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Cage and Foucault: musical timekeeping and the security state

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From discipline to security

John Cage (1912–92) was an American composer, performer, writer, and visual artist, whose development of writing and performance processes that allow performance elements to be decided by chance established him as a leading figure of musical and theatrical avant-gardes from the 1950s up to the present day. In this chapter I argue that John Cage's musical practice should be seen in terms of a general aesthetic economy that governs relationships among writer, text, conductor, performers, and audience in a distinct way. Furthermore, this general aesthetic economy is ambivalent in the way that it governs, which we can observe by noting its parallels to two techniques of power that Foucault, in the first three lectures of his 1977–78 series at the Collège de France, *Security, Territory, Population*, suggests should be distinguished from one another – those of security and discipline.[1] Musicologist Benjamin Piekut is virtually alone in drawing connections between Foucault's richly diverse characterisations of liberal power arrangements and Cage's various experimental strategies for governing ostensibly free performers. Piekut has applied multiple moments in Foucault's thought to the analysis of Cage's practice, notably discussing the New York Philharmonic's reluctant 1964 performance of *Atlas Eclipticalis* in terms of disciplinary control and liberalism, and renegade cellist Charlotte Moorman's irreverent performances in the 1960s and 1970s of *26'1.1499" for a String Player* in terms of discipline and the care of the self. While I find his analyses productive, I suggest that his evaluation of Cage is too damning overall, and that we can achieve a richer understanding of Cage's work by attending to Foucault's distinctions between security and disciplinary, as well as juridico-legal, techniques of power.

I will argue that there are kinships between the way Cage's musical scores govern groups of musicians and the mechanisms of power that Foucault analyses. In taking this approach I share Jon McKenzie's drive in *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, to build obliquely on Foucault's reading of mechanisms of power while recognising, with Gilles Deleuze, 'the transience of [the disciplinary] model';[2] however, whereas Deleuze and McKenzie, writing before the publication of *Security, Territory, Population*, thematise contemporary power formations in their own terms – 'societies of control' and 'the performance stratum', respectively[3] – I see significant potential in examining Foucault's own revision to his famous thematisation of discipline with the formulation of apparatuses of security.

Cage described the bulk of his orchestral works as models of anarchist communities. He conceived these works without a conductor and wrote their sheet music in such a way that each performer must make decisions regarding what exactly and/or when exactly to play. Piekut argues in 'When Orchestras Attack', the first chapter of his 2011 book, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, that Cage's practice, while perhaps suggestive of utopian anarchism, actually embodied a 'rather orthodox liberalism',[4] in which musician subjects are given the illusion of choice while the restrictions on the frame within which these choices are made are so extensive that the actually existing freedom is paltry. Moreover, Piekut argues, Cage, in trying to advance 'a model of utopian social systems that we do not yet have', relied on 'the threat of discipline' in order to bring this new model into reality: the New York Philharmonic's music director Leonard Bernstein and its general manager Carlos Moseley 'castigated the orchestra' and the labour contract issued by the Philharmonic to its musicians made it clear that the musicians had to 'obey Cage's demands'.[5] Foucault is present but unmentioned in this chapter: Piekut relies primarily on Wendy Brown to introduce his understanding of liberalism and neoliberalism, and her understanding, in turn, is heavily influenced by Foucault.[6] Meanwhile Piekut's usage of 'discipline' appears to derive from Foucault's famous analysis of discipline, in *Discipline and Punish*, as a modern technique of power that coerces subtly compared with a pre-modern technique of power that relied on highly visible displays of torture and execution. The thrust of Piekut's argument is that while Cage purports to be advancing a gentler form of government, he actually, in a classical liberal manner, merely conceals his mechanisms of control.

I find the critical aspect of Piekut's account valuable, but I think it exaggerates Cage's role in the lives of the New York Philharmonic musicians. Cage, after all, had only one two-and-a-half-hour rehearsal with the group before a run-through rehearsal that included four other pieces. More importantly for present purposes, Foucault's characterisation of liberalism in *Security, Territory, Population*, offers decidedly different insights than those of *Discipline and Punish*, above all calling into question the association of disciplinary techniques with liberal governance by proposing a third technique of power, which he calls security. Foucault thus alters his apparent historical schema here, and moreover, he suggests that this schema should not be taken too strictly, insofar as all three techniques of power he identifies – juridico-legal, disciplinary, and security – have actually been present throughout ancient, modern, and contemporary periods.[7] His characterisation of security offers, in my view, a compelling parallel to Cage's peculiar authorial role within some of his purportedly liberating

music. Meanwhile I propose to make explicit Piekut's implication that discipline functions within Cage's practice, as well as his implication that, on the other hand, Cage also at times resists the historically accumulated effects of disciplinary power. In sum, I am proposing that Cage's practice does two different things, at different moments: it resists the effects of discipline, yet in a manner consistent with the principles of discipline; and it embodies security.

Throughout the first three lectures of *Security, Territory, Population*, originally given in Paris on 11, 18, and 25 January 1978, Foucault conveys the significance of security mechanisms by differentiating them from disciplinary mechanisms. In the process, he makes it clear that security, in distinction to discipline, is part of a larger strategy of government that includes laissez-faire economic policies. Foucault first distinguishes apparatuses of security, however, by articulating their particular orientation towards space, dubbing spaces determined by such an orientation 'spaces of security'. Cage's methods in the 1952 Black Mountain College event enabled him to create sonic spaces that differ slightly from those created by another work of his from the same period, *26'1.1499" for a String Player* (begun in 1953, returned to and completed in 1955). I believe we can identify two distinct modalities of power in these two works from the early 1950s. Foucault's characterisation of security and discipline as distinct from one another can illuminate this comparison.

