The Voicing of the Voiceless in Tan Dun's The Map: Horizon of Expectation and the Rhetoric of National Style

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Published by University of Texas Press
DOI: 10.1353/amu.0.0021

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The Voicing of the Voiceless in Tan Dun’s *The Map*: Horizon of Expectation and the Rhetoric of National Style

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During my undergraduate years in Sydney, Australia, one of my embarrassingly preliminary compositions for flute and piano, which no longer remains in my current portfolio, was featured at the Young Composers’ Salon of the 11th Sydney Springs International Festival of New Music.¹ The composition drew its inspiration from a set of eighth century haiku poems. It had a provocative Japanese title, made extensive use of Japanese pentatonic modality, and it featured shakuhachi-like gestures on the flute. I thought nothing of its lack of subtlety at the time; it was, after all, one of those straightforward efforts that you might expect from an inexperienced young composer. After its premiere, a well-respected Australian composer, who shall remain anonymous, approached me and complimented the composition’s attractiveness; she was however puzzled as to why my Chinese-ness did not come through.

It seemed as though in the tug-of-war between the prefix and suffix of my schizophrenic hyphenated-self, the more generic Australian-ness was somehow expected to give way to the more exotic half of my identity. Perhaps the way my name (Kar-Fai Samson Young) is spelled, carrying the unmistakably Chinese romanization of Kar-Fai, also meant that I am not to expect to be regarded as just a composer, an individual, but as a hybrid Chinese-insert-location composer, depending on where I am working from at the time. Given the ambition of the festival, which was to promote contemporary Australian compositions, the political duty of tokenism my colleague had imposed upon me certainly seemed unfair.

Individualism versus National Style

Despite the great disparity between the many different kinds of Chinese-ness in and outside of mainland China, the notion of a coherent, one-size-fits-all national style has often been cited as a stylistic signpost for the collective creative output of ethnically Chinese composers, at the expense of other artistic qualities (Kouwenhoven 1992; Mittler 2003; Utz 2003, 7–8). Ethnically Chinese composers have a love-hate relationship with the romanticized notion of Chinese-ness:
On the one hand, for many, it is a time-tested marketing stratagem, a productive resource with a proven track record (Lau 2004, 33–9). On the other hand, when appropriated in commentaries, it remains an artistically restrictive pigeonhole of categorization that imposes enormous burden on composers. In an interview with Christian Utz shortly after the 1998 premiere of Peony Pavilion, New York-based Chinese composer Tan Dun lamented music critics’ tendency to read too much into his cultural background, and their use of it as a yardstick against which to measure his creative output. Indeed, Tan Dun’s treatment of cultural elements has long been a popular subject of dispute that attracted considerable criticisms from both the press and the academic community in and outside of China (Smith 2003). Yu Siu-wah (2004) in “Two Practices Confused in One Composition” took issue with Tan’s insensitive juxtaposition of cultural signifiers in his Symphony 1997. According to Yu, many of the current generation of ethnically Chinese composers’ insensitive handling of politically charged subject matters had led many into “embarrassing or controversial situations” (71).³

In defense of his compositions against the kind of culturally referential readings that Yu and other critics had put forward, Tan Dun resorts to the notion of individualism:

> If I were to write a Ph.D. thesis about Schoenberg, my own point of departure, initially, would be his personality, rather than broader cultural issues [. . .] Ideally, every artist must be regarded, first and foremost, as an individual. (Utz 1998, 143)

Tan Dun’s defense mechanism seems to be echoed elsewhere. Beijing composer Guo Wenjing, in an interview with Oliver Chou prior to the premiere of his latest offering, Journeys, remarked:

> What is a national style? It’s hard to define [. . . ] Is Tchaikovsky’s music so popular because it’s [in] Russian style or because it’s Tchaikovsky? (Chou 2004, 5)

In a recent conference paper, “Against National Style—Individualism and Internationalism in New Chinese Music,” Barbara Mittler (2003) suggested that new Chinese music, rather than always being defined by its relationship to China, should also be taken seriously as “the expression of individualism” (2–3). She argued against the use of minzuxing (nature of a race) as the main point of reference in the reading of contemporary Chinese compositions; rather, she advocated the viewing of composers as individuals speaking to a global public, each mapping his or her unique identity onto sound.

