

THE LIVES OF GLENN GOULD: THE LIMITS OF MUSICAL AUTO/BIOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the large body of life writing in various genres by and about Canadian pianist, recording artist, and broadcaster Glenn Gould to consider reasons for his continuing international popularity, and to explore the implications his auto/biography has for life writing as a genre. Gould is a musical auto/biography “limit-case,” in that the texts about him enact the many fascinating and often bizarre possibilities for life writing. Despite the conservative history of musical biography as a genre, many biographers, filmmakers, and even novelists have come to the unlikely conclusion that Gould is an elusive subject who must be constructed rather than represented. Such conclusions arise from Gould’s own auto/biographical interventions which have profoundly influenced subsequent representations of his life. A man obsessed with privacy and with control over his own image, Gould created auto/biographical representations that turned him into something of an empty signifier, both confounding biographers, and allowing them to invest their own meanings into him.

Each chapter explores a key theme in representations of Gould. Chapter one examines portrayals of Gould as genius and eccentric. Two notions of genius prevail. It is a mysterious force, beyond the understanding even of the possessor himself; alternately, the genius is a god-like figure, transforming the lives of the listener through art. Eccentricity—manifested in Gould through his unusual performance practice, his illnesses and drug use, and his apparent lack of traditional relationships—is often portrayed by Gould’s biographers as the terrible downside of his genius that paradoxically serves to normalize Gould and allows life writing to wrest biographical control from him. Chapter two explores representations of Gould as a Canadian icon,

largely in response to his own self-constructed links with the Canadian North. While Gould himself, many Canadian institutions, and some of his biographical representations have presented him as an exemplary Canadian, other texts dispute Gould's appropriateness as icon for an increasingly diverse nation, and at times even question the biographical enterprise itself. Chapter three considers Gould as a performer of music and of his own complex constructions of self, examining the ways in which Gould's music, self-interviews, and radio documentaries test the suppleness of auto/biographical forms. Gould's textual lives ultimately demonstrate that music can be effectively deployed as life writing, and shatter the myth of a unified, coherent biographical self.

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INTRODUCTION

And so it needs stressing that what people listen to is more important for their sense of themselves than what they watch or read. Patterns of music use provide a better map of social life than viewing or reading habits. Music just *matters* more than any other medium . . .

Simon Frith. “Music and Everyday Life.”

If what Simon Frith says is true, then there is much to be learned about Canadian, North American, or even Western culture from a study of Canadian pianist and recording artist Glenn Gould. He is more than just a famous musician. Like artist Andy Warhol or writer Virginia Woolf—or within Canada, politician Pierre Elliott Trudeau or hockey legend Maurice “Rocket” Richard—he is a cultural phenomenon, essential to numerous enraptured fans’ constructions of self. Upon its initial release in 1956, Gould’s first recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations* became the bestselling classical album of the year, and then the decade. Later still, it was called one of the top classical albums of the twentieth century, and Gould himself was proclaimed one of the top artists.¹ With such devoted listenership came even more intense media attention during his life and after. And yet, unlike many classical musicians, Gould shunned not only the after parties, receptions, and award shows, but after only eight years of performing, the concert stage as well. His supposedly hermit-like existence, combined with his fierce guarding of his privacy, made him the subject of powerful audience curiosity. Even before his death in 1982, biographical interest in Gould flourished. As early as his 1955 American debut,

musical publications and the popular press treated him more like a rock star than a concert pianist—an attention which he both courted and sought to avoid. Interest in Gould only intensified after his death, with new recordings and biographies appearing roughly once a year ever since. As John Terrauds, *The Toronto Star*'s classical music critic, has stated, "More has been said and written about Glenn Gould than about any other classical musician of the twentieth century. The late pianist and broadcaster is classical music's Elvis, growing larger in death than he was in an already public life." A unique combination of breathtaking pianistic ability, eccentricity, virtuoso skills in media manipulation, and the specific cultural circumstances of his time made Gould a major celebrity.

This study is not another biography of Glenn Gould, whose life has been told again and again, but a critical analysis of the large body of Gould life writing that continues to proliferate. All of these texts have been influenced by Gould's own autobiographical play. When composing his life, biographers must confront Gould's own prolific, and often highly unusual, self-representations. For instance, he reviewed the first biography published about him. He also scripted interviews with himself, on one occasion even "hiring" a journalist to play himself, in a radio interview that he wrote, performed, recorded, and edited. He created various fully-developed personae (mostly music critics), then staged auto/biographical performances in which he and his critics discussed the topic of "Glenn Gould," thereby creating his own self-contained critical tradition. As they were undoubtedly intended to do, Gould's self-representations have puzzled, irritated, and occasionally inspired his biographers. When Gould's own constructions of self are combined with the huge number of representations by others, the

result is something that begs to be examined from a life writing perspective. By looking closely at Gould's textual "lives," I am hoping to understand what it is about him that continues to fascinate, why he remains an important element in so many people's musical constructions of self, and how these many representations of Gould can add to our understanding of the life writing of musicians, and of the genre of life writing as a whole.

This project combines life writing theory, the cultural study of music, and the emerging field of music and word studies. All three have developed considerably over recent years, but with little overlap. Traditionally, classical music biography has been a conservative genre, constructing the musician's life as stable and unified, and neatly dichotomizing the "life" and "work," often within distinct sections of the text. Gould's life writing oeuvre poses exciting new challenges for music scholarship. Gould's own posthumous textual life, distinctly influenced by his own earlier auto/biographical interventions, has also unfolded alongside new ways of looking at music as an art form, and alongside significant developments in life writing theory as well. These shifts can also be brought to bear on the Gould auto/biographical texts.

Each of the following chapters examines a particularly prominent thematic representation that appears in Gould life writing: Gould as genius and eccentric; Gould as a national icon; and Gould as performer, both of his music, and of his own multiple and conflicting self-images. My argument is not only that Gould can be seen as a musical auto/biography "limit-case," in the sense that the many texts about him demonstrate the many fascinating and often bizarre possibilities for the form, but also that these auto/biographical acts emerge because Gould himself constantly engaged in theoretical discussions of auto/biography in his written texts, his visual self-representations, *and in*

his music itself. Given the conservative history of musical biography as a genre, that so many biographers, filmmakers, and even novelists have come to the unlikely conclusion that Gould is an elusive subject who must be constructed rather than re-presented in text results directly from the lasting influence Gould's own auto/biographical interventions have exerted on subsequent representations of his life. As this study will demonstrate, Gould is indeed what Russian researcher Sergei Medvedev has characterized as "a one-sided sheet of paper, a signifier without a signified" (2). A man obsessed at times with privacy and control over his own image, Gould created auto/biographical representations that turned him into something of an empty signifier, both confounding biographers, and allowing them to invest their own meanings into him—whether ideas about genius and eccentricity, about a sense of national history, or about musical performance and the performance of self.

Who Was Glenn Gould?

When writing a critical analysis of the biographical material on a subject, it is usually helpful to start by briefly outlining the life. Especially in the case of Gould, though, problems arise, because this outline must be drawn from those life writing texts whose truth claims and constructions of an apparently definable self will come under scrutiny. I will be addressing at length how the various representations of Gould's life cast each other and often themselves into question, but here are some of the largely agreed-upon facts:

Glenn Gould was born on September 25, 1932 to Russell Herbert Gould and Florence Gould (née Greig). They lived in the Beaches area of Toronto, an affluent, wasp-ish community on the shores of Lake Ontario. Gould's parents were of middle class

Presbyterian background, and both were active musicians in their church community.

Bert Gould made a comfortable living as a furrier. Flora, who at one time may have had the possibility of a singing career, was a home-maker and piano teacher. An only child, Gould was born relatively late in his parents' life, after Flora had suffered numerous miscarriages. His parents' hopes and fears for him were therefore high.