Piekut again provides a starting point for such an analysis. His discussion of Charlotte Moorman's performances in the 1960s and 1970s of *26'1.1499" for a String Player* draws explicitly on *Discipline and Punish*. Piekut explains that the unique notation system of this extremely difficult piece 'requires considerable effort to understand, let alone master'.[8] Each of the several rows of notation instructs the player on a different aspect of playing. One row indicates how to articulate notes (for example, with bow hair, bow wood, finger, fingernail; near or far from the instrument's 'bridge'); another prescribes how hard to press with the bow; there are rows unconventionally representing what to play on each of the instrument's four strings; and a row is devoted to noises that may issue from 'entirely other sources, e.g. percussion instruments, whistles, radios, etc'.[9] Altogether the instrumentalist must attend to seven rows of instructions at once.[10] Piekut refers to Foucault's notion of 'subjectivation' (*assujettissement*) in order to articulate the opportunity for self-reconstitution that Cage's piece affords a string player: 'Because Cage's piece so denaturalized the "normal" ways of playing a cello, it pulled off the layer of disciplinary efficiency that customarily managed and administered the relationship between body and instrument, returning that interaction to a clumsier encounter among flesh, metal, and wood'.[11] In Piekut's reading, then, Cage's composition mounts a kind of resistance to the 'disciplines' responsible for constructing the Western classical musician subject. I am in agreement with Piekut here. I would just add that in resisting the training that is constitutive of classical musicians' subjecthood, this composition adopts the same posture as that which it resists. Cage's novel music notation resists tradition, but it too 'leaves its trace directly' on the body, its behaviors, and its habits'.[12] His tools for breaking history and tradition take what Derek Hook calls, paraphrasing Foucault in *Psychiatric Power*, the '"somatic singularity" of the body as their target',[13] just as disciplinary mechanisms do. Security mechanisms, in Foucault's account, have a different target: not the body, but

the population. Although Piekut discusses Foucault's later writings in his chapter on Charlotte Moorman – in particular he cites 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom', an interview conducted in January 1984 – he does not engage with the concept of security. I wish to extend his utilisation of Foucault in the context of Cage's practice by doing so here.

When Foucault introduces security as a 'mechanism of power' in the first of his 1978 lectures at the Collège de France,[14] he emphasises a principle of aleatoric governance that I argue could equally well describe Cage's posture as a composer in many of his best-known works.[15] This particular connection between Foucault's thought and Cage's practice has not been theorised. It is worth mentioning that despite the two men's shared personal acquaintance with composer Pierre Boulez, and Foucault's long-term romantic relationship in the 1950s with Boulez's colleague, composer Jean Barraqué,[16] there is no evidence that Foucault knew Cage's work, and Foucault's brief writing on Boulez suggests that he did not feel equipped to comment on contemporary art music.[17] In January 1978, however, this music may well have been on Foucault's mind; the following month he would participate in a debate on contemporary music, chaired by Boulez, and including Gilles Deleuze and Roland Barthes, at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM) in Paris.[18]

At any rate, Cage utilised a principle of aleatoric governance in the 1952 event at Black Mountain College, thereby arguably providing a sonic and theatrical parallel to what Foucault calls spaces of security. In this event, often referred to as the first 'happening', Merce Cunningham danced, Robert Rauschenberg exhibited paintings and played a Victrola, Charles Olson and M. C. Richards read their poetry from the tops of ladders, David Tudor played piano, and Cage read a lecture that included silences from the top of another ladder.[19] The performers all used stopwatches to keep track of time and Cage prescribed when each performer was allowed to be active. For this event, Cage eschewed the usual composerly tasks of constructing an artificial space – a sonic imaginary space – characterised by melodies or motifs, accompanimental figures or noises, that musicians must materially produce with their trained bodies – and instead adopted the responsibility of regulating a collection of individual performers in their independent movements by giving structure to a series of simultaneities: two, three, four, five, or six people performing at once. The structure Cage provides, in this somewhat managerial role, thus takes the form of a particular progression of densities of activity (the more people doing things, the denser), in a particular set of proportions (for example, one minute of a trio followed by two minutes of a quintet, and so on), all of which is determined by his time brackets for each performer.[20] In taking on this role, Cage relinquishes the usual composerly role of intervening on matters of taste pertaining to the minutiae of sonic material. He simply and fully accepts the individual performers' personal inclinations, abilities, limitations, and peculiar performative work. Cage does not presume to tell the performers of this particular work what to do, only when they may do it. Yet he does not fail to make a distinctive authorial mark on the performance. For Cage his willingness to accept what performers are inclined to do is representative of his anarchism. For Piekut, the fact that Cage nonetheless controls the overall situation links the work with discipline and liberal governance.

Yet Cage's regulation of time here, I would argue, is of a different sort than that promoted by a disciplinary modality of power. I suggest we might instead understand the innovations of the Black Mountain event in terms of a parallel conceptual shift that we find in Foucault. 'Discipline', Foucault says, preparing to distinguish between the modern technique of power he analysed at book-length in 1975 in *Discipline and Punish*[21] and the technique that he had come to see as more relevant at that moment,

> works in an empty, artificial space that is to be completely constructed. Security will rely on a number of material givens. [...] Security will try to plan a milieu in terms of events or series of events or possible elements, or series that will have to be regulated within a multivalent and transformable framework.[22]

It is an elusive distinction, which concerns both a relationship with space and an approach to managing events in time. As I've argued above, in the Black Mountain event Cage indeed relied on material givens instead of constructing an artificial space. Moreover, Cage's concern with time in this 1952 event was similarly on the order of a 'series of possible elements'. I would like to stress that this modality of timekeeping does not evidence any kind of parallel with the disciplinary mechanisms that Foucault articulated in *Discipline and Punish*. It is not the regulation of people's time, per se, that defines disciplinary techniques of power. That existed already in earlier modalities of power. What Foucault draws our attention to in *Discipline and Punish* is the rise, during the eighteenth century, of a particular *kind* of attention to time, of precisely timed instructions that aim to constitute bodies as individuals with particular specialised abilities, and to extract the maximum possible forces out of these bodies. Foucault articulates this somewhat repetitively in the following passage:

> Discipline [...] poses the principle of a theoretically ever-growing use of time [...]; it is a question of extracting, from time, ever more available moments and, from each moment, ever more useful forces. This means that one must seek to intensify the use of the slightest moment, as if time, in its very fragmentation, were inexhaustible or as if, at least by an ever more detailed internal arrangement, one could tend towards an ideal point at which one maintained maximum speed and maximum efficiency.[23]

The statement contains several variants of the same principle. Foucault's overall concern is with two actions: the extraction of forces and the intensification of the brief moment. It is worth recalling that workers and soldiers are the target of this disciplinary control, and that Cage is operating in a radically different, if potentially parallel, realm. My argument here is that in *26'1.1499" for a String Player*, this kind of extraction of forces and intensification of the brief moment is part of Cage's work, but that in the Black Mountain event, it is not. Unlike a Wagner or a Stravinsky or a Gershwin composing an opera or ballet, Cage temporally choreographs the Black Mountain performers on a broader structural level, indicating only starting and stopping times, in minutes and seconds, for an overall performance time of 45 minutes – enacting the opposite of disciplinary mechanisms' heightened attention to ever-briefer moments.

Cage scholars commonly call this approach to musical time, which is associated with a particular method of music notation, the 'time-bracket method' or 'time-bracket technique'. This technique basically means that each performer has an independent

score telling him or her, in terms of minutes and seconds, when he or she may be active. Radically, the musicians do not have to adjust their playing to the playing of their fellows; instead each musician is encouraged to ignore the others and to focus on their own playing. Cage connected many of his later pieces that use the time-bracket technique, with anarchism.[24] He wrote forty-three works in the last eleven years of his life whose titles are all simply the number of performers required[25] – for example, *One* for solo piano (1987); *Five* for any five voices or instruments (1988); and *108* for orchestra (1991).[26] All of these pieces – commonly referred to as the 'Number Pieces' – use the time-bracket technique. Unlike Cage's instructions for the Black Mountain event, the time brackets here are flexible: each period of activity is given a window of time, in minutes and seconds, for example [0'45"-1'30"], within which to begin, and another time window within which to end, for example, [2'15"-2'45"]. In addition, rather than leave the decision of what to do entirely up to the performer, Cage indicates a single note, or a few notes, to play within each time bracket (see Figure 1). Rob Haskins has analysed Cage's intended evocation of anarchic communities in detail, noting aspects of the works that would seem to contradict it – a fixed sequence of pitches for specific instruments; a fixed duration for the overall work; a reduced quantity of pitches; and so on.[27] At the same time, Haskins elaborates reasons nonetheless to see them as 'anarchic societies of sounds': the time brackets allow players a degree of choice over when to start and stop playing; players may also choose 'to play short, loud sounds or long, quiet ones'; and, in a somewhat less self-evident argument, 'the restricted pitch material suggests the virtue of poverty', an assertion that Cage implied.[28]

Haskins' assessment is inconclusive, which further supports the attempt here to explore the political nature of Cage's work through other lenses. While I will not attempt to judge whether the Number Pieces embody anarchist utopias, I would like to examine the means with which Cage attempted to lend them that allegorical meaning. Haskins reports that Richard Kostelanetz 'identifies six elements that make [Cage's] work specifically anarchistic'.[29] The conjunction of all six elements, as Haskins argues, only appears in a handful of Cage's works, but it is useful for the present argument to note a couple of them here, insofar as all of them, when they do appear, are supported by Cage's withdrawal from the moment-to-moment composerly control over time. The first element that Kostelanetz names is: 'the presence of all participants as equals'.[30] In the majority of Number Pieces, Cage aims to support egalitarianism in the rehearsal and performance process by making the individual parts easy to play. There are, at most, a few notes each minute, and it is not necessary to start playing at a precise time. The fact that participants need not have any particular training has a levelling effect. Meanwhile, in the process of creating easy parts for everyone, Cage omits to exploit each moment of musical time for expressive potential. Again, his control of time is distinctly different from a disciplinary one as might be derived in relation to Foucault's analysis of discipline based on the extraction of forces and the intensification of the briefest moment.

Other 'anarchistic' elements, including 'the formal expression of chaos' and 'a tendency toward levity',[31] cannot be said to apply to the Number Pieces in general. Kostelanetz's sixth element, however, contains a strikingly literal resonance with Foucault's characterisation of apparatuses of security. This element pertains to Cage's
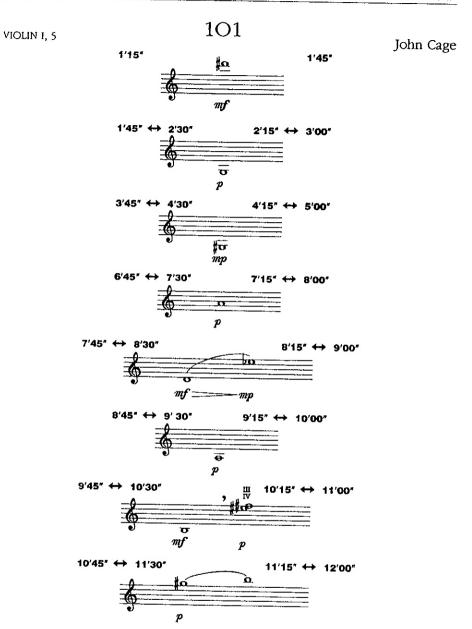
VIOLIN I, S

1O1

John Cage

1'15"   ♯Ω   1'45"

mf

1'45" ↔ 2'30"   2'15" ↔ 3'00"

p

3'45" ↔ 4'30"   4'15" ↔ 5'00"

mp

6'45" ↔ 7'30"   7'15" ↔ 8'00"

p

7'45" ↔ 8'30"   8'15" ↔ 9'00"

mf —— *mp*

8'45" ↔ 9' 30"   9'15" ↔ 10'00"

p

9'45" ↔ 10'30"   10'15" ↔ 11'00"

mf   *p*

10'45" ↔ 11'30"   11'15" ↔ 12'00"

p

Figure 1 Extract from '1O1' by John Cage (EP67265)

style of hosting a performance: 'the desire not to hold the audience prisoner, but to give them the opportunity to leave whenever they wish'.[32] Here a reading of Foucault affords a forceful critique of Cage's desire to link this style of hosting to anarchism. Foucault associates the freedom to circulate – around town, from countryside to town,

across jurisdictional borders – not with anarchism, but with a modern kind of 'government of men'.[33] Near the end of his lecture on 18 January 1978 he says,