Mittler’s apostrophe to individualism is timely, for it puts into perspective ethnically Chinese composers’ many positions from which to speak in a global marketplace, thus offering multiple perspectives from which New Chinese Music can be approached critically. Mittler’s model also renders arbitrary the fraught demand imposed upon ethnically Chinese composers to be Chinese, bringing
to light the heterogeneous state of Chinese tradition and Chinese-ness among different communities.

By the same token, however, Mittler’s individualism also offers a broad shelter with which composers can deflate all sorts of culturally defined criticism. Do analysts want to evade ethnicity altogether by adopting a neutral, utopian ideology? As Frederick Lau (2004) has pointed out, despite their wish to be viewed as individuals in a transnational world, some Chinese composers appear to have nonetheless actively summoned cultural identity at various times for commercial and personal interests. In a postcolonial market place where ethnicity is also a commodity, there is, naturally, enormous temptation to self-Orientalize to exploitative ends. In the words of Allen Chun:

[. . . decolonization] does not mean [. . .] that one is free to invent culture as one pleases . . . only by demystifying the authority of interests that have deemed it necessary to define culture in [a] particular way and to make people identify with prevailing communities would one then be free to choose, making the idea of multiple identities a meaningful reality. (Chun 1996, 137)

To reconcile the contesting paradigms of slippery acculturation and sweeping individualism, what we need is a framework that, on the one hand sufficiently acknowledges minority composers as global citizens and individuals, but on the other hand, continues to allow for nuanced culturally referential readings of their works. In the following, I will attempt to describe such a framework, under which analysts and commentators can continue to hold composers accountable for the sort of cultural hypocrisy Yu has pointed out, without necessarily imposing the burden of tokenism on ethnically Chinese composers in their artistic endeavors. Borrowing Jeffrey Kallberg’s idea of style as “rhetoric” and “contract,” I will argue that the active summoning of minzuxing and other self-Orientalizing gestures carries with it sets of expectations that a composer must answer for. In other words, minzuxing is not only a classification after the fact, but an active form of communication to be potentially exploited.

Our inquiry shall begin with Tan Dun’s multimedia epic, The Map.

Mapping Oneself

In 1999, Tan Dun returned to his native Hunan with a sizeable camera crew, where he collected video footage of musical activities from the regions of Tujia, Miao, and Dong of southwestern China. Tan Dun juxtaposes these video footages with a Western orchestra and a cellist; the resulting synthesis is The Map—a work which Tan Dun describes as a “multimedia concerto grosso” (2004b, 7).

Tan Dun had spoken publicly about his aspiration for The Map on several occasions, most notably in a documentary film that is part of a DVD recording
released by Deutsche Grammophon, but also in an article entitled “Mapping the Portrait” written by the composer himself in July 2004, prior to *The Map’s* Boston premiere, the text of which also appears as part of the video projection itself in the “Interlude.” He also gave several documented public lectures on the work, including one that was given at the University of Hong Kong prior to *The Map’s* 2004 New Vision Festival performance.7

I would like to list a number of quotations from the sources listed above, to generate a sense of how the composer positions himself in relation to the work, the surrounding cultural norms, and the various institutions of production:

*The Map* [. . .] is a return home, the home of music, the home of spirit. (Tan 2004a)

Today, ancient cultural traditions vanish everyday, everywhere. If artists embrace the past and the future within their hearts, miracles will arrive. (Tan 2004b, 7)

If one composes for a European orchestra, but incorporates the unique perspectives of different cultures, as well as one’s own personal roots, it becomes a new orchestra—like Schoenberg’s and Bartok’s did. People always say that human life is finite, but we forget that renewing the cultures and reinventing the traditions can extend human life infinitely. (Tan 2004b, 8)

