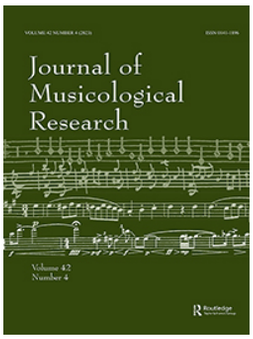

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Musical Instruments and Palimpsestic Identity

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ABSTRACT

Palimpsests are conventionally understood to be manuscripts that have been reused or recycled, with traces of earlier inscriptions identifiable under later writings. Metaphorically, the term connotes ideas about reading off meanings, references or signs that remain recorded below surface appearance. Here I consider the palimpsestic nature of musical instruments, drawing extensively on the literary typology set out by Gérard Genette in his 1997 work *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Ultimately, I consider how any musical instrument is shadowed by a past that may or may not be visible through its morphology and/or surface ornamentation.

Introduction

Palimpsests are conventionally understood to be manuscripts that have been reused or recycled, with textual inscriptions laid over a previous set in such a way that traces of the earlier writing can still be identified. Early biblical texts, for example, were often written on parchment that was scraped by later writers who wished to reuse the comparatively expensive material for their own purposes, but remnants of the earlier writings remain discernible to the naked eye or, today, using computational imaging. Metaphorically, the term has been used more widely to connote ideas about reading off meanings, references or signs that remain recorded below surface appearance. Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse, for example, see popular music in general as "a multi-layered palimpsest" in which musical borrowing, hybridization and intertextuality play key roles, with the traces of earlier works indelibly remaining underneath newer ones.[1] In her study of experimental theater in Mexico, Ruth Hellier-Tinoco sees the human body as an archival palimpsest in which traces of human journeys, stories and environments can be revived and reworked in theatrical performance. Hellier-Tinoco's words neatly encapsulate the palimpsest concept in a range of contexts:

> Palimpsests are inherently trans-temporal, containing traces and remains of previous existences even as they are experienced in a present moment. Palimpsests are

[1]Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse, *The Pop Palimpsest: Intertextuality in Recorded Popular Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 1.

> formed through movements over time, through layering and sedimentation, through complex arrangements and through shifts and accumulations of iterations. Palimpsests contain a plurality of fragments and ephemera, existing through simultaneity and juxtaposition. Palimpsests provide evidence of multiple journeys, stories and environments through a temporal narrative that is often ambiguous. Palimpsests involve strategies of re-using and re-forming, where traces endure, sometimes scarcely palpable, sometimes ghostly, yet always remaining.[2]

Hellier-Tinoco's description moves us beyond the tangible semi-permanence of the manuscript and into a more nebulous space where palimpsests are perhaps less clearly defined, and thus even more capable of accruing different meanings as they change over time.

Perhaps the most extensive theorizing about palimpsests comes from the literary critic Gérard Genette in his work *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*.[3] Returning to the fixity of the manuscript, Genette breaks down the palimpsest concept into five different types of textual relationships, for which he provides different literary examples, drawing on classical and modern sources. Taking Genette's work as my starting point, here I consider how the diversity offered by his approach is useful in considering the palimpsestic nature of musical instruments. I start by briefly outlining the different types of relationship that Genette sees as existing between various literary texts. Through a series of case studies, I then consider how these might be mapped onto musical instruments and any relationships existing between them. Ultimately, I argue that instruments have what might be described as a "palimpsestic identity," a term I use to embrace the different associations we make with an instrument and the manner in which they are seen to act on each other in the course of musical performance.

Gérard Genette's palimpsestic relationships

Relationships between literary texts are often described as "intertextual," following the coining of this term by the semiotician Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s.[4] Genette, however, prefers the overarching term transtextuality in place of the term intertextuality, defining the former as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts."[5] This, then, is the umbrella term under which he posits five different types of relationship between literary texts. *Intertextuality* is in fact the first of these, and Genette argues that it denotes "a relationship or copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another."[6]

[2]Ruth Hellier-Tinoco, *Performing Palimpsest Bodies: Postmemory Theater Experiments* (Bristol: Intellect, 2019), 5.

[3]Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997). Genette's work was originally published in French in 1982. Here I have worked from the 1997 English translation.

[4]Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980 [1969]).

[5]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 1.

[6]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 1–2.