> an apparatus of security, in any case the one I have spoken about, cannot operate well except on condition that it is given freedom, in the modern sense [the word] acquires in the eighteenth century: no longer the exemptions and privileges attached to a person, but the possibility of movement, change of place, and processes of circulation of both people and things.[34]

Freedom of circulation – posited by Kostelanetz as anarchistic – is interpreted by Foucault instead as a necessary element of liberal government and 'the correlative of the deployment of apparatuses of security'.[35] What Foucault then goes on to describe, I would argue, aptly defines Cage's creative thrust: 'a power thought of as regulation that can only be carried out through and by reliance on the freedom of each'.[36]

To encapsulate the argument at this stage: like Foucault's 'spaces of security', Cage's Number Pieces (1981–92), as well as the 1952 Black Mountain event, are defined at the level of a milieu of possibilities, rather than a totally constructed sound-world. The Number Pieces, like the Black Mountain event, rely on a series of possible elements – in some cases a less motley crew than at the Black Mountain event, but in the larger-number pieces, such as *101* for orchestra (1988), a very diverse ensemble indeed. Cage dictates specific instrumental sounds in the scores, but Cage's creative intervention is, so to speak, at a greater distance than normal for a composer – he does not compose phrases, only individual notes whose articulations are not fixed in time. Crucially, he also does not compose counterpoint – that is, he does not fix instrumentalists' parts to one another in time.

The lack of counterpoint signals another important departure from the way that disciplinary mechanisms aim to exert control in the context of music. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*, the time of workers and soldiers, each composed of the individual's own pace and prescribed tasks, must be combined to form a composite time. The efficiency of this combination is a crucial element within larger systems of production and domination.[37] His description, in terms of the time and forces of a multiplicity, is at a level of abstraction that is equally suggestive of musical counterpoint as of workplace division of labour:

> The various chronological series that discipline must combine to form a composite time are also pieces of machinery. The time of each must be adjusted to the time of the others in such a way that the maximum quantity of forces may be extracted from each and combined with the optimum result.[38]

The kind of combination of timelines Foucault describes is aimed at maximising forces, and it requires that each individual adjust the timing of their productive articulations to the timing of their colleagues. To a musician's ears, Foucault's terminology may seem already musical here. It is striking that he felt he had so little to say about musical form.[39] In a short piece on Pierre Boulez in 1982 he acknowledged that he felt perplexed regarding contemporary art music, despite learning about it through personal relationships with France's most illustrious practitioners. At the same time he acknowledged that the concern with radically reinventing musical form that occupied

many composers in the mid-1950s was absolutely central to broader twentieth-century culture as well.[40]

At any rate, Foucault's statement regarding the composite time of disciplinary mechanisms appears to have a specific parallel in the realm of Western art music (circa 1600–1910). In this musical era, broadly encompassing Baroque, Classical, and Romantic music, individual voices produce momentary dissonances with one another in such a way within a system of consonances and dissonances, that tension is created in an ever increasing manner, until a final dissonance of maximum possible force eventually resolves to a consonance, dissipating the energy that has been built up over the course of a musical work.[41] Composers in the early twentieth century had already rejected the aim of increasing force – Debussy is a frequent canonical example – but Cage goes a step further by removing the stipulation that the time of each player should be adjusted to the time of the others. The relaxation of this requirement represents a new way of constructing a musical work. The mechanism that produces the work, that generates the work's integrity as a work, thus cannot be found at the moment-to-moment level, where this integration of elements is worked out, but must be found on another level.

For Cage, it is clear that when you remove counterpoint, you get superimposition.[42] Yet Foucault's distinction between discipline and security offers an instructive analogy. In *Security, Territory, Population*, he analyses the 'disciplinary' strategy of urban planning as one of combining elements: discipline structures a space hierarchically by placing residences in broader portions of the grid of streets, and commercial activities in denser parts of the grid, and also crucially placing the latter in close proximity to the former.[43] So, there is what I would call a spatial counterpoint of areas differentiated, as well as related to one another, by their respective functions. Security, in contrast, takes the grid and its surrounding natural elements as given and focuses instead on organising circulation, attempting to maximise the 'good circulation'[44] of goods and the people who are trading those goods, while diminishing the 'bad circulation' of unwanted people from outside – 'beggars, vagrants, delinquents, criminals, thieves, murderers, and so on'.[45] Individual flows, under the framework of this tactic of power, would remain determined in part by the well-worn paths belonging to the contrapuntal formations of disciplinary power, but attention would now be focused elsewhere. Foucault is not entirely clear about what security does to organise circulation without reconstructing any part of an urban space, but he alludes to the possibility of intervention in matters of taxes and public health – water cleanliness, air temperature, the presence of trees, the health of the soil – all of which influence populations to live or to be active, in certain areas rather than in others.[46]

The analogy between Cage's work and the apparatus of security may seem stretched here: after all, can it be said that Cage is interested in allowing people freedom yet managing the conditions that influence what people would do with that freedom? Furthermore, can it be said that he is interested in creating conditions to exclude certain types of people from taking part in his performances? Is he interested in producing some sort of overall effect at the level of the population? In fact, I would argue, the answer is 'yes' to all three of these propositions. That Cage worked on managing the conditions within which musicians could act while embodying his image of freedom,

and that these conditions effectively excluded types of people, has been argued by numerous others.[47] Cage notoriously condemned Julius Eastman's sexualised rendition of *0'00"*.[48] And, as Rob Haskins reminds us, Cage wrote after early performances of his *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1958): 'I must find a way to let people be free without their becoming foolish. So that their freedom will make them noble ... My problems have become social rather than musical'.[49] That Cage was interested in producing an effect at the level of the population is borne out by his statements endorsing Buckminster Fuller's project to improve humankind by developing global utilities while doing away with politics.[50] Still, we might wonder, is this the same sort of effect that Foucault has in mind when characterising the will of the eighteenth-century liberal economists?

