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***Rethinking Reich*. Ed. by Sumanth Gopinath and Pwyll ap Siôn. Pp. xvii+394. (Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 2019. £25.99. ISBN 978-0-19-060529-2.)**

There's a prescient scene at the beginning of Björn Runge's 2017 film *The Wife*. A biographer named Nathaniel Bone is seeking skeletons in the closet. He has wheedled his way onto the same flight that the protagonist (novelist Joseph Castleman) has taken to Stockholm, with his wife, to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Bone approaches the couple and we see their obvious disdain—they're already aware of him by name and politely accept his congratulations for what he describes as an 'astounding achievement' (he doesn't think spouses get enough credit, but I won't spoil the plot any further). The disgruntled Castleman reminds him in no uncertain terms that 'I am not giving you permission to write my biography', before asking him to leave them alone.

It's hard not to see this brief encounter as an archetype of the scholar's relation to a still-living creative subject. Bone could pass as any mid-ranking faculty member, dry and obdurate, in need of meat for his next project. Castleman, then, is the model artist, the great man—his focus above all on his own work rather than on what Steve Reich once called 'meaningless intellectual jargon' (p. 10). The great man has little time for the inquisitive academic who is little more than an irritation, someone who wastes time on futile erudition to cover up 'simple facts'. Bone, however, is far more perceptive than either Castleman or his wife admits. They know their history will be written in his words; their legacy is resting in his hands.

When I began thinking seriously about Reich a decade ago, this was very much the case. My requests for an interview were politely declined: Reich was, on first inquiry, unable to schedule one, on second inquiry he was flatly 'unavailable'. Looking at an early period he had neglected to document fully in his personal archive, my solution was to look to the people surrounding him at the time—figures such as Jon Gibson, Pauline Oliveros, Tom Constanten, Ramon Sender, and R. G. Davis associated with a nascent West Coast counterculture. Our conversations were the highlight of my research: unlike the composer himself, they were willing to open up in wonderfully generous, lucid, and idiosyncratic ways. I remain indebted to these denizens of the sixties—figures who, as Oliveros's and the Fluxus artist Benjamin Patterson's passing in 2016 sadly showed us, will not be around forever.

*Rethinking Reich* thus comes at a crucial moment when these rhizomatic histories are at risk of disappearing entirely or else being lost to the mute voices of the archive. Written material nevertheless looms large in this book, the Paul Sacher Stiftung having acquired its Steve Reich Collection in 2008, along with subsequent additions by the composer. Reich's files (hand-written, hybrid, and digital) now sit alongside sources relating to Bartók and Stravinsky, as well as to his former teachers Darius Milhaud and Luciano Berio. The Sacher holdings are thus a kind of canon—for Reich, a self-conscious canonization at the heart of Europe among a modernist elite. This newly archived material largely justifies the publication of *Rethinking Reich* and indeed the notion that Reich should be 'rethought', wrested away from a former generation of well-thumbed monographs, such as Edward Strickland's *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington, 1993), K. Robert Schwartz's *Minimalists* (London, 1996), and Keith Potter's *Four Musical Minimalists* (Cambridge, 2000).

For these scholars, a number of Reich's works were yet to be published or had only recently been made available as printed scores. If we look closely, large gaps exist between the stated date of composition and the score's year of copyright: *Piano Phase* (1967), for instance, was copyrighted in 1980. The convoluted history of this piece is traced assiduously in a chapter by David Chapman, revealing a genealogy at odds with Reich's ambiguous yet oft-quoted timeline. What we find is a piece emerging from a series of experiments, sketches, improvisations, and related works such as *Variations on a Watermelon* (a redacted piano composition performed with Arthur Murphy attesting to Reich's involvement in Robert Nelson's 1965 film *Oh Dem Watermelons* made for the notorious San Francisco Mime Troupe production *A Minstrel Show, or Civil Rights in a Cracker Barrel*). Likewise, as Potter notes in relation to *Music for 18 Musicians*, Reich only completed a full score in pencil up to section 7 (of 11), opting to use individual parts for rehearsals and performances. It was not until 2000, some twenty-five years after the initial period of composition, that an authoritative score was finally published by Boosey & Hawkes. This score, however, was not Reich's own manuscript, but a detailed transcription—made by the composer Marc Mellits under Reich's supervision—of the iconic 1978 LP recording released by ECM.

In the process, as Kerry O'Brien claims in a stand-out chapter on Reich's fascination with yoga and somatic control, we lose something of the initial spirit of the piece. The opening of his handwritten manuscript contains the cascading performance direction 'one breath' for the voice and bass clarinet parts, a direction later sidelined in the Boosey & Hawkes score. Such traces—here, of that telling direction 'one breath' written by someone practicing yogic *prāṇāyāma*—open up fascinating hermeneutic windows onto Reich's cultural world. A similar opening is explored by Sumanth Gopinath, who reads Reich's *Four Organs* (1970) in relation to the Cold War obsession with space—his clues hidden in a strange, spaceship-like doodle that Reich drew in 1969 (year of the Apollo 11 moon landing), similarities with the theme to *Star Trek*, and the titular four Farfisa Mini-Compact organs resembling a kind of sonic cockpit on stage. Given the jazz harmony and the omnipresent maracas, Gopinath also encourages us to hear inverted echoes of Afrofuturism—of a 'racial-political escape' (p. 35) in which the composer lifts off into other spheres even as he's held hostage by the logic of repetition.

