stories (and, by extension, beings) *are* related, and that this complexity is more evident when it is not over-simplified by an idea of relationship in one person's mind."[30] Upon returning from Germany, Young recommended both articles to Conrad. Declaring them by far the most inspirational texts on music he had ever encountered, Young urged Conrad to read them, capitalizing the word "must" and underlining it five times.[31]

When Young arrived in Darmstadt, the best-known and most significant phase of Cage's aesthetic had already been thoroughly developed. Situated roughly between the *I-Ching*-derived chance techniques of the *Music of Changes* (1951) and the complete indeterminacy of *Variations II* (1961), this period in Cage's work has long been recognized as central, indeed, fundamental, to the breakdown of the modernist project and the advent of postmodernism.[32] Despite its multidisciplinary importance, which had profound consequences for art, music, dance, and film, Cage's impact on the period outside the discipline of music (and sometimes within) is more often minimized or dismissed than explored. Frequently, the idea of chance, aside from any specific understanding of Cage's deployment of it, is hypostatized as the sole content of his aesthetic and equated with an attitude of complete relativism. Caricaturing him as some type of holy fool, dismissing him as a mere imitator of dada, or disparaging him as a religious reactionary on account of his invocation of Zen, critics consistently overlook the logical, self-reflexive, and utterly consistent development of the first two decades of Cage's career. Individual quotes and compositions are routinely cited or analyzed out of context (a practice, to be sure, abetted by Cage's decomposition of his own writings via chance procedures and typographic experiments), while the specifics of both his scores and his performances are usually simply ignored.

Such off-hand treatment by critics and historians, however, differs markedly from the reception of Cage by the artists (in the widest sense of the term) who interacted with him on an almost daily basis in New York or at Black Mountain College, encountered his work at Darmstadt (like Young), took his composition

courses at the New School for Social Research, or studied his scores in Robert Dunn's choreography workshop, out of which the Judson Dance Theater would arise. While it would be impossible to chronicle the evolution of Cage's project in detail here, it is nonetheless important to analyze certain of its most significant implications, for they formed the backdrop against which the aesthetic positions developed (variously) within the network of which Young and Conrad were a part would play themselves out.[33]

The first implication of Cage's work is the production of an aesthetic of immanence. For the better part of two decades, Cage had pursued a thoroughgoing disarticulation of any and all abstract or transcendent connections between sounds or between the individual components of a sound, such as frequency, amplitude, timbre, duration, or other morphology. In this, he opposed the direction of his European contemporaries, most notably Stockhausen and Boulez, who sought an aesthetic of integral serialism by which all aspects or parameters of a composition would be interrelated. Beginning with the investigation of chance procedures, Cage worked to detach sounds from traditional, illustrative, or other preestablished meanings, as well as to disconnect composition (the arrangement of sounds) from continuity, whether produced by melody or by rhythm, and any form of structure: harmonic, atonal, and eventually even the neutral time structures he himself had produced and lauded throughout the 1940s. "It is thus possible," Cage argued, "to make a musical composition the continuity of which is free of individual taste and memory (psychology) and also of the literature and 'traditions' of the art. The sounds enter the time-space centered within themselves, unimpeded by service to any abstraction, their 360 degrees of circumference free for an infinite play of interpenetration."[34]

Going beyond the disarticulation of a priori connections between sounds, Cage also sought to undercut the production of any determinate a posteriori interconnections between them, as well. Quickly realizing that, once fixed, a chance-derived score such as *Music of Changes* (which was indeterminate with regard to *composition*) was still as determinate upon *performance* as if it

had been intentionally produced,[35] Cage sought to insert indeterminacy into the relation between composer and performer, by allowing, for example, for multiple realizations of any compositional notation, as well as into the relation between performer and listener, by means, for instance, of arranging loudspeakers and musicians around the audience so that no two listeners would hear the same "mix" of sounds – so that there was no longer any "best seat in the house" (one of the aspects of Cage's work Flynt replicated in 1959). Cage's goal, in all such endeavors, was to eliminate as much as possible from the acoustical experience the creation of any abstract form that could be received as existing on a level above, beyond, or outside the immanent realm (what Deleuze and Guattari, discussing Cage, among others, would term a "plane of immanence").[36]

