

While her analysis of "product" is carefully executed and provocative, her discussion of "process" seems to need further clarification. Perhaps we can look forward to such a study in Miss Carpenter's future publications.

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The articles by Miss Carpenter and myself have produced a gratifying divergence of responses. But if the respondents had difficulty responding to us, I, at least, find it impossible to formulate a response to them that is both comprehensive and comprehensible. In availing myself of this opportunity kindly provided by the editors, permit me to make only a very small point and a very large one.

As to the small point, one or two of the respondents seemed confused as to my own position. I was, in fact, trying to be soft-spoken; now let me speak hard: the "common notions" I presented (I think they are clearly identified) are emphatically not my own. I fail to see how any intelligent person, upon due reflection, could continue to subscribe without qualification to those simple-minded ideas I put forward under a politely collective "we." I trust that no one shares the ideas in question; if someone does, he does not share them with me.

Mr. Cone seems unwilling to believe that any intelligent person, even Miss Carpenter or myself, could really intend to take positions as unreasonable as our language might suggest. Mr. Cone seems sure that a quick trip to the dictionary will straighten us out. For my part, I must reluctantly assure him that my position is still as unreasonable as it first appeared to him. Mr. Cone's own position is, of course, quite clear.

As to the large point: I found both encouragement and horror in the fact that Miss Carpenter and seemingly all the respondents either explicitly asserted the decisive importance of historical concepts in resolving questions of aesthetics, or else tacitly agreed to such importance by invoking historical ideas to illuminate their arguments. I myself happen to think that history provides the only reliable answers to such problems, but I did not expect to find a half-a-dozen aestheticians agreeing with me. From this I take encouragement.

What horrifies me is the content of many of the historical ideas invoked. The basic categories in which we have been trained to think about music history are not merely open to question; when questioned seriously, they often turn out to embody outright fabrication with little or no meaningful relationship to observable fact. It would be hard to construct on purpose a more fantastic and unwarranted system of assertions about Western society from 700 to 1500 than the system retailed under the heading "Middle Ages" in books in common use. But, you say, we are not here discussing the Middle

Ages. To that I reply that the very substance of many of the ideas advanced depends upon their being attached to an alleged historical period "ca. 1420-1910" and that this substance is clarified, "objectified," perhaps even defined by being distinct and different from "the medieval world-view." Descriptions of European culture that contrast (no matter how tacitly) high-level generalities about the modern period with high-level nonsense about the medieval one risk serious difficulties. Assertions that such-and-such (say, formal objectivity) is a distinctive feature of *modern* thought are weakened if such-and-such keeps popping up in medieval thought as well. My own feeling is that these observations apply, one way or the other, to many of the arguments presented in this colloquium.

I would like to add that more is involved than just my own notorious idiosyncrasies. Read a paragraph by William C. Bark, in his book *Origins of the medieval world* (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958, p. 109); he is speaking of conceptions of the Middle Ages:

All the old views—the Renaissance aesthetic contempt, the Enlightenment's anticlerical sneers, the economic snobbery of the early twentieth century—are still alive. All are the products of ignorance and bias, the more surprising because proponents of these views abhorred those evils and thought they were free of them. All are primarily negative. All are quite wrong.

And if we have been that badly informed on the first two-thirds of Western history, how goes it with the last third?

What is most horrifying is not that such arbitrary historical generalities exist, but that they are blandly accepted in our own field as if they were fact. Well-educated, intelligent musicologists will diligently root out errors of terminology, bibliographic reference, birth dates of minor composers, or will argue endlessly (and sometimes with profit) about the function of a single note in a small piece; yet these same intelligent people may accept without a wince a statement such as, "The Middle Ages produced, not works of art, but a synthesis of the arts . . ." It is not just the level of generality I call into question here, it is the truth of the assertion. I do not say that we can afford carelessness in detail; I merely say that we can afford it even less in our most high-level thoughts about history.

To apply this summarily to the matter at hand, it seems to me that the idea Miss Carpenter constructs of the work of art in Western culture was not the only one in force during the period she has in mind, was not *the way* Europeans thought about music; and that this same idea could be applied with equal validity to certain kinds of pieces in music from the Middle Ages—or from other times and places. *Et sic de ceteris*. It seems to me that Western music, along those stretches known to me, shows such a variety of simultaneous alternatives that the attempt to marshal them behind a stately procession of *Weltanschauungen* can only continue to yield unsatisfactory results.