Direct quoting from and plagiarism of other sources are seen as quintessential forms of intertextuality, which in Genette's figuration thus has a narrower range of meanings than is often employed elsewhere. Genette's second type is *paratextuality*, a wide-ranging category that includes titles, marginalia, epigraphs, illustrations, book covers, etc., which "provide the text with a (variable) setting and sometimes a commentary, official or not."[7] Paratextual material 'binds the text' as part of the literary work as a whole and may guide our reading or influence our perception of the author's words but is seen as being distinct from them. *Metatextuality* is 'the critical relationship par excellence' in which one text is linked with another through acts that are most often labeled "commentary." This critical relationship is established even in those literary cases where the original text itself may not be cited, nor even named.[8] *Hypertextuality* conveys any relationship uniting a text B (the hypertext) to an earlier text A (the hypotext) "upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary."[9] Genette notes by way of example that both Virgil's *Aeneid* and Joyce's *Ulysses* owe a debt to Homer's *Odyssey* without referencing the latter directly, notwithstanding that Homer's original provides a clear model for the other two, each of which transforms it differently. He later makes clear that hypertextuality is concerned with works taken in their entirety, rather than being applied to sections of them.[10] Finally, *architextuality*, the most abstract of Genette's transtextual types and the one most closely related to conceptions of style or genre, describes "a relationship that is completely silent, articulated at most only by a paratextual mention [...] most often subtitular [...] but which remains in any case of a purely taxonomic nature."[11] As Genette himself notes, there is some slippage between the categories he outlines: they are not "separate and absolute," that is, without overlap. In fact, he draws attention to the interactions between them, noting that "their relationships to one another are numerous and often crucial."[12]

Genette's approach is obviously closely aligned to the literary roots that inspired it, but he does suggest that his ideas can be applied to areas beyond literature, especially music and the visual arts.[13] This enhanced applicability is particularly salient for musical instruments, which can often be seen as intermediaries between these two areas. Instruments are tools through which musical

[7]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 3.
[8]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 4.
[9]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 5.
[10]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 9.
[11]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 4.
[12]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 7.
[13]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 386–91.

sounds are realized, and they impact significantly—through timbre, tuning systems, etc.—on the meanings associated with those musical sounds. But they are also often taken as akin to works of art, both in terms of the prestige that is sometimes ascribed to them and of course in relation to their visual appearance and any decorations they may have, particularly when these are ornate.

Genette notes that transformation is at the heart of many musical endeavors and lists strategies such as parody, transcription, reduction, orchestration, arrangement and variation as techniques used by composers to transform one musical work into another with which it thus bears a textual relationship.[14] It is therefore unsurprising that his ideas have been recycled elsewhere within music studies. For example, David Horn focuses particularly on intertextuality and hypertextuality in analyzing the work of the jazz pianist Art Tatum.[15] Several of the contributors to *The Pop Palimpsest* unsurprisingly recycle Genette's ideas, including Mary Woodside in relation to nineteenth-century French Vaudeville, and Roger Castonguay on the music of the English rock band Genesis.[16] Perhaps the most extensive theorization comes from Serge Lacasse in the same volume.[17] Writing about popular music recordings (which he describes as phonograms), Lacasse adapts Genette's transtextuality to "transphonography" and expands the number of categories from five to eight, adding polytextuality, contextuality and transfictionality to Genette's original list, and in each case substituting "phonography" for "textuality."[18] Lacasse's reworking is detailed and sophisticated but his new terminology feels to this reader rather uncomfortable, and I have retained Genette's original rather than being tempted to use "transorganography" or a similar neologism, which might have been deployed in relation to discussions about musical instruments.[19] I am also happy to retain Genette's use of the word "text" to embrace musical instruments in the same way that popular music recordings or jazz outputs can be thought of as texts in the metaphorical Geertzian sense.[20] That is, they can be

[14]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 387.

[15]David Horn, "The Sound World of Art Tatum," *Black Music Research Journal* 20 (2000): 237–57.

[16]Mary Woodside, "Intertextuality in the Nineteenth-Century French Vaudeville," in *The Pop Palimpsest*, ed. Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse (University of Michigan Press, 2018), 190–212. Roger Castonguay, "Genettean Hypertextuality as Applied to the Music of Genesis: Intertextual and Intratextual Approaches," in *The Pop Palimpsest*, ed. Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 61–82.

[17]Serge Lacasse, "Toward a Model of Transphonography," in *The Pop Palimpsest*, ed. Lori Burns and Serge Lacasse (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 9–60.

[18]Lacasse, "Toward a Model of Transphonography," 45n2 draws attention to a range of other scholarship that has sought to apply Genette's ideas to musical sound.

[19]Notwithstanding my decision on terminology here, I am mindful of the encouragement of an anonymous reader of this paper to adapt Genette's original terminology as Lacasse has done, that is, to employ terms such as trans-organography, inter-organography, para-organography, meta-organography, hyper-organography, and archi-organography. I list them here so that others more enthusiastic than myself about these neologisms may choose to use them. But I remain persuaded that the cumbersome nature of these terms, particularly when used adjectivally (e.g. hyper-organographical) is likely to work against their broader employment, whereas Genette's originals are widely used, not least by Lacasse himself in his later "Hypertextuality and Intertextuality in Recorded Popular Music," in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* edited by Michael Talbot, (Liverpool University Press, 2000), 35–58.