Gould was related to the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg on his mother's side, and she was proud of that heritage. Even before Gould was born, Flora is said to have told friends and family members that her first child would be a concert pianist. She began to teach Glenn piano at a very young age, and he showed an exceptional ability to play and identify notes correctly. The Goulds discovered their child had perfect pitch, and invested considerable resources into his training in the piano, but were careful to limit his appearances. Though at the age of six, Gould accompanied his parents on piano in a vocal duet at the Business Man's Bible Class 30th Anniversary celebration in Uxbridge, Ontario, he did not give a full scale recital until he was thirteen, and even then his parents permitted few public performances.

Aside from his mother, Gould's only other piano teacher was Alberto Guerrero, at the Toronto Conservatory of Music (now the Royal Conservatory of Music). Guerrero, who also taught Canadian musicians John Beckwith and R. Murray Schafer, became good friends with the family, and although Gould later claimed to be self-taught, Guerrero helped to develop the young musician. Gould's low position at the keyboard and his clear articulation are often said to be the direct results of his teacher's influence.²

Gould was seven years old at the beginning of World War II, which undoubtedly had an effect on him during his formative years. An avid radio listener from an early age,

he learned about music, and the details of the war overseas. In fact, one of Gould's first known compositions, "Our Gifts", was a piano-vocal piece written in 1943 that urged school children to do their part for the war effort. As an adult, though, he became an advocate of non-violence toward both humans and animals, claiming that convincing his father to give up fishing was one of the greatest achievements of his life. Though Gould received no formal training in composition, his mother encouraged him even as a child to write down little melodies he created. Throughout the '40s, the young Gould made occasional appearances at church recitals in both Toronto and Uxbridge. But by his high school years, he was neglecting much of his education at Malvern Collegiate, preparing instead for a career as a concert pianist. School was difficult. He did not fit in socially, and his courses didn't interest him, probably because he already knew music would be taking him in a different direction. Many of his classmates remember him as strange but lovable, and they were clearly impressed by his talents as a pianist.

At fourteen, Gould made his Toronto Symphony Orchestra debut in January 1947, under guest conductor Bernard Heinze, and his solo debut at Eaton Auditorium that October. By the time he was twenty, Gould had played in numerous cities across Canada, including Montreal, London, and Vancouver, and had become well known in his home country. His American debut was in Washington, D.C. on January 2, 1955. Nine days later he first performed in New York—a landmark event, because executives from Columbia Records in the audience immediately offered him a contract and allowed him almost unprecedented control over what pieces he recorded.

Gould made the unusual choice to record Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Believed to have been written as a lullaby for an insomniac Count, this piece was considered to be

cerebral and austere. It was also written for harpsichord, and because it had been recently revived by Wanda Landowska on that instrument, the classical music world considered it to be part of the harpsichord repertoire. The variations were therefore not a safe choice, but Gould's selection was strategic. They were already part of his concert repertoire, and recording them on piano would establish him as a groundbreaking artist both in his choice of music and in his interpretation. His 1955 recording of the *Goldbergs* was preceded by a now-famous press release that focused on his musical talent and his strange habits, setting the pattern for a lifetime and beyond of Gould representations that juxtaposed his genius and his eccentricities.³ His performance of the *Goldbergs* became Columbia's bestselling classical recording, propelling him to instant fame. As audiences worldwide soon discovered, Gould's playing was stunning: energetic and vital, yet thoughtful, with an incredible virtuosity and clarity of tone. He also wrote the liner notes himself, establishing a life-long practice of commenting on his own work.

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, Gould enjoyed phenomenal success as a concert musician. He performed around the world, most notably in the Soviet Union in 1957—the first Western artist invited to play inside the Iron Curtain. Reviews often described him as a genius, noting his virtuosity, his unusual interpretations, and his strange performance practice. Despite this popularity, Gould made no secret of his disdain for the concert hall. In an extraordinary move, he retired from concert life in 1964, ostensibly to devote himself to composing. Very few pieces ever emerged. His only major composition, a string quartet written while he was still performing publicly, received some recognition, but despite Gould's admiration for experimental twelve-tone composers, this piece is quite Romantic. He composed other small pieces for piano,

including cadenzas for Beethoven's Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Opus 15, piano transcriptions of works by numerous composers, and his humorous "So You Want to Write a Fugue," written for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) television program *Anatomy of the Fugue*. Aside from his string quartet, though, he did not become the composer he supposedly wished to be.

He did record prolifically. Though known primarily as a Bach musician, his recording repertoire was broad, spanning works from such early English composers as Orlando Gibbons and William Byrd to such classical music giants as Brahms and Richard Strauss. Gould also became a significant media force, both in Canada and internationally. Essentially given free rein to produce programming for the CBC, some of his most notable works include his contrapuntal radio documentaries, the famous *The Idea of North* (1967), about life in the Canadian north, *The Latecomers* (1969), about Newfoundland, and the *The Quiet in the Land* (1977), about Mennonites. Collected under the title *The Solitude Trilogy*, these programs can be thought of as a thematic autobiographical representation of their composer. Gould's other work for the CBC runs the gamut from television concerts and lectures on music to comedies in which Gould's various alter-egos performed. Gould also published extensively on music throughout his life. His best-known article is "The Prospects of Recording," in which he argued that the concert hall was the performance medium of the past, because recording offered a much more egalitarian, and therefore ideal, interaction between music and listener.

Through his writings, Gould staked his claim to be a philosopher of music as well as a performing and recording musician. Whole books have been written on Gould's theories of music and artistic production. Elizabeth Angilette's *Glenn Gould: Philosopher*

at the Keyboard and Geoffrey Payzant's *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* are two examples, and Kevin Bazzana's *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work* also deals extensively with Gould's ideas. Claiming to dislike competition of all kinds, Gould abhorred what he saw as the hierarchical nature of ranking concert performances and performers. Recording, which he saw as its own distinct form of art, was better both for performer, who through editing could achieve an ideal conception of the musical work, and for the audience, who could enter into an active one-on-one relationship with the performer and the music. Through recording, then, artist and listener could more fully achieve that state of "ecstasy," loosely defined as a sense of standing outside of oneself, that Gould believed was the purpose of art.

Gould did not hide that he regularly edited various versions of a piece together to create what he felt was an ideal conception of the work. He also believed that all art had moral implications, and the potential for creating negative (largely related to competition) and positive effects. In his essay "Let's Ban Applause," Gould stated his oft-quoted opinion on the purposes of art:

. . . I believe that the justification of art is the internal combustion it ignites in the hearts of men and not its shallow, externalized, public manifestations. The purpose of art is not the release of a momentary ejection of adrenaline but is, rather, the gradual, life-long construction of a state of wonder and serenity. (246)

Though he never took on students, Gould was certainly a natural teacher, who viewed his music as didactic, and often justified his unusual interpretations as a means for bringing audiences to a new awareness of well-known musical works. He approached musical compositions as a stage director might approach a dramatic script, often ignoring

composers' dynamic and tempo markings, adding embellishments, and occasionally even rewriting sections of the score. (Bazzana's *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work* analyzes this aspect of his performance practice). Gould pursued an ideal rather than a historically accurate conception of music. He regularly performed pieces written for other instruments on the piano, and his string quartet seems to be written more as music for the mind than for specific instruments. He also claimed that great art should not be subject to the fashion of a particular period, and often spoke about the importance of solitude for artistic creation. For every hour he spent in the company of others, he claimed, he needed considerably more time alone.