My greatest wish in composing *The Map* was actually to meld technology and tradition. Through tradition, technology can be humanized; through technology, tradition can be renewed and passed on. (Tan 2004b, 8)

[Things] stopped at the moment I left the village a long time ago [. . .] sounds must come from somewhere but also must continue to somewhere. (Tan 2004c)

Here, not without hesitation, I shall attempt to assert a number of observations regarding Tan Dun’s self-positioning in relation to his cultural roots, his audience, and the institution of Western classical music production:

1. *The Map* represents the composer’s effort to preserve vanishing traditions;
2. *The Map* represents the composer’s effort to renew and revitalize the Western orchestra, in line with similar attempts by such key figures of Western art music history as Bartok and Schoenberg;
3. Tradition for Tan Dun is specifically defined as a frozen cultural moment in time that is preserved and idealized in the collective psyche of the Chinese people, and such a precious cultural moment is not to progress with time.

Note that Tan Dun seems to be playing two roles here simultaneously, each coming from a different ideological standpoint: that of the preserver of vanishing cultures, specifically as an ethnically Chinese artist; and that of the innovator of the modern Western orchestra, as a citizen of the world and practitioner of Western art. With this in mind, let us now proceed to examine ways by which his aspirations manifest themselves in *The Map*. 
Whose Map?

The Map is scored for cello and orchestra, with an accompanying video projected onto a screen behind the ensemble. For the most part, musical instruments dominate the soundscape, while the audio recording of the accompanying video is occasionally heard in synchronization with the musicians on stage. Structurally, The Map can be divided into four major sections:

- “Sonic Counterpoints”
  - I. Nuo
  - II. Blowing Leaf
  - III. Daliuzi
- “Studies in Contrasts”
  - IV. Miao Suona
  - V. Feige
- “Interlude”
  - VI. Mapping the Portrait
- “Solo Cello, Orchestra, and Video Becoming One”
  - VII. Stone Drums
  - VIII. Tongue-Singing
  - IX. Lusheng

Nuo, Blowing Leaf, and Daliuzi constitute the first section that Tan Dun regards as a succession of “sonic counterpoints” (Tan 2004b, 13). This section begins with a lyrical solo passage on the cello, occasionally punctuated by bold orchestral gestures. The winds and the percussion then enter into the texture, and this is followed by video footage and sound recording of a group of elder female villagers half-crying and half-singing, in a vocal style that is commonly referred to as lament singing (Schimmelpenninck 1997, 94–5). The following movements Miao Suona and Feige can be thought of as an extended dialogue between the video and various Western instruments on stage. The movement Feige is of particular significance. Feige, literally meaning “flying song,” refers to an antiphonal song of courtship that is usually sung by a male and a female across great distances (Schimmelpenninck 1997, 18–19). In the case of The Map, a young Miao woman is seen on screen, dressed in the region’s traditional costume, and accompanied by a wash of strings and harp glissandi. She symbolically exchanges songs with the cellist, who then responds in imitation. The Miao girl’s vocal style is florid, rhythmically free and improvisational with a piercing nasal quality. Her floriferous passion, when transferred to the Western compositional framework, is tamed and rationalized in the cellist’s answer: little of the original calling’s most striking characteristics remain, apart from its approximate melodic contour and the sliding tones. The fact that this particular Feige actually recounts a young boy whom the Miao girl met at the
market and is longing to see again seems to bear little significance for Tan Dun; the cellist and the Miao girl are made to court on the stage, and on public display (see Figure 1). Toward the end of Feige, bodily movement of the Miao girl in the video is drastically slowed down, frozen, and eventually faded away, while the orchestra proceeds to the next section. Her duty is done, her voice is contingent, but the music must go on.

