. Mindful to the point of obsession of his place within a tradition which he revered—a tradition whose aesthetic norms he stood accused of up-rooting—Schoenberg was the type of the conservative revolutionary. The desire for legitimation made a polemical analyst of him. He searched the works of the masters for evidence of his own conservatism, and produced analyses of his own works which sought to underline their very ordinariness. It is perhaps apt (and it is certainly poignant) that Schoenberg himself should have come eventually to supplant Brahms or Bach at the focus of his own genealogical concern. In 1937 much of his early music had been accepted, and was now being used to berate him for his later music. So he was reduced, in what is probably his most touching essay, to claiming descent—not from Brahms or from Bach—but from himself: 'I have not discontinued composing in the same style and in the same way as at the very beginning. The difference is only that I do it better now than before' ('How One Becomes Lonely').

For a music historian who is also a musical analyst this should be a rich preserve, and Dahlhaus certainly explores it in earnest. He deals at some length with the two most obvious counter-examples to Schoenberg's assertion—namely, his emancipation of the dissonance, and his invention (or his 'discovery') of dodecaphony—and is never less than absorbing in his observations. Sharing with Schoenberg a predilection for theory, and a certain discomfort in