Some argue that Gould's musical philosophy was constructed at least in part to explain his own eccentricities, and throughout his life, his peculiarities often attracted as much media attention as his musical and media accomplishments. Gould was famous for his unusual posture at the piano, his incessant humming while playing, his strange pre-concert rituals and frequent cancellations, his hypochondria and legitimate physical ailments and sensitivities, his proclivity for various medications, and his reclusiveness, including an apparent lack of romantic relationships. On the other hand, Gould's friends and acquaintances have frequently commented on his kindness and good humor. Known for his love of word and guessing games, he also played the stock market with much success. He was intensely interested in technology, and the telephone in particular. Notorious for calling his friends and talking for long hours in the middle of the night, his long-distance phone bill often soared into the thousands of dollars. Sometimes he seemed disturbed by the attention to his eccentricities; sometimes he used this attention to his advantage.

Though Gould's artistic output remained prolific, his health noticeably declined. In 1981 he re-recorded the *Goldberg Variations*; the taping sessions were also filmed as part of Bruno Monsaingeon's documentary series on Gould. During this final recording, his hands visibly shake, and he appears bloated and pale. On October 2, 1982, a few days after his 50th birthday, Gould suffered a severe stroke. Removed from life support, he died on October 4.

The Lives of Glenn Gould

The textual "life" of Glenn Gould has continued and proliferated after his death. This study examines many of these texts, with each chapter starting off with Gould's own autobiographical writings and statements. Keeping control over the material has been difficult. In Thomas Bernhard's novel *The Loser*, the narrator had studied music with Gould, but has given up the piano because he is overshadowed by Gould's genius. Instead, the narrator devotes his life to "philosophical matters," including an ever-evolving, but never completed "Glenn Essay." The constant additions to the "life" of Gould—two new print biographies, a national exhibition, and a documentary film appeared in 2009, and another biography appeared in April 2010—have at times made this project seem like my "Glenn Essay." New biographical information also emerges, most significantly Cornelia Foss's 2007 confirmation that she was the previously unnamed married woman with whom Gould had a long affair in the 1970s. As part of my attempt to keep this study from truly becoming my "Glenn Essay," I have therefore set my cut-off point at the 2010 publication of Michael Clarkson's *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould*. For convenience, and also because of personal competence, I have also limited myself to auto/biographical representations in English, though Gould texts have appeared

in numerous languages in ever-increasing numbers.

The first biographical texts about Gould were newspaper articles, reviews, and publicity materials from his early concert career. These are followed by what I will argue are Gould's first autobiographical representations: his recordings of music. The early and late versions of the *Goldberg Variations* both in audio and film are the most significant examples of this form of self-representation that I will examine here. Privately, Gould kept detailed documents regarding his health. A brief unpublished diary also exists in the Glenn Gould Archive. Though I address these briefly, they do not figure prominently in this study, because I am interested primarily in Gould's public deployment of self. Such auto/biographical acts can be found in Gould's published writings, including his liner notes, his many articles on music, and especially his self-interviews, several of which have been collected in *The Glenn Gould Reader*, edited by Tim Page (1984). The three radio documentaries making up Gould's *Solitude Trilogy* are all significant autobiographical representations, and two documentary films appeared during Gould's lifetime: the National Film Board of Canada's *Glenn Gould: On the Record* and *Glenn Gould: Off the Record*. I consider these both autobiographical and biographical. *Off the Record* is a profile of Gould featuring an interview conducted at his cottage on Lake Simcoe, and footage of Gould choosing a piano in the basement of Steinway in NYC. *On the Record* presents him using this Steinway during a recording session at Columbia Records. The first full-length print biography, Geoffrey Payzant's *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, appeared in 1977. Though he received Gould's permission to write the text, the book is based entirely on previously-published material. Supposedly there was no communication between biographer and subject during the writing, but Gould actually

reviewed Payzant's text favorably in *Piano Quarterly* and in *The Globe and Mail*, Canada's national newspaper, establishing a link between this early biography and its subject that each subsequent biographer for some years had to address.

Though life writing about Gould predictably surged after his death in 1982, the next full-length print biography was Otto Friedrich's *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations* (1989). Because the book was commissioned by the Gould Estate, as the official biographer, Friedrich had first access to Gould's papers and various other mementos from his life. In the same year, Andrew Kazdin, Gould's longtime producer at Columbia, published his memoir, *Glenn Gould at Work: Creative Lying*, a book notable for its criticism of Gould, and for its mention of a possible romantic relationship with Cornelia Foss, who would not be named in any other Gould study until her interview with Michael Clarkson in 2007. *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, a psychobiography by psychiatrist Peter Ostwald, Gould's one-time friend, was published in 1997. *The Idea of Gould*, a collection of interviews with Gould's friends and colleagues interspersed with brief autobiographical sections in which author Rhona Bergman describes listening to Gould's music and attempting to construct a biographical portrait, was published in 1999. Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* appeared in 2003. Its even-handedness and its detailed consideration of the Canadian context for the pianist's life and work have made it the most authoritative Gould biography to this point. Subsequent biographies have focused on specific aspects of Gould's life. Helen Mesaros, a Toronto psychiatrist, published a psychobiography of Gould in 2008. Katie Hafner's 2008 *A Romance on Three Legs* examines Gould's long-time relationship with his favorite Steinway piano, CD318, and parallels his life with that of his blind piano tuner,

Verne Edquist. As part of the Penguin Extraordinary Canadians Series, Mark Kingwell's *Glenn Gould* looks at Gould by examining his significance in twenty-one "takes."

Vladimir Konieczny's brief biography, *Glenn Gould: A Musical Force*, also appeared in 2009. In *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love* (2010), Michael Clarkson explores Gould's romantic life—largely a matter of speculation to that point. Published in 2007, and translated into English from the original French in 2010, Georges Leroux's *Partita for Glenn Gould* evaluates philosophical concepts suggested by Gould.

Besides print biographies, many other biographical texts have appeared, and although it would be impractical to list them all here, several are particularly significant for this study. François Girard and Don McKellar's *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, the first full-length feature film devoted to his life, was released to critical acclaim in 1993. The film's form echoes the thirty variations and the opening and closing arias in the *Goldbergs*. Bruno Monsaingeon, who collaborated with Gould in filming many of his recording sessions, and most notably his 1981 *Goldbergs*, directed *Glenn Gould: Hereafter*, a documentary film examining his subject's continuing influence (2006). *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*, directed by Michèle Hozer and Peter Raymont, premiered at the 2009 Toronto International Film Festival. It features interviews with Cornelia Foss and her children, as well as other rumored Gould romantic partners. There are two important books of photographs. In 1956, while on assignment for *Weekend Magazine*, photographer Jock Carroll went with Gould to the Bahamas. *Glenn Gould: Some Portraits of the Artist as a Young Man* (1995) contains photos taken on this trip. When Carroll first attempted to publish his book, the Gould Estate filed suit, claiming that it owned the "personality" and "likeness" of Gould, and was therefore

entitled to a share of the profits. The Supreme Court of Canada eventually rejected the Estate's claim. In 2002, the Estate itself published *Glenn Gould: A Life in Pictures*, which includes photos of him throughout his life and career, and an introduction by one of Gould's favorite interviewers, Tim Page.

Many fictional texts have represented Gould or Gould-like characters. Because they place their Gould characters in a Canadian context, Tim Wynne Jones's young adult novel, *The Maestro* (1995), and Joe Fiorito's novel, *The Song Beneath the Ice* (2002), are especially important for this study. An already-mentioned fictional examination of Gould's genius is Thomas Bernhard's *The Loser* (1991), though the novel was originally written in German and therefore falls outside of my English-only purview. Gould has also been the subject of many poems. An entire anthology, *Northern Music: Poems About and Inspired by Glenn Gould*, edited by J. D. Smith, includes poems by Tom Henighan, Carol Hamilton, and Robert Phillips among others. And there is also Kate Braid's recent collection of poetry, *A Well-Mannered Storm: The Glenn Gould Poems* (2008).