In at least one further respect Cage's time-bracket pieces seem to resemble what Foucault calls 'spaces of security', and that is their relationship with a material given. These pieces work, so to speak, 'on site with the flows of water, islands, air, and so forth';[51] they are not akin to cities constructed from scratch. Other well-known works by Cage illustrate the point even more clearly – for example, his famous silent piece, *4'33"* (1952), whose soundscape is defined entirely by the environment in which it is performed. The piece is not site-specific – it can be performed at any site – and yet the piece's content is unusually dependent on the environment in which it is performed; its authorial intervention consists in drawing attention to the performance site as it already exists.

Of course, what is understood as 'given' varies depending on the context. In order to be more specific about what Foucault means by 'a given' in the context of 'spaces of security', it is necessary to refer to his contrasting characterisation of disciplinary spaces. This also allows us to attend to an important point: the meaning of 'spaces of security' for Foucault arises in part through their differentiation from disciplinary spaces. That is, a constituent vector of security's will-to-power is its very difference from disciplinary mechanisms. This differential component of meaning also has a counterpart in Cage's work. In the Number Pieces Cage continues to practice an evasive swerve, shunning the power of his own taste to determine an aesthetic world.

This impulse was present in Cage's practice already in the early 1950s, a period during which Cage largely discussed his work in technical musical terms. Even then, he made it clear – as he did in more explicitly political terms later in his career – that whatever he worked through in the medium of musical technique also afforded resonances with other realms of life. In 1952 he writes, '[i]t is thus possible 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'.[52] This bold statement provides an elegant summary of his project at that time, characterised by his creation of rules for compositions that allowed musical content (number of performers, choice of instruments, durations, pitches), to be decided by chance (dice throws, consulting the *I Ching*).[53] Relying on these 'chance procedures' enabled him to bypass his own habits to some extent. As a composing method it stands out as a rejection not only of a cultivated sense of taste but of an inherited 'self'; it seeks to undo, through making, that self which has been constituted by myriad influences and conventions, and to remake its affective orientation, to open it up to liking things it hitherto found ugly or boring.

Discipline *and* security

As I've suggested, Cage's approach in *26'1.1499"* is dissimilar to his posture in the Black Mountain event and the Number Pieces. Here not only is the sonic space completely constructed – and Cage constructs it with exaggerated clock-precision down to the ten-thousandth of a second – the performer has to be constructed, as well – in a sense, dissolved and, through this dissolution, reconstructed. And she is not simply passive in this process; she also constructs herself. The deeper the reconstitution goes, the more successful any performer's engagement with *26'1.1499"* is.[54] This sort of reconstitution is, however, not an aim of the Black Mountain event or the Number Pieces, which instead take the performer's body and bodily training as material givens.

This inconsistency in Cage's methods – within the same period – could not be accounted for if we relied on the political metaphors with which his work is usually described. Neither anarchy nor liberal government properly describes the ambivalent relationship with control that exists within his *œuvre*. A statement of Cage's about his time-bracket pieces supports a reading in other terms:

> Each musician is a soloist. To bring to orchestral society the devotion to music that characterizes chamber music. To build a society one by one. To bring chamber music to the size of orchestra. *Music for* ----- [1984, revised 1987]. So far I have written eighteen parts, any of which can be played together or omitted. Flexible time-brackets. Variable structure. A music, so to speak, that's earthquake proof.[55]

What is an earthquake-proof music? In the context of Cage's utterance, the possibilities he seems to be accounting for, in making sure that a music would go ahead – would survive, would continue to be itself – even if certain unforeseen events transpired, could quite literally include performers' incapacitation due to injury or death from earthquake. But it is important to note that the designation 'earthquake proof' does not apply to any physical structure. Buildings and bridges are at best earthquake-resistant: built to minimise damage in a natural catastrophe, their designers acknowledge that it is not possible to entirely prevent such damage. Meanwhile, humanity does not have the ability to prevent earthquakes from occurring.

Cage's time-bracket pieces are 'so to speak' earthquake proof, because they have flexible structures. They are ductile – they can undergo significant plastic deformation before rupturing. This ductility is not a material property; it metaphorically describes a temporal structure written into the scores. Again, I contend that Foucault's characterisation of security offers a striking parallel. Following his description of security's particular relationship with spaces, in his second lecture of *Security, Territory, Population*, he articulates security apparatuses' particular relationship with 'the event'. Foucault is not concerned with music but with how governments deal with unwanted events like grain scarcity or theft. A transformation in European techniques of government takes place for him with the eighteenth-century French physiocrats:

> Abeille, the physiocrats, and the economic theorists of the eighteenth century, tried to arrive at an apparatus (*dispositif*) for arranging things so that, by connecting up with the

very reality of these fluctuations [of grain's abundance and cheapness], and by establishing a series of connections with other elements of reality, the phenomenon is gradually compensated for, checked, finally limited, and, in the final degree, canceled out, without it being prevented or losing any of its reality.[56]

The apparatus that Abeille tried to arrive at allows all sorts of fluctuations (for instance, of land quality and climatic conditions, as well as rising grain prices) to take place, without trying to prevent them, and by allowing a bit of scarcity, a bit of hunger, it is able to contain the negative effects, to prevent these fluctuations from exploding into a catastrophe. Cage's work flirts with governing a span of performance time in an analogous manner – accepting the hypothetical undesirable event at face value while trying to contain any negative consequences. His time-bracket pieces are ductile so that such fluctuations as mistimed entries, errant noises, and a player playing too fast or too slow relative to other players, are held within a generous structure that cancels out the phenomena – that is, these fluctuations do not appear as mistakes at all. This general aesthetic economy, like Foucault's characterisation of security, is centrifugal, possessing the constant tendency to expand, constantly integrating new elements – this is both what is newest in Cage's œuvre and what is most familiar to us in performance practices today, thanks in part to Cage's influence.