[20]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books Inc., 1973); and Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

viewed as cultural constructs from which we might read interesting or useful information about the people for whom such texts are meaningful; to recall Geertz's well-known words, these are cultural texts that we "read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong."[21]

As with literary texts, the transtextual relationships surrounding a musical instrument extend both synchronically, that is, to a number of contemporaneous instruments with which it is in some way connected, and diachronically, with instruments that function as forebears or precedents. Elsewhere I have drawn attention to the manner in which musical instruments, when shaping musical behavior of the present, simultaneously invoke musical principles of the past.[22] Through their morphology and the performance techniques that pertain to them, instruments store some of the musical conventions of the past, thus ensuring that those conventions are brought to bear on current practice. They thus instantiate a conjunction between past and present that becomes a lived, sonic reality in the act of musical performance. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's terminology, I see musical instruments as being simultaneously structured and structuring: they are structured by the historical precedents and trajectories that have led to them being as they are; but they are also structuring devices, in that their morphology influences current musical practice and thus the musical patterns and social formations to which they contribute.[23] It is precisely because any given musical instrument represents a locus point of these various trajectories that they evidence complex series of transtextual relationships with historical and contemporary cultures, and why I suggest it is useful to consider their palimpsestic nature.

Musical instruments and transtextuality

Below I offer five case studies to illustrate how musical instruments can be seen as having palimpsestic qualities, and I consider how Genette's different types of transtextuality might be applied in each case.

Case study 1: Signed instruments

There is a long tradition of makers adding signatures or identifying marks to instruments they have produced, by way of asserting the authenticity of their product and the personal craftsmanship that underpins it. In nineteenth-

[21]Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 101 (1972): 29.

[22]Stephen Cottrell, "The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments—An Overview," in *Shaping Sound and Society: The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments*, edited by Stephen Cottrell (New York: Routledge, 2023), 1–28.

[23]Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 72. Bourdieu's use of the terms "structured" and "structuring" apply to his conception of the habitus and his ideas about "dispositions", defined as "permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking" (Bourdieu 2002, 27–28). He did not intend these terms to be applied to material objects as I have done here, but his terminology remains useful in its new home, in my view.

century Europe, for example, as makers moved away from artisanal traditions to more industrialized practices, brasswind manufacturers began to stamp their names on instruments or, in some cases, traders would receive unstamped instruments to which they would then add their own stamp; both practices contributed to nascent forms of brand building.

More recently, it has in some contexts become fashionable for performers to autograph the instruments they have used—a musical manifestation of the rise of celebrity culture—thus directly inscribing their association with that instrument and, by implication, the performance contexts in which it was used and/or any music that might have been performed on it. Many examples of this practice can be found: The Music Instrument Museum in Phoenix, Arizona, for example, contains a display of harmonicas signed by the blues musicians who played them.[24] Perhaps the most widely known examples are those electric guitars signed by famous names who have performed on them or, in the case of entire rock bands, alongside those who were performing on them. These signed instruments are frequently displayed in museums or other contexts where such associations are especially meaningful; the Hard Rock Cafe chain, for example, makes a feature of such guitars throughout its various branches (see Figure 1).

In Genette's terms these signatures can be seen as paratextual: they are the equivalent of marginalia or epigraphs added to literary texts. They alter the associations that may be made with the guitar in ways that are consistently variable; that is, such inscriptions obviously vary widely and each one carries different associations, but they are recognized as being addenda to instruments that are otherwise of the same type: the instruments all remain, in this instance, guitars. The autographic inscriptions reveal something of the instrument's association with well-known performers and thus its underlying socio-musical history. Such paratextual addenda are often felt to increase the value of an instrument and are capitalized upon by sellers and auction houses. They thus influence our perception of the underlying instrument while at the same time remaining distinct from it.

Furthermore, the electric guitar is itself a modification—through the addition of pickups, signal modifiers, metal strings, etc.—of earlier gut-strung acoustic guitars. We can clearly see the origins of the electric instrument in its acoustic forebears in a way that, I suggest, resembles that sense of quotation or plagiarism that Genette applies to literary texts. This is an intertextual relationship: the connection between the two instruments is sufficiently close that we can observe "the actual presence of one text within another" in a way that would not apply to other lute-like instruments, notwithstanding that some of them might have more distant relationships with the guitar.

[24] https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Musical_instruments_on_display_at_the_MIM_%2814350936494%29.jpg (Last accessed March 15, 2023).