Musical and dramatic tributes to Gould have appeared over the years as well. Alexina Louie's orchestral composition "O Magnum Mysterium: In Memoriam Glenn Gould" was commissioned by McGill University's Festival of Contemporary Music, and premiered there in 1983. The work was also performed by the BBC Symphony in 1993, and choreographed by Dominique Dumais as *100 Words for Snow*. The CBC commissioned several pieces for their week-long concert series, "Variations on Gould," broadcast from September 25 to October 4, 2007 in commemoration of what would have been his seventy-fifth birthday, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death. Christos Hatzis' "Gouldberg Variations," a composition for MIDI piano and orchestra, was

commissioned by the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne for the 1992 Glenn Gould Conference. David Young's play, *Glenn*, was first performed in Toronto in 1992, and Anne Chislett's children's play, which features Gould as a "fairy god-father" type character for a young girl blessed with musical talent but desiring a "normal" life, was published in 2001. Two children's biographies of Gould also exist: Lynette Roy's *Glenn Gould: The Genius and His Music: A Biography for Young People* (1999) and Vladimir Konieczny's *Struggling for Perfection: The Story of Glenn Gould* (2004). These representations appear primarily in my national icon chapter, since they are important educational documents designed to preserve Gould's memory in the minds of Canadian youth.

Numerous websites, list-serves, blogs, YouTube videos, and other forms of new media create Gould's online life. The National Library of Canada maintains The Glenn Gould Archive, an online searchable database of archival documents. The Glenn Gould Foundation, which was established in 1983 by Gould's friends and colleagues, with a mission to "honour Glenn Gould's spirit and legacy by celebrating brilliance, promoting creativity, and transforming lives through the power of music and the arts," maintains a website. Sony's site glenn Gould.com is the official Gould site. "Sarabande: The Glenn Gould Project" is Irish radio broadcaster Karishmeh Felfeli's website about "Glenn Gould, Animals, Radio, Life. Everything from Gould to cats, Bach to Beatles." Most of these sites also maintain blogs containing Gould musings and Gould news. Comments on Gould in blogs not exclusively devoted to the musician are too numerous to count. New technology has also found new ways of publicizing texts and recordings. Many Gould books now have websites tracking their publication in various nations and languages, and his life is represented in several online encyclopedias, including Wikipedia,

encyclopedia.com, canadianencyclopedia.com, britannica.com, and the Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, maintained online at Collections Canada.

As the above all suggests, the depth and breadth of biographical materials on Gould are astounding, and the numbers continue to grow, often propelled by regular public celebrations of Gould linked to his birthday and the anniversary of his death. Interest in Gould is so intense that almost anything written or presented about him receives media attention, generates sales, and therefore influences people's opinions. Because Gould is indeed classical music's Elvis, a close look at the auto/biographical material devoted to him can tell us a great deal about the changing fortunes of classical music, and about auto/biographical representations of musicians during the latter half of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first.

The Performance and Construction of Glenn Gould

As Paul John Eakin explains in *How Our Lives Become Stories* (1999), our selves are constructed at least in part through self-narration. For Eakin, "narrative is not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience, while self—the self of autobiographical discourse—does not necessarily precede its constitution in narrative" (100). Drawing upon the work of Jerome Bruner and Oliver Sacks, Eakin concludes that "narrative is not merely an appropriate form for the expression of identity; it is an identity content. . . . [N]arrative is not merely *about* the self but rather in some profound way a constituent part *of* the self" (100–101). As my epigraph suggests, it can be argued that music also can play a crucial role in the construction of self, and for some people, it is one of the key elements of self-narrative. For those of us who have navigated our teenage years and beyond to the beat of our own

internal soundtrack, Simon Frith's notion does not seem far-fetched, and music was indisputably primary in Gould's construction of his own identity. In his writings, he narrates his life through his interaction with music. Other Gould self-narratives appear in his choice of repertoire, the way in which he chose to interpret and record music, and his own compositions. And in turn, Gould as musician has become a significant factor in many others' narrations of their own lives.

Recognizing the importance of both narrative and music to self-identity, this study seeks to answer two questions: 1) What accounts for our fascination with Gould—an interest so compelling that almost thirty years after he ceased to produce new work, it shows no sign of abating? and 2) How can the Gould biographical oeuvre inform current notions of music auto/biography, or life writing in general? In other words, I am using life writing as a theoretical lens to examine the Gould “life” industry, while at the same time using Gould to draw conclusions about life writing. I answer my first question by considering some of the primary recurring themes in Gould life writing: Gould as genius/eccentric, Gould as Canadian, and Gould as performer, in all the various and complex meanings of that word. In each chapter, I work outward, starting with Gould's own comments on these themes, then moving to media representations and other biographical texts. My chapters therefore progress from least to most mediated examples of biographical information—although as I will show, Gould's own representations are highly mediated by himself. I therefore ask, in sequence, what does Gould say about Gould? What does the media say about Gould using his self-representations? What do biographers say, using both self and media representations? And finally, what do other biographical representations say, after drawing on all previous layers of representation?

But a warning. This layering of Gould representation is complicated by the fact that during his lifetime, he would intervene at various stages of this overarching biographical project.

The chapters also work together to answer my second question. In her groundbreaking book on autobiography and trauma, Leigh Gilmore defines the autobiographical “limit-case”—texts that “challenge the limits of autobiography in the representation of trauma” and “reveal how complicated and entangled those limits are with still other boundaries” (43). Gilmore focuses our attention on women’s autobiographies of trauma, and on writers who struggle with the larger genre itself, because “Autobiography’s project—to tell the story of one’s life—appears to constrain self-representation through its almost legalistic definition of truth telling, its anxiety about intervention, and its preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence about these criteria” (3). I am not suggesting that a particular trauma caused Gould to confront in his self-representations the boundaries of auto/biographical form. Rather, I want to expand Gilmore’s idea of the limit-case to argue that Gould’s lifewriting texts together form a limit-case of auto/biographical writing on musicians, beginning with Gould’s own production of auto/biographical texts, and particularly with his representations of self through music, then branching out to the conventional Gould biographies, in which the identity of the biographer often blurs with the subject’s, and further out to the various texts that through Gould explore a community or nation’s identity, and even further, to fan-generated auto/biographical texts that use Gould to tell the story of another life. Though the argument that Gould texts are “limit-cases” of musical auto/biography is strongest in the chapter on performance, which looks specifically at Gould’s self-

representation through music, and his performance of self through various created personae, I have attempted to make this point in all of my chapters, by considering texts that push music auto/biography boundaries, either formally, or through the narrative of self they tell.

Though this project operates at the intersection of life writing and musicology, it remains firmly planted on the literary/cultural studies side. I undertook this study to link together my two great interests: literature (and more specifically, life writing) and music. Though I have found some useful theoretical texts that discuss music and life writing, as Jolanta T. Pekacz states in “Memory, History, and Meaning: Musical Biography and its Discontents,” “Musical biography as a genre has rarely been an object of theoretical and methodological reflection” (40). At least in part, this is because for most of the twentieth century, music has been discussed as an abstract and autonomous art form, even though information on the lives of composers has been essential for dating pieces, and for establishing “under what circumstances, at what stage in its creator’s development, and in what sort of emotional weather it was composed” (Weinstock, “Speaking of Musical Biography,” 862). In recent years, critics have begun to launch numerous challenges to the idea that music is autonomous, and most notably perhaps Lawrence Kramer, who is engaged in the study of relationships between music and language. The work of Kramer, and of others who have challenged the idea of music as purely abstract art, has been formative in my thinking about Gould’s music. But on the whole, life writing theory has proved central throughout, as I have examined Gould auto/biographical texts to see how they can expand our current knowledge of life writing.