Thus we have seen three aspects of the distinction between disciplinary and security mechanisms: discipline constructs a space while security relies on material givens; discipline controls the minutiae of time in order to extract greater forces while security eschews both the small-scale control of time as well as counterpoint in favour of achieving effects at a global level; and discipline tries to prevent negative events while security tries to situate undesirable events in a larger context in which they never erupt although they never disappear either. Discipline is characterised in *Discipline and Punish* as a gentler form of power that is nonetheless blatantly controlling. Discipline 'regulates everything' and 'allows nothing to escape'. Security, in contrast, 'lets things happen'.[57] Foucault associates both mechanisms with eighteenth-century liberalism, and although security exercises control more subtly, at a greater distance from its targets, both mechanisms continue to differentiate themselves from the highly visible older form of juridico-legal power, which Foucault famously illustrated in the opening of *Discipline and Punish* via a brutal scene of public torture and execution.

The relative visibility of figures of power

One of the reasons Foucault gives for emphasising the distinction between security and discipline, as we've seen already, is to evade the simplistic assertion of power as something monolithic and centralised in a 'master' figure: 'Neither power nor master, neither Power nor the master, and neither one nor the other as God'.[58] In other words, Foucault's analysis of discipline, in *Discipline and Punish*, understood as a gentler yet still brutal power, is to be distinguished from the sovereign power over death only because it does not take the same form. What is insinuated here is that this centralised

sovereign power continues to operate, only in cloaked form. By introducing a third term he aimed to buttress his position against the possibility of this insinuation. In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus firstly on how both security and discipline, in forgoing visible forms of power, differ from an older model of legal power. This will bring forward questions regarding the relationship between politically conceived music and governance conceived in terms of the control of time and space. At stake is the primacy of the aesthetic or the domain of legislative policy, in political life.

Both security and disciplinary mechanisms of power work as they do in part because they are invisible. Though social hierarchies persist, these mechanisms of power operate not through a monarch or any form of personal directorship but on an entirely other dimension. Western classical music offers a compelling illustration of the highly visible figure of power, as well as the complicated history of its attempted removal. Elias Canetti writes in *Crowds and Power*:

> There is no more obvious expression of power than the performance of a conductor. [...] The conductor [...] is the only person who stands. In front of him sits the orchestra and behind him the audience. [...] Quite small movements are all he needs to wake this or that instrument to life or to silence it at will. He has the power of life and death over the voices of the instruments; one long silent will speak again at his command. Their diversity stands for the diversity of mankind; an orchestra is like an assemblage of different types of men. The willingness of its members to obey him makes it possible for the conductor to transform them into a unit, which he then embodies. [...] The complexity of the work he performs means that he must be alert. Presence of mind is among his essential attributes; law-breakers must be curbed instantly. The code of laws, in the form of the score, is in his hands.[59]

For Canetti the conductor is such a strong imago of power that he seems to forget the person behind the creation of the score. He doesn't mention the composer, but we can infer from his family of analogies that the composer is a legislator – the writer of laws. This writer is an invisible power. Meanwhile, the conductor figure Canetti speaks of is particular to the Western European orchestral tradition. It is an unusual figure in the history of music insofar as he or she leads a group from outside it, without also playing. Historically the figure arose in Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Around the same time, according to Foucault's account in *Discipline and Punish* – that is, from around 1760 to around 1840 – a shift in the power to punish, away from theatricality and towards invisibility, is decisive in Western Europe. I find the coincidence notable. Why should the conductor – this visible figure of power – emerge in Western European societies during the same period that the power to punish goes into hiding? Does the conductor embody the sublimation of a pre-classical form of power? Does the conductor represent the preservation of a form of power that is dormant but not yet – perhaps never – passed? This notion would in fact be consistent with Foucault's thesis in *Discipline and Punish* that while the post-revolutionary decades overturned the way that punishment worked by getting rid of public torture, a trace or sediment of torture [*un fond 'suppliciant'*] remained within the corporal nature of imprisonment.[60] The conductor, sediment of monarchical power, survived, even grew in strength until the early twentieth century. We could speculate that the emergence and survival of the conductor figure in the nineteenth

century either supplements the trace of monarchical power or embodies the possibility of the monarch's return.

What has happened to the conductor figure since then has many twists and mutually contradictory tendencies, and there is not scope to go into it here. However, it is worth noting that conductorless orchestra projects began in the early days of the Soviet Union with the Moscow-based 'Persimfans' (*Perviÿ Simfonicheskiy Ansambl' bez Dirizhyora* – literally, the first conductorless orchestra), and have been enjoying a resurgence in the past decade, in the United States, Russia, and around Europe. The majority of Cage's works for orchestra after 1951 are written such that a conductor is not needed. No conductor is needed to perform the Number Pieces because precise synchronisation is not needed. If we can speak of a general aesthetic economy of security in the twentieth-century neo-avant-garde, it is curious that in political thought and practice this mechanism of power emerged 150 years earlier. Can it be that music praxis is, in at least this one sense, mirroring a society that has ceased to exist?

Discipline as mere fun

On 2 October 1954, David Tudor and John Cage set off from New York City on the *Maasdam* ship, bound for a European tour. The next day the ship collided with a French freighter, crumpling the *Maasdam*'s stern, and the two ships had to return to Hoboken for repairs.[61] Cage's plan had been to write a lecture, to be given in London later that month, while crossing the Atlantic. Instead, after he and Tudor banded together with other passengers to get the Holland-America line to charter a flight to Amsterdam, he wrote the lecture 'on trains and in hotels and restaurants' while on tour.[62] His anticipated expanse of uninterrupted, contemplative time at sea was thus replaced by bitty intervals broken up by the distractions involved in moving between places.