Figure 1. Jon Bon Jovi's signed electric guitar in the Hard Rock Cafe, Moscow, 2008 (courtesy Zak Allan).

Thus the signed electric guitar signifies at the same time both paratextually and intertextually (at least), reminding us that palimpsests are multi-faceted constructs whose layers carry multiple meanings simultaneously. And as I observed above, these significations operate both synchronically and diachronically, respectively in this case to today's rock music culture and those historic guitar cultures that preceded it.

Case study 2: Trinidadian steel pan

The Trinidadian steel pan provides a well-known example of an instrument with a rich historical past combined with a complex, globalized present. That history is well documented: it includes the proscription of certain types of drums by Trinidad's colonial authorities leading to a need to invent new instruments; the colonial exploitation of the island's oil reserves resulting in the country becoming a significant producer of crude oil; and the setting up of American military bases on Trinidad during the Second World War, which led to a significant local demand for petroleum and thus the widespread availability of the 55-gallon drums in which such petroleum was transported.[25] From these drums the steel pan as we would recognize it today was created, a paradigm of local innovation using cheap but readily available local materials to create a musical instrument that then became iconic of local Trinidadian culture. In some ways the steel pan has today

[25]For a fuller history of the development of the steel pan, see Stephen Stuempfle, *The Steelband Movement: The Forging of a National Art in Trinidad and Tobago* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); and Shannon Dudley, *Music from Behind the Bridge: Steelband Aesthetics and Politics in Trinidad and Tobago* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

become symbolic of Trinidad and Tobago as a nation state, as evidenced by its use on a series of national postage stamps, as shown in Figure 2.

In this instance, then, we may say that the relationship between the steel pan and the 55-gallon oil drum is again intertextual: we can clearly see the physical evidence of the latter remaining in the instrument from which it is made. This intertextual relationship evidences the specific material origins of the instrument; and the relationship with material culture, particularly in connection with prevailing environmental or ecological trends, is a common feature of the intertextual signposting of musical instruments.[26]

But in the case of the steel pan, this relationship with the oil drum is simultaneously metatextual because it symbolically evokes the instrument's relationship with the complex and often colonial history of Trinidad and Tobago. Like many instruments in other contexts, the steel pan and its performers implicitly comment on the islands' history without directly representing it. We thus see in the instrument not only remnants of the oil-drum from which it is made but also something of its complex social history; its iconographic use on a postage stamp reinforces the instrument's symbolic importance in relation to that history. These qualities are brought into play, that is, they act upon each other, in the course of performance.

Today the steel pan is also a highly globalized instrument, and steel pan bands have become common, particularly throughout Europe and North America. Initially these were often associated with players of Trinidadian and/or West Indian heritage, but they are now dispersed more widely, and the steel pan band has become a global ensemble in much the same way as, for example, the Indonesian gamelan. Such cases complexify the metatextual relationships and the commentary they embed, according to the contexts in which they are found: for example, whether post-colonial associations are freighted more or less heavily on specific performers or performance events.

Figure 2. A 50c stamp issued in Trinidad and Tobago in 1994 (courtesy Jayson Kerr Dobney).[27]

[26]See for example, Kevin Dawe, "Materials Matter: Towards a Political Ecology of Musical Instrument Making," in *Current Directions in Ecomusicology*, ed. Aaron S. A'llen and Kevin Dawe (New York: Routledge, 2015), 117–29.

[27]https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/410320216058576165/.

Case study 3: The Hungarian tárogató

The Hungarian tárogató provides an example of an instrument whose name has persisted over time despite profound changes in its morphology. It was originally a type of shawm found throughout Europe and Asia, with a conical bore, a double reed and, like others of its type, a loud and raucous sound. It seems to have become part of the Hungarian instrumentarium during the Turkish occupation of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, and there are early references to the name tárogató from as early as 1533.[28] But by the early eighteenth century, when Hungary achieved independence from the Ottoman empire, the tárogató had become particularly identified as a Hungarian instrument, notwithstanding the broader distribution across the Eurasian land mass of very similar shawms.

At the end of the nineteenth century, however, the instrument underwent a complete makeover, with a new version patented by the instrument makers Schunda and Stowasser. This turned the tárogató from a double-reed shawm into a longer instrument, still with a conical bore but now with keywork and a single percussive-reed mouthpiece added;[29] visually the instrument bears some similarity with the soprano saxophone—a probable influence on the design—although it is customarily made of wood rather than metal (see Figure 3). The sound is more mellow than the somewhat strident original which, as Stowasser argues in his patent, was useful on the battlefield but less so in indoor settings.[30]