Such an embrace of immanence does not, as is often charged, amount to a quietistic acceptance of "life" or "nature" (two of Cage's favorite terms) as unchanging or eternal realms, or as ones that are identical to the actually existing social structure as it unreflexively appears from what Cage called an "anthropomorphic" point of view. "Nature," for Cage, or more properly, nature's "manner of operation," was understood as an ongoing process of ateleological and nonhierarchical transformation. At his most specific, Cage described the purpose of music as "an imitation ... of nature in her manner of operation as, in our time, her operation is revealed," further explaining that "art changes because science changes – that is, changes in science give artists different understandings of how nature works."[37] Always attentive to contemporary scientific and technological developments (the one-time futurist was famously the son of an inventor), Cage's notions of complexity and chaos ultimately, perhaps, have more resonances with cybernetics and chaos theory than with Eastern religion. For Cage, the idea of "identifying with nature" was above all a reconfiguration of the avant-garde technique of estrangement, the most important aspect of which, arguably, was the disidentification with overly reductive (but not all) ideas of causality: "The life situation from a natural, rather than anthropomorphic, view is more

complex than art or putting arts together tastefully ... the really important problems require greater earnestness."[38]

The second component of the Cagean aesthetic concerns the relation between the listener and the indeterminate musical production. Instead of confronting the composition as a totality – unified by its derivation from or representation of an abstract (nonimmanent) structure or form – listeners were to encounter sonic events as a "field" or "constellation" that not only potentially surrounded them, but that opened onto and interpenetrated with random acoustical occurrences "outside" and therefore beyond any single intentionality. (Hence Cage's quip that "a cough or a baby crying will not ruin a good piece of modern music.")[39] Like a glass house, to use one of Cage's favorite metaphors, or an auditorium with the windows left open, Cage's compositions emulated a type of acoustical "transparency" to external events that undermined their separation and autonomy. To this end, many of Cage's compositions could be performed simultaneously, allowing for a kind of superimposition or audio collage effect through which they melded into one another and further blurred their status as discrete works. With neither determinable formal nor "spatial" limitations, Cage's compositions were to be grasped not as discrete, acoustical "time-objects," but as temporally changing, yet ateleological ("purposeless") "processes."[40] The listener, then, instead of following pregiven structures or attempting to comprehend the work as a message (whether intentionally implanted or not), was to assume an attitude of attentiveness within a differentiated, but nonhierarchical field of sonic occurrences: "to approach them as objects is to utterly miss the point."[41] For Cage, this reconfiguration of the traditional subject-object/listener-work relation into an almost topographical situation of a listener within a multidimensional transformational field (i.e., a field of more than two dimensions) was an explicit challenge not only to abstraction, but to dialectics:

> Where a single operation is applied to more than one notation, for example to those of both frequency and amplitude characteristics,

> the frequency and amplitude characteristics are by that operation common to both brought into relationship. These relationships make an object; and this object, in contrast to a process which is purposeless, must be viewed dualistically. Indeterminacy when present in the making of an object, and when therefore viewed dualistically, is a sign not of identification with no matter what eventuality but simply of carelessness with regard to the outcome.[42]

According to Cage, seeing the composition as an ateleological process or focusless, but differentiated field produces an additional transformation in the listening relationship, which is the third relevant point of his aesthetic: Interpretation gives way to "experimentation." In place of the attempt to comprehend the meaning of a composition or any of the sounds in it as signs with unilaterally determinable (i.e., bi-univocal) meanings – whether pregiven or a posteriori and even if multiple or ambiguous – the listener was to experience the process as without ulterior signification, structure, or goal. Cage sometimes groped for terms to describe this relationship: "awareness," "curiosity," "use," even "an entertainment in which to celebrate unfixity."[43] Nevertheless, "experimentation," as developed within the Cagean project, was the process of interpretation, of reading and receiving signs, in the absence of pregiven signifieds.[44] Such was not conceived by Cage as an embrace of negation (no received meaning whatsoever), or of irrationality or mystical oneness (though, combined with Zen, both were almost unavoidable receptions), but at least at its most radical, as a death of the composer that was also a liberating birth of the listener. As Liz Kotz has observed, the more celebrated notion of the "death of the author" put forward by Roland Barthes in 1968 was likely a reimportation of the idea into literature and art from the context of contemporary music.[45]