This Dissertation

Organization has been the great challenge of this project, since many of the Gould primary texts illustrate several aspects of representation and subjectivity. I toyed with writing chapters on different textual forms—one on biography, one on visual representations, one on music, and so on. But I ultimately determined that the most efficient approach to answering my key questions would be to organize this project around a few pervading themes in Gould textual lives. The drawback is that individual texts will reappear in different chapters, because these texts provide important examples for several themes. For example, the most extensive Gould biography, Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange*, is important to the chapter on genius and to the one on Gould as national icon, because Bazzana attributes much of his unique musical skill and creativity to his Canadian upbringing. *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* also appears repeatedly, because its fragmented representation of Gould allows it to touch upon all of the significant representations I discuss here. Just as Gould's life has been told over and over, then, in order to explore fully the reasons for Gould's enduring popularity, each chapter selects a thematic representation of Gould that because it appears again in the biographical output can therefore be identified as one of the reasons that Gould remains so interesting and relevant almost thirty years after his death.

Genius, a key theme in Gould textual "life," is a topic for discussion in most music biographies. In the Gould biographical oeuvre, though, and admittedly in many other music biographies as well, genius is constantly linked to eccentricity. Of course, genius itself can be defined as a form of eccentricity—a way in which the individual deviates from the norm. And biographies of musicians, composers, and conductors

generally begin with the premise that the artist is exceptional, then attempt to answer such questions as What makes this artist a genius? Where did the genius originate? How is it manifested? And very often, what negative symptoms or damaging consequences accompanied it? Gould did not explicitly call himself a genius, but he certainly shaped the contours of this representation. Through his claims that he was self-taught, his direct responses to questions about his musical skills, and his articles about other musicians, Gould gave biographers a great deal to work with in terms of artistic genius. Gould also reacted favorably to Geoffrey Payzant's biography, which located Gould's genius in his status as a "polyperson," someone who operates at a very high level in numerous media. The earliest media representations of Gould's genius preceded his own remarks. For example, the Columbia press release for the 1955 *Goldbergs* set the stage for a lifetime of media representations of Gould as both genius and eccentric. The major Gould biographies are fascinating in their approaches to genius and creativity, and to celebrity, which can be viewed as either accompanying these qualities, or generating them. The philosophies of genius applied to Gould include the "10,000 hours of practice" theory espoused by Michael Howe and recently taken up by Malcolm Gladwell in *Outliers*, and which can be found in Kevin Bazzana's biography. A notion of genius as a mysterious force beyond the understanding even of the genius himself informs Otto Friedrich's biography. And Rhona Bergman's *The Idea of Gould* and Bruno Monsaingeon's biographical film *Glenn Gould: Hereafter* both see Gould as a god-like figure, capable through art of transforming the lives of the listener.

While genius is a form of eccentricity, in the Gould textual life, eccentricity is often deployed as a normalizing strategy. As film scholars have noted, the biopic often

“normalizes” extraordinary subjects by tempering their professional success with personal failure, or by concentrating on the subject’s struggle to achieve greatness (Custen, Hanson). One way of normalizing an apparent genius, then, is by foregrounding his/her eccentricity, which functions as the result or the cause of personal struggle. Beginning with his Columbia press release, the biographical material diagnoses Gould as everything from mildly eccentric to neurotic. (Some have even posthumously assigned him Asperger’s Syndrome.⁴) From his earliest performances, Gould’s eccentricities heightened audience interest in his work and personal life, and Gould himself was not above using this eccentric persona to attract media attention. Representations that foreground Gould’s eccentricity, most notably Peter Ostwald’s *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, focus on four aspects of his musical practice and character: his unusual performance habits (sitting low at the keyboard, hunching over the keys, humming and conducting while playing); his unusual musical interpretations; his hypochondria, genuine physical ailments, and drug abuse; and his apparent lack of traditional relationships, and particularly romantic ones. In the wake of Cornelia Foss’s revelation of her romantic involvement with Gould, his sex life became the focus of renewed biographical interest, demonstrating how new information can cause the life history of a subject to be entirely redrawn. Michael Clarkson’s *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love* and Michèle Hozer and Peter Raymont’s documentary, *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* both highlight Gould’s relationships with women, many musicians themselves, thus challenging earlier representations of his musical world as almost exclusively male. And yet, rather than revising Gould’s status as an eccentric, these texts present the women’s narratives as evidence for Gould’s abnormalities,

displaying a biographical subject who was beyond his own control. Taken together, these recent texts test the limits of biography, as they attempt to redraw the interactions between Gould's body, his mind, and his music.

The second recurring theme in Gould lives is Gould as Canadian icon. As a Canadian concert musician and media personality raised on and later embraced by the CBC and other Canadian cultural institutions, Gould offers a site for examining the links between music and national identity. Gould performed his own Canadian-ness in various ways: his insistence on living and working in Canada throughout his career, his writings and compositions that linked him to the Canadian north, and even his famous cold weather uniform. While Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange* identifies Gould's upbringing in Toronto as the most important contributing element to his becoming the music and cultural phenomenon that he is, in most of his biographical material, Gould's Canadian-ness is displayed through his associations with the Canadian north. The two National Film Board documentaries on Gould, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, and more recently, Mark Kingwell's *Glenn Gould* from the Extraordinary Canadians series, also present Gould as an exemplary Canadian, as have Canadian cultural institutions devoted to Gould. But some of the texts at the limits of musical biography, most notably Tim Wynne Jones's *The Maestro* and Joe Fiorito's *The Song Beneath the Ice*, both biographical novels, dispute Gould's appropriateness as an icon for an increasingly diverse nation, and at times question the biographical enterprise itself.

The third theme present in almost all Gould biographical work is that of performance, which I take to mean both the performance of musical texts and of identity. In the Gould biographical material, these are inextricably linked. The most obvious

autobiographical “limit-cases” in Gould life writing are his own performances of self through his music, and his many self-representations. Just as the conventions of autobiographical form represented unique challenges and risks for Gilmore’s autobiographers, as a sometimes-reluctant celebrity faced with intense interest in his private life, and troubled at times with mental illness, Gould seems to have found traditional modes of self-representation problematic. As his many ventures into autobiography, and his frequent comments on the genre show, however, he seems compelled toward self-representation, and he was definitely fascinated by auto/biography on a meta-level. Gould actively sought opportunities for self-expression outside the typical boundaries of the form: through his musical interpretations, recordings, and compositions; through his liner notes, self-interviews, and radio documentaries, and through his lifelong multi-vocal performances of various personae. This chapter examines how Gould’s musical performance constituted a complex performance of self, and looks at Gould’s own comments on his musical performances as evidence that he himself viewed music as a form of self-representation. The chapter then considers the various ways that Gould represented himself through speech acts, both in written and audio texts. As a result, I most explicitly consider the limits of musical biography in this chapter. That music, still viewed for the most part as a non-representational art form, could be seen as autobiographical certainly tests the limits of the form. Gould’s writings and performances, in which he seems to represent himself as a way to preempt and control representation by others, also challenge the boundaries of typical auto/biographical genres. Finally, under the protection of humor and play, his various created personae allow him literally to take on alternate constructions of self.

* * *

Gould's autobiographical ventures have been seen by others as genuine attempts at self-representation, and as forms of elaborate play meant in part to obstruct and confuse those who would attempt biography. Many biographers have responded by presenting Gould as a biographical enigma. As they narrate his life, Mark Kingwell's *Glenn Gould*, Otto Friedrich's authorized biography, the biographical film *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, and in smaller ways even Ostwald and Bazzana's biographies, position their subject as ultimately unknowable. Gould's own descriptions of his life, his self-conscious and playful manipulation of the media, and the auto/biographical papers that he left behind have created what Friedrich describes as endless nests of Chinese boxes—the multiple, fragmentary Gould (9). Other ways of describing the unrepresentability of Gould might draw on the “one-sided sheet” with which Sergei Medvedev characterizes the north, or the Derridean idea of the “trace.” Even as someone tries to represent Gould in a text, thanks to the influence of his own interventions into his “life,” such representations are always already undoing themselves. And even if these texts grant that Gould is knowable only through the various highly-mediated layers of source material surrounding his life and artistic output, or through the ideas he continues to represent, these texts and ideas, often either produced or influenced by Gould, bear the mark of the trickster.