Never was there another moment in the composition where Tan Dun’s unidirectional East-West model is so perceptibly exposed: the traditional versus

Figure 1. Screenshot from Feige, in a performance conducted by the composer with Yo Yo Ma as the soloist (from Parnassuss Productions n.d.: Composition and Remarks section).\textsuperscript{10}
the modern; the irrational versus the logical; history versus progress, and the objectified and the muted versus the transparent, theorizing intellectual who grants it a voice. The videotaped Miao girl is forever preserved on screen, caged in a specific time in history, reincarnated only when her service to a Western orchestra is called for. She is not allowed to progress with time; or if she does, she must at once be slowed down, for a modernized Miao girl is of no interest to the composer, whose main interest is to enrich and renew the modern Western orchestra.

The curious “Interlude” that follows opens with a scrolling text by the composer himself, a sort of program-notes-on-screen, once again reminding us of his wish to “keep things from disappearing” (Tan 2004b, 7). While we listen to the symphonic backdrops that accompany the text we again wonder: Is Tan Dun genuinely concerned with the intrinsic value of disappearing traditions, or is he more concerned with the modernization of what could be a source of creative renewal? In the fourth and last section, the soloist, the orchestra, and the video footage merge into a unified, multimedia canvas of sounds and sights. In Tongue-Singing, footage of a quintet of Dong women singing in polyphony is juxtaposed with a sustained drone. At times, the camera zooms into the eyes of the female singers, who at first acknowledge the camera’s presence with some hesitation, exchange gazes, and then self-consciously look away (see Figure 2).

Tan Dun speaks of the melding of tradition and technology in The Map, when in fact they never really come together even until the very end. Barriers are preserved and punctuated at all times, for the composer is constantly reminding us of the dichotomy of the object and bearer of the gaze, and of the imbalance of the promise of power. This is not a map of a reconstruction of personal memory, or that of a preserver of vanishing cultures, but a map by which an innovator of the Western musical language finds his way to exotic materials. Our expectations are once again frustrated.

You may find that I am being unforgiving with my postcolonial reading of The Map. This is done so with the deliberate intent to expose a question that inevitably begs itself: Does it matter even if Tan Dun is confusing two roles at once? The fundamental question remains: If, following Mittler, composers are first and foremost global citizens and individuals, would it still be fair to subject his/her output under the scrutiny of postcolonialist discourse, and to fault insincere employment of cultural signifiers or self-Orientalizing strategies?

Kallberg’s Generic Contract

Let us now make a detour and refer to Jeffrey Kallberg’s (1998) idea of musical genre as a social phenomenon. According to Kallberg, genre, rather than being a category for classification, is a communicative concept and “a social
Figure 2. A sequence of close-up shots from Tongue-Singing (from Tan 2004a).
phenomenon shared by composers and listeners” (243). This communicative concept actively frames our response to a piece of work, for it evokes a whole set of expectations and meanings that are in turn based on some social, historical, and contextual constructs. When a composer chooses to evoke a particular genre, he or she is entering into a “generic contract” (ibid.) with the audience, under which the composer agrees to adhere to certain conventions, while the audience agrees to interpret the composition under certain specific conditions necessitated by the genre in question. Generic contracts, according to Kallberg, can be frustrated by composers. In fact, it is often those works that defy the limits of generic contracts that exemplify the most interesting and individual outputs of a composer’s career.14

The persuasive force of genre’s “horizon of expectation” (Kallberg 1998, 243), which directs one’s response to a composition, depends largely on the concept of a generic contract between the composer and the audience, and the potential for a composer to either comply to or defy its limits. But how does this generic contract get established in the first place? Allow me to make a further detour.

The Rhetoric of Minzuxing

In “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance,” Nicholas Cook (2001) proposes an ethnographic approach to musical analysis, where a performance is read in reference to what he describes as a performance network, a pathway of communication beginning from the composer, to notation, to performer, to material realization, and eventually to the listener, within a particular cultural context (see Figure 3).