In this reconfigured listening experience, neither the unavoidably *perceived* connections between sounds nor the listener's thoughts or feelings about them were denied or eliminated. "Hearing sounds which are just sounds," Cage stated, "immediately sets the theorizing mind to theorizing."[46] However, the locus of the

meaning of the acoustical experience is transferred to the listener, who is thereby allowed to "become their own center," rather than submit to the will or thoughts of either composer or performer. "Of course, there are objects," Cage declared about the visual analogue of his aesthetic in Rauschenberg's Combines. "Who said there weren't? The thing is, we get the point more quickly when we realize it is we looking rather than we may not be seeing it."[47]

The dissolution or dismantling of transcendent structures was understood as a subversion of power. This was the fourth relevant point of Cage's aesthetic. For Cage, the traditional, determinate passages from composer to score, score to performer, and performer to listener were understood in terms of power relations. Thus, to disarticulate them as necessary, bi-univocal relations meant that neither performer nor audience had to be subservient to the will of another; they could instead work from their own centers, not by doing whatever they want, but nonetheless without being "pushed," as Cage put it, in any one direction.[48] As he explained about one such musical relation, "Giving up control so that sounds can be sounds (they are not men: they are sounds) means for instance: the conductor of an orchestra is no longer a policeman."[49] This (ultimately utopian) attempt to dissolve or to eradicate all forms or effects of power was essentially an anarchist position, and it would be explicitly labeled as such by Cage in 1960 in a brief statement published in *Art News*: "Emptiness of purpose does not imply contempt for society, rather assumes that each person whether he knows it or not is noble, is able to experience gifts with generosity, that society is best anarchic."[50]

The final component of the Cagean legacy to be drawn out at this point is its challenge to the disciplinary status of the separate arts. Beginning with a quest to undermine the separation between music and noise in his futurist-inspired percussion work of the 1930s and 1940s, Cage moved, at the outset of the 1950s, to undo the distinction between sound and silence. Following upon his experience in an anechoic chamber at Harvard in 1951, Cage famously redefined silence as inherently and unavoidably filled with sounds, the production of which is simply unintended.

There is thus no such thing as silence. Instead, there are only two kinds of sounds: "those intended and those others (so-called silence) not intended."[51] By 1954, Cage would go further, extending the progressive disarticulation of "abstract" categories such as sound and silence to the distinction between the auditory and the visual. The inevitable combination of these two components in any and all performed actions, which implicitly questioned the distinction between the visual arts and music, Cage described as "theater."[52] As he wrote in "45′ for a Speaker" (a lecture carefully scripted to incorporate, via chance determinations, such activities as coughing, brushing his hair, blowing his nose, and banging his fist on the table), "Music is an oversimplification of the situation we actually are in. An ear alone is not a being; music is one part of theatre. 'Focus' is what aspects one's noticing. Theatre is all the various things going on at the same time. I have noticed that music is liveliest for me when listening for instance doesn't distract me from seeing."[53]

All five aspects of Cage's aesthetic would have been available to an attentive student in 1959 and would become progressively more so up to the publication of *Silence*, the first volume of his collected writings, in 1961. And, as we will see, the group around Young and Conrad would respond in various ways to them all. For our purposes, however, it is worthwhile to pause for a moment to understand more clearly how the points sketched above, in particular, the final two, interact, and what some of the implications of that interaction might be.

Since the publication of Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood," art historians, in particular, have largely accepted an idea of "theatricality" as the undetermined area outside the traditional arts or mediums. Outside or beyond the "modernist arts," from Fried's perspective, is a vast no-man's land, "some kind of final, implosive, hugely desirable synthesis" that has been all too easily accepted and conflated with the idea of postmodernism as a relativisitic, potentially indistinguishable heterogeneity in which, as Fried argued, standards of neither quality nor progressive status could hold.[54] Fried provided this undetermined area (where, in the words of

Clement Greenberg, which he quotes, "everything material that was not art also was") with a veritable topography, referring to the architect and sculptor Tony Smith's infamous ride on the New Jersey Turnpike.[55] Theatricality was seen as a mundane spatial and cultural expanse without discernible boundaries that continues for an "endless or indefinite *duration*."[56] Despite the fact that many of the most significant artistic movements of the latter part of the twentieth century arose precisely from within this realm, the anxiety associated with the dissolving specificity of modernist mediums has never entirely dissipated. And it is this anxiety, one might suppose, that stands in large measure behind the failure to contemplate the full importance and scope of the Cagean legacy, certainly within the visual arts and potentially within music, as well.