In an interview with Otto Friedrich for *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, Margaret Pacsu, a friend of Gould's, stops in the middle of an unrelated question to consider his influence on his biographies, including those written after his death:

How much of this was calculated, for *you* to be sitting here asking these questions

and falling into this? I mean, you know, did he set this all up? . . . Could you imagine that you'd be asking questions about Barbra Streisand? Or that he had carefully set this up so that historians and biographers in future years would be asking *these* very questions? You can go around in circles with that. (297)

Guided and frustrated by Gould's attempts to control and obscure representations of himself, his biographers often find themselves going around in circles as they attempt to capture adequately the details of his life and his lasting significance. Gould's shifting and elusive persona has inspired multiple interpretations, which have found their way into newspaper articles, print biographies, film, online accounts, poetry and drama, music, institutions and even parades of school children in Glenn Gould attire. Some Gould accounts try to be authoritative. Others abandon truth claims in favor of a more theoretical or personal representation of the musician.

And Gould and his music are part of my own construction of self as well. As a former Royal Conservatory piano student who like Gould grew up playing in church and school concerts and in the Kiwanis festival, I am equally and acutely aware of his genius whenever I listen to his astounding interpretations, and whenever I sit down at the instrument to play. As a resident of Ontario who comes from a cottage community similar to Gould's beloved Uptergrove, my Canadian identity has also been formed in part by the CBC and other institutions that showcase unlikely artistic role models like Gould. Finally, as a student of life writing, I am fascinated by Gould's incessant play with auto/biographical form, his pushing against auto/biographical limits to the extent that even his close friends can wonder whether he is indeed still performing his identity from beyond the grave.

**CHAPTER 1: “Thin Partitions”: Genius and Eccentricity in Biographies and
Biographical Films About Glenn Gould**

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
and thin partitions do their bounds divide

John Dryden, “Absalom and Achitophel”

“That nut’s a genius.”

George Szell, talking about Glenn Gould

With his 1955 recording of Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, Glenn Gould erupted onto the international musical landscape as a young piano virtuoso whose early press images combined elements of identity not previously seen in classical music. Reviews quickly proclaimed the young Canadian a keyboard genius, and almost as quickly linked his genius to a profound eccentricity. Aggressive marketing made him a household name both in music circles and beyond, and the key elements of his early public image persist in virtually all of his subsequent representations. Beginning with Gould’s own self-representations and his early marketing by Columbia Records, this chapter considers how the genius/eccentric dichotomy has persisted and shifted its focus in the major Gould print biographies and films. I also examine two “limit-case” Gould auto/biographical texts: Bruno Monsaingeon’s film *Glenn Gould: Hereafter* and Rhona Bergman’s *The Idea of Gould*. Through their constant reframings of Gould’s genius and eccentricities, the Gould biographies bear out Ira Nadel’s claim that “biography continually unsettles the past, maintaining its vitality through its continual correction, revision, and interpretation of individual lives” (103).

Gould biographical texts draw frequently on genius myths found in musical biographies since the first book-length life of a musician, John Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*. Discussed both in philosophy and psychology, such genius myths and paradigms of creative exceptionalism present the musician as a *wunderkind*, whose mysterious gifts appeared in early childhood, and flourished despite a lack of formal schooling or hard work, *and* as a god-like creator who asserts control over his natural gifts, and breaks rules to create his own forms. Both representations display important assumptions about music itself. Taken to its extreme, the first representation constructs a Glenn Gould whose genius is a divine force that makes him a conduit for delivering celestial music with a transformative power over its listeners. The second establishes the performer as a re-creator of the musical composition, and who recognizes the possibilities inherent in technology for new musical forms. Texts informed by these alternate conceptions of genius are Geoffrey Payzant's *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, Otto Friedrich's *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, Francois Girard and Don McKellar's feature film *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, Rhona Bergman's *The Idea of Gould*, and Bruno Monsiegeon's docu-drama, *Glenn Gould: Hereafter*. While important in themselves, these texts' representations of genius are correlated to their creators' understanding of biography's potential to provide a coherent, unified portrait of its subject. Biographers who view Gould's genius as a mysterious force inexplicable even to Gould himself tend to question biography's ability to contain its subject, whereas biographers who see the genius as in control of his own life and art construct more unified portraits.

Both juxtaposed and equated to representations of Gould as genius are representations of him as eccentric. Throughout his life, Gould in his own writings and interview comments would embrace and counter accounts of his oddities. These eccentricities can be loosely grouped under three primary symptoms: his performance practice, including his musical mannerisms, choice of repertoire, and decision to abandon his concert career at the height of his success; his drug abuse and physical ailments—or more commonly, his own perception of physical ailments; and his lack of traditional relationships, especially sexual ones, but also extending to ones with friends. While some biographers emphasize Gould's eccentricities, portraying them as a terrible, but necessary correlative to genius, others recognize his difference, but normalize Gould by presenting many of his eccentricities as logical or necessary results of his art.¹ Since representations of eccentricity are important in all Gould life writing texts, throughout this chapter, I will discuss his eccentricities alongside representations of genius. The primary texts I will examine are those in which his strangeness is more important than other aspects of Gould's identity: Peter Ostwald's *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, a psychobiography which treats Gould's neuroses as the unfortunate but inevitable flipside to his creative exceptionality, located almost exclusively in his pianistic ability; and Michael Clarkson's *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love*, which rewrites Gould's private life by revealing his many relationships with women, but ultimately uses the first-hand testimony of his female witnesses to corroborate and heighten Gould's status as an eccentric. Finally, I will briefly examine Peter Raymont and Michèle Hozer's documentary film *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*, which transforms Gould from socially awkward hermit, a key feature of his past representations as an

eccentric, into a family man. But again, although *Genius Within* initially seems to normalize Gould by juxtaposing his otherworldly genius with his behavior as the caring and domestic “Uncle Glenn,” the documentary ultimately stresses his eccentricities by suggesting they prevented him from sustaining the personal connections he longed for.

One noteworthy element of all three texts is how they rewrite Gould’s history to include the narratives of women musicians. In Ostwald’s psychoanalytic portrait, the key figure is Gould’s mother, while Clarkson and Raymond and Hozer draw on recent revelations of his romantic life to rewrite Gould’s history. In all three cases, though, Gould’s romantic, familial, and collegial relationships become avenues for explaining other elements of his eccentricity, and all three actually move toward more traditional biographical strategies than many earlier Gould biographies, and in the process deny Gould agency in both his life and in his biographical representations. When drawn together in the narratives, Gould’s eccentricity and genius account for the often complex relationships between music, celebrity and marketing, technology, gender, and the body. Indeed, Gould’s awareness of and control over his eccentricities often determines which genius myth is in play in a biographical representation, and at a particular historical moment.