Carolyn Abbate (2004) recounts Cook’s idea as viewing performance as a phenomenon that has been “scripted into the musical text” (507). The scripted phenomenon in question passes through multiple channels of communications originating from the composer, to musical notation, which in turn is physically realized by the performers, to be eventually received by the audience. One might understand this act of scripting as simply putting notes on a page, embedding into the notation various performance directions, tempo, dynamic markings, and so on. Naturally, if the composer was present at the rehearsal, he might also choose to communicate his thoughts with the performers. But according to this view, it would seem that a composer’s control over his or her communication with the audience mostly begins and ends with the act of scripting, for beyond the level of notation, a number of indeterminate variables immediately come into play: the quality and character of the performance, the acoustic conditions of the venue, or the number of occurrences of mobile phones going off, to name a few.

As a composer, I am aware of my vulnerability, and the lack of control over the sonic realization of my own compositions. However, I am also poignantly aware
of the ways outside of conventional notation by which I could, and have been able to, resume some control over the reception of my compositions by communicating to the audience by nonnotational means; for example, through elaborate program notes, biographies, and preconcert talks; by speaking to the press about my work; or by giving my piece a provocative and exotic title. All of these are ways by which a composer could bypass the unpredictable variables of a physical performance. Immediately, we can see that Nicholas Cook’s unidirectional model of a performance network no longer suffices in giving us the full picture of the various forces that come into play in shaping the audience’s response. Much like the way genre frames the audience’s expectation, the various devices other than notation I have thus far mentioned function in a similar manner, within what I would call a “network of expectation formation” (see Figure 4).

There is, of course, a limit as to how much control a composer is able to exert beyond the level of scripting. But if one is to accept the choice of genre and the consequential generic contract as an aspect that deserves serious attention in
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Music criticism, nonnotational scripting that opens an alternative path of communication ought to be taken seriously also as part of a composer’s toolbox. So when Tan Dun speaks of *The Map* as being “a multimedia concerto grosso [. . .] incorporating one’s own personal roots” (Tan 2004b, 13), a horizon of expectation is immediately evoked, obliging the composer and the audience into a communicative contract.

At this point my intention in citing Kallberg should be self-evident: I would argue that the subscription to a particular musical style, such as Chinese national style or *minzuxing*, is as much a conscious and deliberate artistic decision as the choice of genre. The communicative contract of *minzuxing* gets established through multiple paths of communication in the “network of expectation formation.” Here too, *minzuxing* is not only a classification, but communication.

In the case of *The Map*, when Tan Dun frames it in terms of a personal journey back to his cultural roots, and claims close affinity with the culture that is borrowed, a certain sensitivity in his treatment of materials and a level of social awareness as well as cultural fidelity are assumed. Note that this demand for cultural accuracy stems not from the cultural context within which the work is situated and critically received, but from the composer’s own active engagement and exploitation of a discourse that carries with it sets of expectations. Despite his wish to be viewed as transnational, when Tan Dun describes *The Map* as “a return home . . . the home of music, the home of spirit” (2004a), and speaks of a crystallized image of his native Hunan that “stayed beautifully in [his] memory” (2004c), is he not again accentuating the very category he aspires to transcend?

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**Figure 4. Network of expectation formation.**
One, of course, must always bear in mind that the network of expectation formation functions within cultural norms and institutions that also shape the audience’s expectation. This external force is often exerted in a manner that is contrary to a composer’s wishes, as in the case of the unfair demand imposed upon me to be Chinese by my Australian colleague. This is where Mittler’s individualism comes into play to defend one’s artistic freedom. But when Tan Dun willingly and actively enters himself into a communicative contract through the network of expectation formation, he could potentially be held accountable for any mishandling or trespassing of the sets of limits that the contract entails.