The lecture that Cage wrote under unanticipated time pressure, *45' for a Speaker*, was originally intended to be *39'16.95"*. Cage used a pre-determined 'rhythmic structure' (a sequence of whole numbers), which he had also used for the two piano pieces, and a multiplier, which he obtained through a chance procedure, in order to decide this length.[63] However, he subsequently composed the text using chance procedures as well, and when he completed it he found he 'was unable to perform it within that time-length'. So he made it longer. He reports that it remained difficult to read, 'but one can still try'.[64] Cage indicates ten-second increments every six lines, along the left side of the page (0'10" ... 0'20" ... 0'30" ... etc.) (see Figure 2). The indication is vague enough that the speaker may take some extra time – on the order of a few seconds – with the denser passages while shortening the silent passages in compensation. Once again an 'earthquake-proof' security mechanism seems to be at play. Yet the speaker's attempt to stay 'with the clock' creates tautness in the performance – a dramatic tension for the performer, which is conveyed to the spectator/auditor. For the performer it can be fun – a kind of game. Yet if we analyse this structure, it appears cruel – tension is

6'00"   the course
of the
performance.

10"   The principle called mobility-immobility is this:
every thing is changing
but while some things
are changing
others
are not.
20"

Eventually those

that were

not
30"

changing

begin suddenly

to change
40"

et vice versa ad infinitum.

A technique to be useful (skillful, that is)

must be such that it fails
50"   to control
the elements subjected to it. Otherwise
it is apt to become unclear.
And listening is best
in a state of mental
emptiness.

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Figure 2 Excerpt from '45' for a Speaker' in *Silence: Lectures and Writings*

created through a differential between time expected for a task and time that ultimately materialises for that task. It mirrors the workplace dynamic wherein the boss requires his or her workers to produce more than they previously had been able to within a given timeframe, to 'perform or else' as McKenzie aptly puts it, in order to produce outputs at the efficiency rate that has been 'benchmarked' in an unrelated field. Clearly, the moral value of this general aesthetic economy is hugely variable, depending on who creates the tension, and for whom it is created.

This leads to a final set of questions. It is not just the mirroring of a political strategy that should interest us in Cage. The greater mystery is the relationship between his aesthetic economy and the political mechanism it appears to double – why did this doubling take this particular form? As previously noted, Foucault had little to say about contemporary art music, but a remark of his, made in conversation with Pierre Boulez in 1983, seems apposite here. Foucault posed the question regarding twentieth-century art music: 'this music which is so close, so consubstantial with all our culture, how does it happen that we feel it, as it were, projected afar and placed at an almost insurmountable distance?'[65] If an artform that doubles society feels nonetheless distant from that society, what else is hidden in the doubling relationship? Is this disjunction between music and broader culture not reason to suspect that whatever Cage's practice appears to resemble, it cannot be reduced to a 'political rationality'? That would be altogether too tidy.

Conclusion

In my view, we are not finished with critical appraisals of Cage's practice in relation to political imaginaries. I have tried to use a particular moment in Foucault's thought to extend some of the links that Benjamin Piekut made between Cage's practice and liberal governance, and to revise others of these links. Foucault's conceptualisation of security must be understood not simply as a new concept, but as a complex moment in his thought during which his characterisation of modern societies as 'disciplinary' was displaced by a more complex account involving three distinctive mechanisms of power. Two of these mechanisms – security, which functions through the application of pressure to aspects of a broadly conceived environment in which human life freely moves, and discipline, which focuses on forming certain kinds of subjects – are broadly associated, in Foucault's account, with modernity, although he insists that the apparent historical alignment in his account is not absolute. They both differ from an older model of juridico-legal power, but the latter does not disappear entirely in modernity. This complex tripartite account is designed in part to make it difficult to place greater value on one or the other form of power over the others. By identifying parallels between John Cage's practice and both security and discipline, we can move beyond current scholarship's tendency to seek ultimate judgement on his practice by exaggerating one or another evaluation of its power dynamics – either praising its anarchistic vision as Rob Haskins has done, or cautioning against its liberalism as Piekut has done.

And, at the same time, by using Cage's work to exemplify the conceptual development in Foucault's own thought, I suggest that we are conversely better able to think how Foucault moved beyond the impasses of disciplinary power.[66] Foucault's thought is often erroneously cited in order to suggest that a singular thing called disciplinary power, which appears to be gentle and innocuous, is actually coercively responsible for the order of our world. By introducing the term security, Foucault aimed to compli-cate our understanding of the locations of power and to rein in the impulse simply to condemn the functioning of power. He clarifies his position in his 1984 interview, 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom':

> The idea that there could exist a state of communication that would allow games of truth to circulate freely, without any constraints or coercive effects, seems utopian to me. This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad in itself, that we have to break free of. I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely trans-parent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the *ēthos*, the practice of the self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible.[67]

Notes

1 According to Michel Senellart, editor of the original French edition of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, 'Foucault distinguishes security mechanisms from disciplinary mechanisms for the first time in the final lecture (17 March 1976) of the 1975–1976 course "*Il faut défendre la sociéte*" p. 219; "Society Must Be Defended" p. 246'. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, gen. eds. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007 [2004]), p. 24n5.
2 Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 175.
3 Ibid., p. 175; and Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October* 59 (1992), 4–7.
4 Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 61.
5 Ibid., p. 63.
6 Wendy Brown, 'Neo-Liberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy', *Theory & Event* 7.1 (2003), n.p.
7 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 6–9.
8 Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, p. 145.
9 Ibid., p. 145.
10 An excerpt of the score can be seen on James Pritchett's website, *Rose White Music*, http://rosewhitemusic.com/piano/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Fig6–2.png, accessed 31 December 2017.
11 Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, p. 172.
12 Ibid., p. 148.
13 Derek Hook, *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 8.
14 'Introduces', that is, within the context of the 1977–78 lecture series. See note 1 above.
15 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*. Foucault declares near the beginning of his first lecture of 1977–78 that he will be continuing an 'analysis of these mechanisms of power' that he began years ago. Midway

through the lecture, he outlines four 'general features of [...] apparatuses of security', the second of which is its 'treatment of the uncertain, the aleatory' (p. 11).