Artistic genius and Glenn Gould

Representations of Gould that specifically label him a genius continue to proliferate, despite the late twentieth-century trend toward deconstructing genius as a descriptive category for artists. As Michael Pickering and Keith Negus point out in “Rethinking Creative Genius,” the study of genius has lost considerable validity in academic work:

Questions of genius are now regarded as hopelessly out of touch with the approaches adopted by contemporary cultural theorists and sociologists. They are denounced as naïve, as inherently mystifying and elitist. Genius is now almost a taboo category, and not least because it is seen as epitomising bourgeois individualism and masking the collective relations of cultural production and consumption. (199)

Gould, however, remains an exception, perhaps because from the beginning, accounts of him by journalists present an eccentric, pianistic genius--not someone merely talented, but someone whose work and life take on groundbreaking, often mythical proportions. Of course, Gould first rose to fame in the mid-1950s, when the deconstruction of the aesthetic category of genius had not yet taken place. But studies of how and why Gould became a genius continue to proliferate. Two very recent Gould texts, *Genius Within* and *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love* consider the potential for geniuses to maintain traditional human relationships. And the most recent, Georges Leroux's *Partita for Glenn Gould: An Inquiry Into the Nature of Genius*, is in part a philosophical examination of genius with Gould as the primary example.²

Biography has long existed at the margins of academic work, and most musical biographies assume that their subjects exhibit what Pickering and Negus call “creative exceptionalism” (199).³ Biographers and critics have repeatedly located Gould's exceptionalism in his breathtaking technical pianism and interpretive ideas, his groundbreaking compositions in the form of contrapuntal radio documentaries, and his visionary philosophy about recording – though the last two remain a matter of contention for many observers of Gould's life and career. Extra-musical gifts that contributed to

Gould's artistic ability also form part of his genius: his extraordinary memory, his tremendous work ethic and capacity to concentrate for long periods of time, and his polyphonic mind—an ability to focus on more than one thing simultaneously. Gould's meta-cognitive and meta-narrative skills also appear in representations of his creative exceptionality. What B. H. Haggin identified as Gould's preference for "talking nonsense on anything anywhere to playing marvellously in the concert hall," other commentators have seen as his elucidation of a complex philosophy of music, and I see as his exertion of agency and control over his own life narratives and an elaborate form of virtuosic autobiographical play (216). More than most musicians, Gould struggled to determine what constitutes art and what purpose it serves. Since both questions have traditionally been related to the idea of genius, Gould's life-long attempts to answer them make his exceptionality even more important to his biographers than that of other artists.

To see how Gould's distinctiveness has been both constructed and deconstructed by his biographers, it may be useful to consider briefly the scholarly history of genius in the west. The idea that certain individuals possess extraordinary creative capacity appears as early as the Greeks, who felt that poetic genius was divinely inspired. But as Penelope Murray points out in *Genius: The History of an Idea*, the notion of genius in the modern sense "is essentially an eighteenth-century development" (2). At this time, "the genius, and in particular the artistic genius, comes to be thought of as the highest human type, replacing such earlier ideal types as the hero, the saint, the *uomo universale* and so on" (2). These two notions of genius now coexist: the genius as divinely inspired, and the genius as another kind of god, who "invents his material, making images of things that do not exist" (4).

While aesthetic philosophy has long pondered artistic genius, psychology has developed our understanding of how and why genius occurs. Both disciplines have seen paradigm shifts in their study of genius, and both have explored the links between genius and madness. My own sense of how musical genius has been represented historically relies heavily upon Peter Kivy's *The Possessor and the Possessed: Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and the Idea of Musical Genius*, which takes the philosophical and aesthetic approach, and upon Dean Keith Simonton's numerous psychologically-oriented texts, and especially *Origins of Genius: Darwinian Perspectives* and *Greatness: Who Makes History and Why*. More recent texts on exceptionality, such as Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* have also influenced my thinking.

In *The Possessor and the Possessed*, Kivy explores ways in which the myth of musical genius has been constructed since the Renaissance. He identifies the two representations mentioned above as Platonic and Longinian. Plato views the genius as "possessed" by divine forces who use the genius as a conduit to express creative ideas. Longinus sees the genius as the possessor of natural gifts and powers who can make and break artistic rules.⁴ Kivy argues that representations of genius in Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven have swung back and forth like a pendulum between Platonic and Longinian views. Representations of Mozart, for example, often swing toward an extreme Platonic view of genius, in which the creator is a perpetual child incapable of understanding his own abilities. Beethoven, however, is a Longinian genius: in his music and in his life, he broke rules and defied societal norms. While critics of Kivy's text have noted that these two models of genius do not necessarily exclude each other, there is an important difference in the amount of power and awareness attributed to the genius himself. Plato's

genius creates in a fit of inspiration beyond personal understanding. The Longinian genius possesses knowledge and control over his own creative ability.

My interest in Kivy's work is not just in his account of the ways that the genius myths have been applied to musicians, but also in the way he reads the biographies of his three key musicians to show which genius myths have predominated at different times. Kivy argues that musical biographers construct representations of their subjects' creative exceptionalism by drawing on the prevailing notions of genius. Like Kivy, my interest is not in determining whether or not Gould was a genius, but in looking at how biographers, filmmakers, and especially Gould himself have employed various elements of the musical genius myths in their representations of Glenn Gould. And predictably, Gould emerges as a Platonic genius, a Longinian genius, and a combination of both.

While philosophy has been trying to determine what constitutes genius, psychology and psychiatry have more recently been attempting to demystify its sources and development. In *Origins of Genius*, Dean Keith Simonton defines genius as extraordinary creativity which results in eminence. Geniuses are

individuals credited with creative ideas or products that have left a large impression on a particular domain of intellectual or aesthetic activity. . . . [T]he creative genius attains eminence by leaving for posterity an impressive body of contributions that are both original and adaptive. In fact, empirical studies have repeatedly shown that the single most powerful predictor of eminence within any creative domain is the sheer number of influential products an individual has given the world. (6)

Simonton identifies various biological and social factors that contribute to the

development of genius as eminence. Certain childhood conditions seem to be factors: “(1) a person’s ordinal position in his or her family; (2) the experience of traumatic events; (3) the family provision for, and encouragement of, mental stimulation.” All three line up for Gould (*Greatness*, 144).⁵ Eminence is also apparently to some extent inheritable, and related to intelligence. Lewis Terman’s famous experiment with high IQ children showed that as adults, many of these children became successful in their fields, as demonstrated by awards, publications, and patents. But as Simonton points out, William Shockley, one of the children tested in the 1920s, but who fell below the level needed to be part of Terman’s study, achieved a higher award than any of the Termites: the 1970 Nobel Prize for physics. According to Simonton and many others, then, achieving eminence results from a broad constellation of factors: “success is not merely a matter of innate personal capacities; rather countless sociocultural forces calibrate the tools by which an individual attains distinction” (*Greatness*, 35). Some qualities, however, do emerge with time. Geniuses tend to focus exclusively on their area of interest. They also tend to work laboriously, and to maintain focus despite setbacks (*Greatness*, 181).

And yet, as many scholars have noted, in the late twentieth century, the concept of genius has been repeatedly attacked (see Murray, Pickering and Negus, and Kivy). This inclination to deconstruct the concept of genius is particularly understandable given the current and widespread popular conception of genius as “one hundred percent inspiration, zero percent perspiration” (Kivy, 159) found in texts like Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus* and Gus Van Sant’s *Good Will Hunting*. Penelope Murray points out that regardless of the particular reigning representation, genius is “problematic”:

How do we define genius, and how do we differentiate between genius and talent? If creativity is an essential ingredient of genius how creative does a person have to be in order to be a genius, and for that matter what exactly is a creative person? . . . If the hallmark of a work of genius is that it stands the test of time, is it only possible to apply the idea retrospectively? . . . Furthermore, genius is perforce elitist, not only in that it privileges certain individuals, but also because it elevates certain kinds of activity above others: genius forces us to make value judgments.

(6)

Those who question notions of genius argue that its study as a category of human achievement has often ignored important facts about the production and consumption of works of art. In the discipline of music and many others, feminist critics have convincingly pointed out that women have historically been excluded from being designated geniuses. Biographies like Nancy Reich's *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman* have also retrieved stories of early female composers and performers who have been overlooked or only considered in regard to their relationships with male musical "geniuses." Psychological studies lend support to such theoretical deconstructions of artistic genius. To attain eminence, it helps to be a man, or at least a woman who is childless (*Greatness*, 36).

The study of genius entered the realm of popular literature with huge fanfare through Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers* (2008). He argues that social factors such as culture, community, family, and generation all contribute to anyone's attaining of an unusual degree of success. While many of Gladwell's ideas—for example, that it takes 10,000 hours of practice at a particular skill to reach genius levels of proficiency—are not

new (see Michael Howe's *Genius Explained*), *Outliers*, which remained number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for eleven consecutive weeks, brought the social study of genius into popular consciousness. Furthermore, Gladwell seeks to replace the Platonic and Longinian myths with a constellation of favorable circumstances that coalesce when an individual achieves eminence.