Reincarnating National Style

With minzuxing’s loadedness in mind, it is not difficult for one to see why ethnically Chinese composers both in and outside of China are quick to disassociate themselves from the notion of a unified Chinese national style. I, for one, remain convinced that minzuxing or Chinese national style continues to be a source of potential artistic burden, imposing unfair demands on Chinese artists in their artistic endeavors. But while it is true that a homogenous national style can impose unfair demands on composers, it is perhaps premature to sideline minzuxing and to underestimate its significance in the critical reading of New Chinese Music. I am certainly not advocating the re-centralization of minzuxing in our discussions. Instead, we need a framework that on the one hand acknowledges the versatility in the treatment of the imaginary construct of Chinese-ness as a particularized reality, and that, at the same time, sufficiently accounts for its impact on artists and audiences alike as a collective cultural invention. Note that here, I am not simply referring to the ways by which the notion of a cultural China have influenced the style, aesthetic, and subject matter of the nation’s recent serious music. Instead, we must consider minzuxing as sets of histories and conventions that a composer might choose to avoid, appropriate, exploit, or critique, and as sets of communicative expectations that frame the audience’s response. We must consider the persuasive force that minzuxing exerts, the ways by which it guides the responses of listeners—its rhetoric.

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Notes

1 The Sydney Springs International Festival of New Music, the last season of which was held in 2002, focuses on the presentation of contemporary Australian compositions. The concert in question was held at the studio theatre of Sydney Opera House on August 21, 2000.
Peony Pavilion, Tan Dun's second chamber opera, is loosely based on the Chinese classic by Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) of the same title. It was premiered in Vienna on May 12, 1998.

Symphony 1997 was commissioned by the Hong Kong government to commemorate the reunification of Hong Kong and China. To many local residents, the handover of sovereignty had been a source of anxiety. In 1992 alone, more than 66,000 Hong Kong residents sought citizenship in other countries in fear of drastic changes to their way of life under future communist rule. It is estimated that a total of one million locals left the city between 1984 and 1997 (Manion 2004). Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, Tan Dun's use of certain cultural signifiers was considered by some to be inappropriate. For instance, Tan Dun's employment of the Bianzhong (Imperial Bells) as well as the use of musical quotations from the famous Cantonese Opera Dinhuahua, which depicts the fall of a dynasty and the dissolute fate of the imperial family, offended many Hong Kong intellectuals. For details of other mishandling of politically charged subject matter by Chinese composers, see Yu (2004, 71).

Journeys for soprano and orchestra was given its first performance by the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre concert hall on October 22, 2004.

The nature and definition of minzuxing is a multifaceted problem that warrants a study of its own. In fact, numerous such studies have been attempted; some even feel that the discourse of contemporary Chinese music suffers from a lack of close reading, in overwhelming favor of identity politics and meta-cultural issues (Kouwenhoven 1992, 76). Scholars of the field, including some of its pioneers, have traditionally emerged from such diverse disciplines as cultural studies, sinology, postcolonial studies, and literary studies. As a result, literature on contemporary Chinese music has traditionally focused on this music's relationship to its identity-marking suffix. Questions such as “how Chinese” or “what kind of Chinese-ness” are often points of departure in these writings. In a recent article in Contemporary Music Review (Young 2007), I suggested that instead of focusing on the degrees to which a signifier is “traditional” or “contemporary,” one should ask why is ethnicity performed when it is not always necessary, and potentially even distracts attention from the music itself. Minzuxing can manifest in numerous ways, ranging from the more obvious use of pentatonic neo-romanticism, to recognizable musical quotations, to more ephemeral allusions to Chinese philosophies. Note that the concept of minzuxing as applied by Mittler, Utz, and Kouwenhoven does not refer to the state-imposed cultural rhetoric, which was an integral part of China's post-Mao nation-building project; rather, it has more to do with reception (by the audience) and perception. For the purpose of our discussion, I similarly refer to minzuxing as simply a focus on ethnicity, either by a composer's own use of identity-marking gestures, or as a stylistic signpost as deemed appropriate by analysts.

Here, Lau is referring to the ways by which some of the current generation of Chinese composers have exploited the Orientalist discourse to their advantage in the global marketplace, specifically, with the record industry and arts presentation agencies in mind.