16 For Foucault's relationship with Barraqué, see Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 64–8.

17 Michel Foucault, 'Pierre Boulez, Passing Through the Screen' (1982), in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, Vol. 2, *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984* (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 241–4. See also Edward Campbell, *Boulez, Music and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 138–40. There are many near-misses linking Foucault with Cage's aleatoric music, but none of them are very helpful: Boulez had a well-publicised correspondence with Cage, in which the two spoke extensively about their individual conceptions of what sort of freedom should be involved in 'aleatoric music'. After a number of letters back and forth they appear to have realised that they disagreed fundamentally about this. It's probably fair to say that Cage's conception was much more daring and as such has provoked more extensive artistic repercussions. Even so, and despite Cage's fame, it is not necessarily the case that Foucault would have known his work.

18 David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Vintage, 1993), pp. 398–9. Macey explains that Foucault, in his contribution, 'concentrated on a brief analysis of the musical culture of the Parisian intelligentsia, noting with some surprise that few of his colleagues or students took any serious interest in contemporary music and commenting on the anomaly between their philosophical and musical tastes: people who were passionately interested in Heidegger and Nietzsche followed the fortunes of mediocre rock groups rather than the experiments of IRCAM'. See also David Macey, *Michel Foucault* (London: Reaktion, 2004), pp. 41–3.

19 John Cage, 'An Autobiographical Statement', *John Cage.org*, http://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html, accessed 1 January 2018.

20 Arnold Aronson, *American Avant-Garde Theatre: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 38–40.

21 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1991 [1977]); orig. *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

22 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*. The first part of the quotation is from p. 19; the second from p. 20.

23 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 154.

24 Rob Haskins, 'John Cage and Anarchism', http://terz.cc/print.php?where=magazin&id=264, accessed 26 December 2017.

25 James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 199.

26 Cage, *John Cage.org*, http://johncage.org/pp/john-cage-works.cfm, accessed 2 January 2018.

27 Haskins, 'John Cage and Anarchism'.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 49.

34 Ibid., pp. 48–9.

35 Ibid., p. 48.

36 Ibid., p. 49.

37 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 164–5.

38 Ibid.

39 Foucault, 'Pierre Boulez, Passing Through the Screen'. It is interesting to note that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in A *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), name Cage's practice as emblematic of a particular kind of temporality, which 'affirms ... floating time above pulsed time or tempo' (p. 267). The interconnectedness of all topics within this book may suggest that their concern with temporality has some relation to their concern with Foucault's disciplinary society, mentioned elsewhere in the book (pp. 67, 224). But their discussion is too ambiguous to be helpful here.

40 Michel Foucault and Pierre Boulez, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', trans. John Rahn, *Perspectives of New Music*, 24.1 (1985), 6–12. The original appeared in *CNAC* Magazine, 15 (May-June 1983), 10–12.

41 Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd edn (Belmont, CA: Thomson, 2003).

42 John Cage, '45' for a Speaker', in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 164. Deleuze and Guattari allude to Cage in a discussion not unrelated to superposition in *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 267, 269.

43 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 16.

44 Ibid., p. 18.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid., pp. 22–3.

47 On the latter point see Ryan Dohoney, 'John Cage, Julius Eastman, and the Homosexual Ego', in Benjamin Piekut (ed.), *Tomorrow is the Question: New Directions in Experimental Music Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), pp. 39–62. On the former see Sharon Williams, 'Uncaged: John Cage and Conceptual Approaches to Participatory Music-making', *Malaysian Music Journal*, 2.2 (2013), 90–103.

48 Dohoney, 'John Cage, Julius Eastman, and the Homosexual Ego'.

49 Cited in Haskins, 'John Cage and Anarchism'. Original: John Cage, 'How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run', in *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969), p. 136.

50 See Cage, *A Year from Monday*, pp. 4–5, 19, 162. See also Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*, p. 60.

51 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 19.

52 John Cage, 'To Describe the Process of Composition Used in Music of Changes and Imaginary Landscape No. 4', in *Silence*, p. 59; initially published as part of 'Four Musicians at Work' in *trans/formation*, 1.3 (1952).

53 Much has been written about Cage's use of 'chance techniques'. See Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*.

54 Piekut's discussion highlights cellist Charlotte Moorman's creative relationship with her own subjecthood in her performances of Cage's piece.

55 John Cage, 'An Autobiographical Statement', *John Cage*, http://johncage.org/autobiographical_statement.html, accessed 30 December 2017.

56 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 37.

57 Ibid., p. 45.

58 Ibid., pp. 55–6.

59 Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (1962) (New York: Continuum, 1981 [1960]), pp. 394–5.

60 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 16. See also Stuart Elden on the translation of this passage at *Progressive Geographies*, https://progressivegeographies.com/2014/01/22/beyond-discipline-and-punish-is-it-time-for-a-new-translation-of-foucaults-surveiller-et-punir/, accessed 3 August 2017.

61 Peter C. Kohler, 'The Atlantic's "Great Little Liners": "Ryndam" and "Maasdam"', www.halpostcards.com/unofficial/kohler.html, accessed 29 December 2017; *The Suffolk County News* (Sayville, NY), 8 October 1954, p. 7, http://nyshistoricnewspapers.org/lccn/sn84031477/1954-10-08/ed-1/seq-7/, accessed 29 December 2017; Henrik Ljungström, Maasdam (IV)/Stefan Batory/Stefan, www.thegreatoceanliners.com/maasdam4.html, accessed 30 December 2017.

62 Cage, *Silence*, p. 147.

63 Ibid., p. 146.

64 Ibid.

65 Foucault and Boulez, 'Contemporary Music and the Public', pp. 10–12.

66 Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, pp. 55–6.

67 Michel Foucault, 'The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, Vol. 1, *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984* (New York: New Press, 1997), p. 298.