Part of the reason for Schunda and Stowasser's redesign, therefore, was an attempt to legitimate the instrument by making it more appropriate for indoor use in the concert hall or the opera house, albeit with limited success. Today the instrument is more usually heard performing popular or folk music. The most common version is the soprano in B-flat although at some point Stowasser was advertising an entire family of instruments in different pitches, some specimens of which have survived. Stowasser's aspirations for the new instrument were clearly modeled on similar families of wind instruments developed in the second half of the 19th century such as saxophones, sarrusophones, and rothphones. Indeed, János Pap suggests that "Schundaphone" might have been an appropriate title for the revised tárogató, such was the distance from its shawm predecessor and the extent of the modifications that Schunda and Stowasser applied.[31] As recently as September 2022, a celebration was held in Budapest marking 125 years since

[28]Eszter Fontana, "Tárogató," in *Grove Music Online*, (Oxford University Press, 2001).

[29]Schunda suggests in an amendment to the original patent that a clarinet mouthpiece should be used, although a later patent argues for an unusual double percussive-reed mouthpiece. The latter does not appear to have caught on, if it was ever made.

[30]Schunda and Stowasser's three patents relating to the tárogató are nos. 11545 (granted 1898), 13545 (1899) and 33849 (1905). The first was registered in Stowasser's name and the second two in Schunda's. All are freely available from the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office https://www.sztnh.gov.hu/en (accessed March 29, 2023).

[31]https://archive.ph/Lzl5m#selection-67.1-79.58 (accessed March 30, 2023).

Figure 3. Older shawm-like tárogató (left) and a more modern instrument showing Schunda's modifications (right) (Courtesy Nick Hart [left] and Music Instrument Museum Berlin [right]).

the redesign of the tárogató. The event described the instrument as "the voice of the Hungarian soul," and various ministerial figures and other dignitaries were in attendance.[32]

Here, then, we have an instrument that continues to be closely attached to Hungarian national identity, notwithstanding that the modern instrument itself bears little physical resemblance to the original from which it takes its name, with both being asserted as symbols of Hungarian nationalism. The relationship between the two types of tárogató can be seen in Genette's terms as being intertextual. Notwithstanding that there is comparatively little that connects the two instruments morphologically or sonically, apart from both having conical bores and being made of wood—characteristics that would encompass many other instruments—it can reasonably be argued that the older instrument is found "within" the later version: there is "a relationship or copresence" between the two instruments, one that is underlined by the retention of the same name for the heavily revised instrument. Certainly, this relationship is preserved in the way they are understood by at least some, indeed perhaps many, Hungarians to relate to national musical identity.

But the evolution of the tárogató family, and its obvious relationship with similar families of wind instruments developed over the 19th and early 20th centuries, might also be said to be metatextual. This is the "critical relationship par excellence." The debt to, or "commentary" upon, these other

[32]https://minalunk.hu/budaors/125-eves-a-tarogato-a-magyar-lelek-hangja/.

instrument families is implicit in Stowasser's emulation of them and his attempt to achieve for the tárogató the musically homogenizing effects that impelled Sax, Sarrus and others similarly to develop their instrumental innovations in related groups. And in all cases, these groupings sought to establish these new instruments in the world of Western classical music, a form of cultural legitimation that can again be seen in the metatextual relationships that exist between them.

Case study 4: The saxophone and the ophicleide

Genette devotes the overwhelming majority of his volume on palimpsests to what he describes as hypertextuality, that relationship between a text B (the hypertext) and an earlier text A (the hypotext) "upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary."[33] Genette sees this relationship as operating in a number of ways within those literary texts with which he is concerned: through parody, imitation, pastiche, caricature, etc. These operations can also be identified in musical creativity —in works described as "neoclassical," for example—but they do not perhaps translate widely into the world of musical instruments, although organological exceptions to this general principle can be found: a "toy" piano could be said to be an imitation of its larger cousin; the slide-operated "Swanee" saxophone might be seen as a parody of Sax's original, etc. At the heart of Genette's hypertextuality, however, is the process of transformation, and it is certainly not difficult to find instruments that have been transformed into other instruments: the tárogató discussed above provides one such example. Key to differentiating between metatextual and hypertextual relationships is Genette's notion of commentary, or rather, the lack of any commentary in a hypertextual relationship. Since the relationship between the two forms of tárogató is clearly asserted—in terms of its name, its association with national identity, etc.—it is reasonable to see this as a form of commentary, which is why I have described the relationship between the two instrument types as being metatextual rather than hypertextual. For the latter, I turn instead to the relationship between the saxophone and the ophicleide.

The ophicleide is a low keyed bugle invented by the French maker Halary in 1817, with a conical bore and large tone holes covered by key-operated pads (later sometimes replaced with valves).[34] Adolphe Sax's invention of the saxophone in the late 1830s almost certainly arose from him fitting a bass clarinet mouthpiece to

[33]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 5.