The way in which Reich's scores have since been made available should tell us something important about his working methods and how his identity has shifted over the years—from West Coast provocateur to Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, and from left to right. One of the ironies of *Rethinking Reich* is its intense focus on the written score in a strikingly orthodox musicological manner. We know that Reich employed various forms of notation and even improvisation, releasing recordings of particular performances, and only later authorizing the production of scores. Why, then, should we read the work concept back into this fluid creative practice? Why should the focus be on works and scores rather than, say, on recordings, ensembles, and performances? It is perplexing to say the least when one looks in vain for 'Steve Reich and Musicians' in the index to *Rethinking Reich*—only to find one fleeting reference to the Steve Reich Ensemble in Robert Fink's characteristically stylish chapter on logocentrism in Reich's 'Jewish' music. Musicological habit dies hard with the avant-garde. What we find throughout the book is an enduring attraction to sketch studies, close reading, descriptive analysis, and positivist data-gathering. Matthias Kassel of the Paul Sacher Stiftung even tells us that it is with Reich's sketchbooks 'that any study of his music must [!] begin' (p.181).

A book calling itself (albeit at the behest of an on-going Oxford University Press series) *Rethinking Reich* begs the question of just how much rethinking is really going on. The editors have done a fine job of arranging a series of useful and extremely well researched essays, but we are hardly on radical terrain when their introduction is titled 'Reich in Context' and notes that a central concern of the book is 'the problem of musical meaning and hermeneutics'—phrases that recall the stock language of the not so very 'new' musicology. Despite such claims, however, some chapters look even further back in the discipline's history, far beyond Korsyn's decentering and Kerman's contemplating. The 'rethinking', in short, fails to extend to the renewal of musicological tools and research methodologies, which in turn leads to Reich being situated in surprisingly conventional terms as a musical auteur.

An antidote to this tendency is provided by the collection's most provocative and far-reaching chapter, Martin Scherzinger's 'Afro-Electric Counterpoint'. Reich's work as a whole, we might conclude after reading it, can be described as Afro-American Counterpoint—throwing into salient relief Pwyll ap Siôn's claim that Reich's music 'transcends the Western tradition' (p. 70). Such transcendence comes at a significant cost that casts ap Siôn's vision of 'beguiling synthesis' in a very different light: expropriation and systematic exploitation. As such, Reich's aesthetic is yet another example of Eurological thinking absorbing and silencing the Afrological—reproducing, in short, the habitual relationality of colonizer and colonized. We might recall here Reich's *Variations on a Watermelon*, his early recourse to the sound of racialized voices, and a claim that the tape loops he was playing with were 'little mechanized Africans' (p. 278). But this would be merely to scratch the surface.

What becomes clear is that, as Scherzinger argues, Reich's works are in fact 'creative paraphrases of music from various parts of Africa' (p. 266)—music that Reich encountered as early as 1962 via the ethnographic work of A. M. Jones, and later via Kwabena Nketia, Hugh Tracey, David Rycroft, John Blacking, and Gerhard Kubik. Consider Jones's description of what Reich later called phasing: 'When [the drummer] introduces his variant...he slips one quaver, thereby making a permanent cross rhythm' (p. 278). Wherever we look there is an African prototype secreted behind Reich's motivic cells—whether the 'inherent' patterns made by overlapping lines, staggered canonic relationships, pentatonicism, reference to the music of the Banda Linda, the 12-beat *gankogui* bell pattern, or *makwa* clapping. Reich, at one point, worries that all this might sound a little bit 'too African?' (p. 296).

As Scherzinger insinuates, perhaps the question should be 'not African enough?' (p. 294). There is a global history waiting to be told here, a history that takes Reich's intertextualism seriously. The question that always arises in such cases—as it does in relation to Reich's sampling of human voices—concerns ownership and authority: does Reich have the right to use these sources in any way he sees fit in the name of art? *Different Trains* (1988), his response to the Holocaust, has been praised and faulted in precisely these terms. Is Reich 'as guilty as Picasso', as he confesses (and simultaneously self-justifies) elsewhere in relation to African sculpture?

To return to *The Wife*, this book tacitly raises another question concerning ownership: who owns access to Reich? Who will become the Nathaniel Bone to his Joseph Castleman? From footnotes it's clear that Reich has started talking to scholars in a new way, even as he relinquishes control to his archive. Perhaps he's beginning to see that, however irritating they are, scholars simply refuse to go away. Let's hope that the result is

not a territorial musicology of opus and Urtext, but one that shares a love of Reich's music as performed and recorded (as the editors of *Rethinking Reich* propose) through acts of criticism and pleasure dialectically entwined.

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