This lecture was given at the Rayson Huang lecture theatre of the University of Hong Kong on October 23, 2004.
Lament singing is not particular to the people of Miao, but is practiced in several regions of China including the Hakka. These are usually mixtures of singing and weeping, functioning either as funeral laments for the deceased, or as bridal laments.

Feige belongs to a category of folk songs of the Miao tribe that are collectively referred to as Shan’ge. They are improvisational songs that are sung outdoors, the subject matters of which are often concerned with work and love. For more details see Schimmelpenninck (1997).

Tan Dun’s 1999 Hunan trip was born directly out of Yo Yo Ma and the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s commission, which Tan Dun had just received months earlier. According to the documentary film that accompanies the Deutsche Grammophon DVD recording of The Map, the Miao girl, whose Feige was videotaped and subsequently weaved into the composition, was told at the time to imagine herself singing the song of courtship to Yo Yo Ma halfway across the globe. The Map’s premiere in Boston did in fact feature Yo Yo Ma as the soloist, but subsequent performances outside of the United States, including the Hong Kong New Vision Festival performance in 2004, as well as the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra outdoor performance shown on the DVD, which took place in the village where the Miao girl resides, featured Finnish cellist Anssi Karttunen instead.

I am referring to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) idea of the irreducible discontinuity of representation (speaking for) and re-presentation. What I hope to problematize here is Tan Dun’s confusing of the two action categories by the covering over of the discontinuity with paradoxical subject-privileging: as a highly visible Chinese speaking for his nation, and as a transparent Western intellectual theorizing the mute and the oppressed (Spivak 1988, 275).

Here, I am appropriating one of the key arguments that has emerged from feminist theories about gender, images, and popular culture, namely, the view that historically, women have been the object of the gaze. Theorists such as Laura Mulvey (1988) and John Berger (1972) have argued that in films, for example, women on screen are to be looked at by men—men have the right to gaze upon women, while women’s presences express their own attitude to themselves. Women have little recourse: they are the object of the gaze and men are the subject of the film’s action and plot. The bearer of the gaze also embodies the promise of power and cultural dominance. This idea of the dichotomy of the bearer of the gaze and the object of desire is sometimes appropriated in postcolonial studies of power imbalance between an imperial power and its colonies.

The idea of genre as communication rather than classification originated in literature theory, as seen in the writings of such theorists as Adena Rosmarin (1986, 46), Ann E. Imbrie (1986, 45–69), and Alastair Fowler (1982, 75–82, 92–8), though Kallberg is one of the first musicologists to have explicitly applied similar concepts to the study of musical genre, specifically, to the Western canonic repertoire.

For example, Kallberg (1998) drew Chopin’s Nocturne in G Minor, op. 15, no. 3 as an example of the composer’s use of generic ambivalence as an original compositional strategy.

Since we are on the topic of genre, it is also interesting to note that Tan Dun has described The Map as a multimedia concerto grosso: On the one hand, it simply reveals the composer’s intention to treat the cellist and the video as musical equals (though, as we have seen, they are not really on a level playing field, at least ideologically). On the
other hand, it hints at how Tan Dun wishes to locate himself and his works in relation to the institution of the Western classical canon. In all of the examples cited earlier where Tan Dun publicly speaks about The Map, he compares himself with such great innovators of Western music history as Beethoven, Schoenberg, Bartok, and Stravinsky. This fascination with placing oneself at the forefront of the historical progress of Western art is not partial to Tan Dun. Stravinsky, for instance, was also known to be always mindful of comparing himself to the great masters, but it is of particular significance for someone such as Tan Dun, who is essentially Occidentalizing a Western musical language that is not a part of his perceived heritage. Perhaps this might also shed light on the reasons behind Tan's desire to be viewed as a transnational composer, an individual situated within the core of Western culture, instead of being a marginalized Chinese composer.

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Young, Samson

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