[34]William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index: A Dictionary of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers and Inventors* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), 157.

an ophicleide.[35] Those who have replicated Sax's experiment confirm that this produces a distinctly saxophone-like sound.[36] Part of Sax's motivation for developing the saxophone was to find an instrument that could provide an effective low bass line in military bands and orchestras, something the ophicleide was meant to achieve but for which it was often seen as deficient. The connection between the two instruments is evident in Sax's 1846 saxophone patent, where the earliest saxophone has an obvious ophicleide shape, unlike the later members of the family which largely have the more familiar S-shape recognized today (see Figure 4).

There are no surviving specimens of this ophicleide-shaped saxophone, and it is unclear to what extent it was ever produced or used. The saxophone family soon evolved into something resembling the instruments we know today, and the ophicleide was left behind, its original connection with the saxophone now forgotten by most.

But it can reasonably be argued that the saxophone represents a transformation of the ophicleide while no longer resembling it. While the conical bore and the use of pads to close the tone holes remain—morphological details that can be found on many instruments such as other keyed bugles or various oboe types—the shape of the instrument is radically different, as are the musical uses to which it is put. Nor is there any connection via nomenclature, unlike many other instruments that have been in some way modified from earlier prototypes. The saxophone is sufficiently distant from the ophicleide that it no longer "comments" on the earlier instrument, if indeed it ever did. It might be said that attaching a bass clarinet mouthpiece to the keyed bugle was an act of imitation, arguably even parody, although this is perhaps stretching a point. But the hypertextual relationship between the two instruments—that sense of one being grafted upon the other—remains, if one knows where to look for the evidence of it.

Case study 5: Architextuality and instrument taxonomy

Genette's notion of architextuality is, in his own words, 'the most abstract and implicit' of the various categories of transtextuality he posits. He suggests that architextual relationships are "completely silent, articulated at most only by a paratextual mention"; and while they are not directly relatable to literary genres—Genette argues that "genre is only one aspect of the architext"[37]—they do provide a way of seeing texts as being connected, albeit more distantly, perhaps through a description which asserts that the text is *A Novel, Poems*, etc. Negotiation is central to the notion of architextuality;

[35]Stephen Cottrell, *The Saxophone* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 39–41.

[36]See for example, Wally Horwood, *Adolphe Sax 1814–1894: His Life and Legacy* (Bramley, England: Bramley Books, 1980), 31.

[37]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 4.

Figure 4. An extract from Adolphe Sax's 1846 saxophone patent (left) inverted and placed next to an ophicleide (right), illustrating the apparent relationship between the two.

there will always be discussions about which category a text might fit into. Genette underlines this with reference to particular literary examples, noting that it might be asserted that "a given 'tragedy' by Pierre Corneille is not a true tragedy, or that *The Romance of the Rose* is not a romance."[38] But the fact that the relationships between these texts is "implicit and open to discussion [...] in no way diminishes its significance."[39]

[38]*The Romance of the Rose* is a long-form allegorical medieval poem written in old French by two different thirteenth-century writers.

[39]Genette, *Palimpsests*, 4–5.

Genette's ideas on architextuality resonate with the taxonomic systems we use to classify musical instruments. As Margaret Kartomi has shown, these systems can be found in many historical and contemporary cultures, with each system emphasizing different aspects of an instrument's morphology and/or the social contexts with which it is associated.[40] Some systems span cultures or nations over broad geographic areas and eras while others remain grounded in particular locales. But each reveals a good deal about the contexts in which they emerge, how different musical instruments are understood at a particular time, how those understandings align with other socio-cultural or environmental concepts and, from this, how instruments might be conceptualized and ordered.

Classification systems, then, provide a backdrop to our understanding of the place of musical instruments in a given musical ecosystem. In Western cultures this often starts with an identification of the instrument as being "wind" or "string," etc. Our most well-known system, originally put forward in 1914 by Erich von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, proceeds on this basis, grouping instruments initially by the nature of the sound-producing material: idiophones (struck percussion), membranophones (drum-like instruments), chordophones (string instruments) and aerophones (blown instruments); a fifth group—electrophones—was proposed by Francis Galpin in 1937 to account for electronic instruments. From this initial designation, the system proceeds in a tree-like fashion by determining the instrument's further physical characteristics. The various morphological differences are then captured in a series of numbers, each number designating a branch in the tree: the violin, for example, is designated as 321.322, the saxophone as 422.212, and so forth.[41]