Fried was, of course, right to note the manner in which "theater" questions the distinction between mediums or disciplines such as art and music.[57] However, Cage's notion of theater might be seen as opening up something quite different from the naively euphoric and boundless dissolution of any and all distinctions that Fried's analysis of theatricality foresaw or implied. Rather, Cage's theater opened onto a situation in which *certainty* about the disciplinary status of the aesthetic object (even that it was necessarily "aesthetic") was effectively dissolved. This, of course, did not imply that there was, magically, no longer any such thing as a painting or a sculpture or that the different institutions of concert hall, gallery, or museum were no longer relevant or recognizable. What it implied, as Fried in fact observed and argued, was that the disciplinary and medium-based distinctions between the arts as traditionally handed down could no longer be received as akin to ontological facts or even mutually accepted conventions, but had to be reiterated in each instance.[58]

For the generation of artists in Cage's wake, however, as opposed to those championed by Fried, the issue was not one of seeking to restore the validity of medium-based or disciplinary distinctions through what Fried called "conviction." Rather, for a certain group of artists at a certain time, not only could such distinctions not be taken for granted, but the very idea of producing

an "advanced" work seemed to imply precisely that the question of a work's status — the disciplinary, institutional place of the work as art or music — almost necessarily had to come into play. That is, for a certain group of artists roughly associated with minimalism (which would include Conrad, Young, Robert Morris, Walter De Maria, Simone Forti, and Yvonne Rainer, for example, but not necessarily Frank Stella, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, or Donald Judd), the very notion of being "advanced" meant that the status of the work (which might be an object or a process or, as we will see, might be both) was not only already constitutively problematized, already *in* question, but had to take up that question and keep it in question. Not eradicating, but continually questioning the notion of medium or disciplinary specificity was, in other words, a primary condition of being "advanced" after Cage. This is different from Judd's positioning of what he termed a "specific object" in the formal space between (but no longer part of) painting and sculpture. For a more radical group of minimalists, whether coming from a lineage historically rooted in music or in visual art, a work could not be advanced, could not be "new," unless it took up the question posed by Cage's idea of "theater."

Furthermore, the question or issue of the problematization or breakdown of formal and disciplinary distinctions was — particularly after Cage's linking of his aesthetic to anarchism — an unavoidably political question. Indeed, it was a directly political question, a question of politics without mediation. According to Cage, the relations between composition, score, performance, and audition were directly political to the extent that they involve the imposition of something like semantic force. Hence the conductor, enforcing (his or her idea of) the dictates of the composer, was understood to act as a "policeman." For Cage, form and power appeared intimately connected to such a degree that form was politics; an abstract or transcendent connection or relation was, for Cage, an imposition of power.

More specifically, we could say that, by 1960, at the latest, Cage conceived form as a particular *technique* of power, a moment within a micropolitics. To disarticulate, unstitch, or undermine

form, to produce an aesthetic of immanence, was therefore to dismantle that technique. Rather than obscuring or avoiding a political project (a charge, for instance, routinely advanced about Cage's relationship to dada), what Cage put on the table was precisely the connection or articulation of politics and form. For the generation coming of age with Cage in their sights, a certain relation was thereby posed between aesthetics and politics — an understanding that an aesthetic is, in some way and without mediation, equal to a politics or to a political position or model. Thus, the situation from which the arts were approachable after Cage was no longer evidently and unquestionably that of "objects" (even if musical performances) within a discipline or institution, but of specific techniques enacted within a field or realm of power effects. (Cage's decomposition of form, his production of an aesthetics of immanence, therefore also opens onto a historiographic project.)[59] To examine how this was played out in Young's work and what it means for an understanding of the artistic production of the time will be one of the primary goals of the remainder of this (and the following) chapter.

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Perhaps because Young at Berkeley was relatively less familiar with Cage's work than Conrad had been at Harvard, exposure to Cage's ideas at Darmstadt had an immediate impact on his production, most notably in *Vision* (November 12, 1959) and *Poem for Chairs, Tables, Benches, etc.* (January 21, 1960). Both compositions employed chance techniques to determine the duration, arrangement, and, in *Poem*, number of sounds, as well as other aspects of instrumentation and performance. Determinations were to be made by drawing pieces of paper out of a hat (a technique Diane Wakoski, Young's partner at the time, also used to produce poems)[60] and by using a random-number table or, the poor man's equivalent, the last four or five digits in any column of the telephone directory.

In *Vision*, musicians are spread around the audience in "Cagean"