It is notable in the present context that the numbering system adopted by Hornbostel and Sachs is based on Dewey Decimal Classification used to categorize library books, providing further resonance to the architextual relationships that pertain between musical instruments and those that connect literary texts. There are several similarities. Most readers are unlikely to know the Dewey Decimal number identifying a written text until they search for the volume in a library; even fewer musicians are likely to know the Hornbostel-Sachs number describing a musical instrument, unless they have a professional reason as a museum curator or other specialist to categorize it. Both groups, however, would conceptualize books or instruments according to more generic criteria:

[40]Margaret Kartomi, *On Concepts and Classifications of Musical Instruments* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[41]The Hornbostel-Sachs classification system was first published in German in *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* in 1914 (vol. 46, 553–90). Perhaps surprisingly, given its now widespread adoption, an English translation did not follow until 1961: Erich M. von Hornbostel and Curt Sachs, "Classification of Musical Instruments: Translated from the Original German by Anthony Baines and Klaus P. Wachsmann," *The Galpin Society Journal* 14 (1961): 3–29. For further reviews of the system, and some historical context, see for example Nazir A. Jairazbhoy, "An Explication of the Sachs-Hornbostel System," *Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology*, 8 (1990); and Christina Ghirardini, *Reflecting on Hornbostel-Sachs's Versuch a Century Later: Proceedings of the International Meeting, Venice, 3–4 July 2015* (Venice: Edizioni Fondazione Levi, 2020). For the electrophone category, see F.W. Galpin, *A Textbook of European Musical Instruments: Their Origin, History and Character* (London: Williams & Norgate, Limited, 1937).

just as a reader might have a general idea as to the genre or style of a text, or form some opinion of the work based on the author's reputation, so too might we engage in more general conceptualizations of the place of an instrument in a prevailing taxonomic system: whether it is string or percussion, or the particular musical styles or contexts in which it is most usually found, etc.

These higher-level architextual relationships again form part of a series of transtextual associations that surround every instrument and sit alongside the different and often more specific forms of transtextuality noted above. The multi-textual nature of the instrument-as-palimpsest, and the interaction of these different transtextual connections—an important feature of the approach advocated here (and by Genette)—can be seen as occurring within the overarching umbrella of prevailing classification systems that provide architextual relationships—some close, some not—for all those instruments they subsume.

Palimpsestic sound and palimpsestic bodies

While I have largely focused here on the morphological, visible characteristics of musical instruments, there are intangible attributes, notably an instrument's sound, that can also be seen as having palimpsestic qualities. The production of sound is of course the *raison d'être* of musical instruments, notwithstanding the soundless uses to which they may subsequently be put when displayed in museums or as ornaments in homes or businesses. Many people can identify different instruments aurally, without any visual clues, and this sonic analysis is used in part to distinguish between different instruments: we infer different associations from different timbral profiles. To give some obvious examples: an electric guitar with a distorted signal provokes a different set of associations than its acoustic classical cousin; a folk shawm is heard differently from an orchestral oboe, notwithstanding some morphological similarities. Expert ears will detect subtle timbral differences even when instruments are playing the same music: an eighteenth-century piano and a contemporary piano playing the same piece on the radio are likely to sound very different, and those who can hear this distinction will thus draw different inferences about the instrument being performed. Sound influences our perception of instruments and contributes to our understanding not only of the different musical traditions with which they are engaged but also of any relationships between the instruments themselves.

Transtextually, these sonically evidenced relationships may be seen in different ways. For closely related instruments they could be said to be metatextual. In the case of the two pianos mentioned above, the sound of each piano "comments on" the other, by way of acknowledging the different technologies that underpin them, the different musical cultures they represent, etc. But in other ways the sonic relationship between instruments may be more distant and thus only exist in very general terms. The Chinese suona

—a double reed shawm—and the western Boehm clarinet with its single reed may be heard as having little in common other than both being wind instruments. This, then, becomes an architextual relationship, one that is only meaningful at the highest taxonomic levels. Whatever specific transtextual relationship might be asserted between these different instrumental sounds, the important point remains that such sounds are a critical component of the instrument-as-palimpsest, from which we infer a great deal about that instrument's place in the musical ecosystem it is seen to inhabit.

Finally, we should also consider the place of the human body in this plethora of transtextual relationships. Most musical instruments require some engagement with the body; very few are sufficiently autonomous that they do not entail some level of bodily engagement. Indeed, Tellef Kvifte argues that the term "musical instrument" is best thought of as a loop system in which bodily gestures and the sound-producing object with which they are engaged are seen as one.[42]

Obviously, the body engages differently with different instruments. The body adapts itself to the requirements of any given musical instrument, but instruments also adapt over time to the requirements of the performer, particularly if driven by evolving musical taste or ergonomic preferences.[43] Jonathan de Souza, following Foucault, argues that the rigorous training undertaken by performers disciplines the body for the act of musical performance; expert performers thus have expertly trained bodies.[44] And Jane Davidson shows in a series of publications how different physical gestures in performance can lead to different interpretations being made by audience members about musical content.[45] Bodies in performance therefore carry meaning, and these different bodily dispositions can again be seen as evidencing metatextual relationships through which instrumental distinctiveness is asserted. The relatively constrained formal posture of the classical pianist contributes differently to our perception of the piano in performance than does the often more relaxed, freer performance of their jazz, rock or pop equivalent. The same is particularly true of an instrument such as the guitar: guitarists again exhibit a certain formality or physical reserve when on the concert stage, as opposed to the highly theatrical performance styles of, for example, a rock musician such as Jimi Hendrix;[46] indeed, such overtly theatrical guitar performances entirely underpin the mimetic tradition of

[42]Tellef Kvifte, "What is a Musical Instrument?" *Svensk Tidskrift for Musikforskning* 90 (2008): 45–56.

[43]See for example John Bailey's work on the evolution of the 14-string Herati dutâr in "Recent Changes in the Dutâr of Herat," *Asian Music* 8 (1976): 29–64.

[44]Jonathan De Souza, *Music at Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17.

[45]Jane W. Davidson, "Visual Perception of Performance Manner in the Movements of Solo Musicians," *Psychology of Music* 21 (1993): 103–13; "Qualitative Insights into the Use of Expressive Body Movement in Solo Piano Performance: A Case Study Approach," *Psychology of Music* 35 (2007): 381–401; and "Bodily Movement and Facial Actions in Expressive Musical Performance by Solo and Duo Instrumentalists: Two Distinctive Case Studies," *Psychology of Music* 40 (2012): 595–633.

[46]Steve Waksman, *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999).

"air guitar," which would be meaningless without broader understandings of the performance gestures being emulated.[47]

Hellier-Tinoco notes that "we are deeply aware of our bodies as containers and transmitters of memories and histories through trans-temporalities" and this is in keeping with her approach to seeing the body itself as a type of palimpsest.[48] Building on this, I suggest that the bodies engaged with a musical instrument should be seen as part of its palimpsestic whole, and that these bodies similarly convey trans-temporal experiences of musical performance that we use to add further layers of meaning to the instrument itself. We may associate these bodies with traditions of performance, aspects of musical affect, or something else entirely. But the bodies engaged with musical instruments are always meaningful, and frequently imbued with corporeal and gestural codes that inflect the meanings we ascribe to those instruments and the musical work to which they are put.

Conclusion: Palimpsestic identity and palimpsestic memory

The range of transtextual relationships that attach to musical instruments underlines a simple but fundamental point: instruments often have complex histories and are suspended in equally complex webs of culture, both of which lend them meaning and significance. The hermeneutic possibilities offered by considering them as palimpsests allows us to articulate something of those complexities, and to explicate the many associations that become layered upon an instrument both in and out of musical performance. Every instrument has what I suggest is a palimpsestic identity, a term intended to capture that sense of trans-temporality, those fragments of and allusions to other times and places that remain sedimented in the instrument and which inflect such meanings as we may construe upon it. As the instrument changes, perhaps adapts, or moves into new social or musical contexts, so its palimpsestic identity evolves. Palimpsests are not necessarily fixed, they are malleable; they can be recast, reworked or made anew.

It is in their "soundingness" that the palimpsestic identity of musical instruments is most obviously in play. It is when they are employed in acts of musical performance that the range of palimpsestic relationships they retain becomes conflated into a single moment. Here we must speak not only of palimpsestic identity but also palimpsestic memory, following Max Silverman's work on the holocaust in French/francophone fiction and film. Silverman notes that in the films and novels with which he is principally concerned:

[47]Byrd McDaniel, "Out of Thin Air: Configurability, Choreography, and the Air Guitar World Championships," *Ethnomusicology* 61 (2017): 419–45.

[48]Hellier-Tinoco, *Performing Palimpsest Bodies*, 3.

> The relationship between present and past [...] takes the form of a superimposition and interaction of different temporal traces to constitute a sort of composite structure, like a palimpsest, so that one layer of traces can be seen through, and is transformed by, another [And this] composite structure [...] is a combination of not simply two moments in time (past and present) but a number of different moments, hence producing a chain of signification which draws together disparate spaces and times.[49]

I am similarly suggesting that the historical and contemporary traces contained within musical instruments are palimpsestic in nature, and that they interact in ways that produce meaning. Even as static objects of cultural memory, but particularly in the act of musical performance, instruments conflate diverse times and spaces such that different temporal traces can be seen through and act upon each other in relation to the meanings and understandings that we attach to the instrument. And I suggest that Genette's typology of palimpsestic relationships allows us to articulate those meanings in new and interesting ways.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

[49]Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 3.