My concern is not whether genius, either as an abstract category or an embodied Gould, exists. Nor do I want to evaluate the relative merits of genius theories. Rather, I will consider how lifewriting practitioners, who assume Gould's exceptionalism, characterize his specific genius. Biography has always played an important role in shaping common perceptions of extraordinary achievement. As Simonton notes, eminence is granted through value judgments of those who bring creatively exceptional individuals into the annals of history:

At bottom, historians are the final arbiters of who makes it into the history books; they are the Guinness of the future records, the judges of the firsts and bests. One cannot leave a mark on posterity without becoming thus co-opted by the historical profession. Hence any creator, leader, or other celebrity, as a maker of history, is forever subservient to the capricious processes by which historians conceive past events. How they view the past defines the past, as recorded in the documents that only historians live to write. (*Greatness*, 83)

Lloyd E. Ambrosius also notes in *Writing Biography: Historians and Their Craft*, that "Biography and historical analysis are inextricably intertwined" (viii). Biography shapes history not only by providing information about the lives of eminent individuals, but by making assertions about how these people contribute to important events and ideologies

of the time. As Hermione Lee has noted, “Biography is never just the personal story of one life. It always has political and social implication” (63). The simple fact of a biography’s existence suggests that the subject has created or achieved something worthy of particular note, and scholarly texts on genius certainly draw on biographies. They and other forms of life writing about his three key composers underpin Kivy’s exploration of the then-predominant myths of musical genius. Simonton notes that comparative psychological studies of genius necessarily use biographies, and he also offers advice to psychobiographers arising from his own research on creative exceptionality.

In the field of music, though, theories of musical genius have also called into question biography’s usefulness as a tool for research. As Jolanta T. Pekacz has noted, dominant ideas of musical autonomy and self-referentiality, which “implied that musical works must be approached and understood through the analysis of their inner structures, exclusive of extra-musical factors” have “effectively relegated the genre of biography to the margins of the discipline of musicology” (47). But practicing beliefs about musical genius led early musicologists to conclude that biography was largely unnecessary for their real work. This conclusion that biography was an “auxiliary area of study” in musicology “was grounded in the nineteenth-century concept of a genius as a transmitter of divine inspiration independent from outside influences” (49). As a result, musical biography, although it was very popular, became, as Pekacz explains, “the domain of learned amateurs” and, worse yet, women (49). And yet, some biographical information was necessary to date works and establish the chronology of the composer’s life. The result was the academic “life and work” biography, which maintained a clear boundary between the two, often placing them in separate sections of the text. As a result, while

musical biography has in recent years become more prominent in musicology, its marginal scholarly position has meant that critical analysis of the genre is rare, and often conducted by biographers arguing for the validity of their own methodology. The genre also clings to nineteenth-century generic conventions and models of self. In her groundbreaking work, Pekacz notes that “Musical biography typically develops in a way similar to a realistic novel: a coherent, unified voice claiming to represent the truth about a life; omniscient narration, repeating themes and symbols; and a linear, chronological presentation of events provide readers with the illusion of totality and closure” (42). Pekacz advocates for new methodological studies of musical biography which take into account such lifewriting critical commonplaces as that biographers are “an active part of what they write, rather than passive transmitters of eternal verities. Biography is not transparently representational, but moral and political; it is a construction—*not* a reconstruction—of its subject’s life” (79). In many cases, Gould biographical texts both represent the challenge to biographical form that Pekacz champions, and recognize the important theoretical issues involved in the fabrication of selves. I would argue that a major reason for this critical awareness was because Gould himself recognized that the conventions of representing musicians biographically were limited, and because he tried not only to control constructions of his own identity, but also personally engaged in biographical play which often revolved around conceptions of himself as a musical genius.

Gould became famous as a youth, so his life and his own ideas of biography have never been available without existing layers of mediation. Certainly by the beginning of the twentieth century, smaller representations establish elements of individual lives,

including a subject's genius, long before a traditional print biography appears. The philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer called the newspaper "the second-hand in the clock of history" (52), and it was print journalism, both local and international, that first declared Gould a genius. Though I intended to begin each chapter with his representations of self, supposedly moving from the least to most mediated life writing texts, as many life writing scholars have noted, self-representation is rarely unmediated, and especially for celebrities like Gould, whose lives have been public property from a very young age. Since he began performing at fourteen, and was something of a media sensation in Canada before his international debut, there's no moment in his adult life when his self isn't constructed through various narratives. Neither is it easy to determine how much influence the young performer had over his early public image. Well before Gould publicly discussed his own music skills or his bizarre performance practice, he was a genius and an oddball in the media, so even his earliest comments about these aspects of his "self" are reactions to a public identity already written for him by others.

As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have noted, "*telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available*" (*Getting a Life*, 9), making only certain kinds of autobiographical stories acceptable in certain situations: "Recitations of our personal narratives, that is, are embedded in specific organizational settings and in the midst of specific institutional routines or operations" (*Getting a Life*, 10). The marketing of the "selves" of classical musicians, their creative exceptionalism in particular, is one such activity requiring specific narrative and visual conventions. But Gould's musical career began just when the models of selfhood available to classical performers and their methods of dissemination were becoming destabilized, and the young performer soon

began co-opting the new media of music marketing to create self-representational models previously unavailable to performers, and to engage in auto/biographical representation of his own that confounded future biographers. While early media reviews presented a young performer fabricated out of his pianistic skills on the one hand and his bizarre eccentricities on the other, throughout his life, Gould tried to counteract this representation by positioning himself as a multifarious musical thinker whose most ground-breaking philosophies arose out of his work combining music and technology.

That Gould as a young piano virtuoso came to be known as a musical genius at all is in part a product of the time when he made his international debut and early recordings. The 1950s were remarkable years for all genres of music in North America. In the classical music world, European musicians emigrating primarily from Russia and Germany had dominated the early decades of the twentieth century. World War II slowed this inflow, and opened up opportunities for American musicians both locally and internationally (Horowitz, 349). At the same time, North American music was itself changing, thanks to the emergence of new genres and the development of new recording technologies. Perhaps most important for Gould's career was a challenge to the boundaries between what might earlier have been called "high" and "low" art (Carr, 7–8). As Graham Carr points out, in the post-war period, "Artists as seemingly diverse as Leonard Bernstein and Elvis Presley were catapulted into prominence, becoming household names across North America" (8). Carr describes how the marketing of musicians changed dramatically during Gould's time. In particular, Gould's record company foregrounded Gould visual representations, which worked with the many print representations to create a celebrity identity unprecedented for a classical music

performer. But my interest goes beyond marketing image to explore how Gould began performing his own celebrity identity, and how he treated his own musical genius and eccentricities, which had established him as a celebrity in the first place.

Such a performance of self began early in his career. His incredibly virtuosic performances, when coupled with his unusual performance practice and his choice of repertoire, immediately established him as extraordinary at both ends of the genius/eccentric spectrum. But Gould was never a self-declared genius, nor was he the first person to address his perceived eccentricities. The print media got there first. After his debut as an organist, *The Evening Telegram*, a Toronto newspaper, ran an article titled, “Boy, Aged 12, Shows Genius as Organist” (Payzant, 8). Later Canadian reviews were equally laudatory, commenting on Gould’s “infallible accuracy and intense finger-technique,” his “eloquent” phrasing, and his ability to bring out the “spiritual” as well as the “technical” beauty of the piano (Payzant, 9–11). Though the original Columbia Records press release for Gould’s *Goldberg Variations* didn’t explicitly call him a genius, this designation wasn’t long in coming from the American press. Articles and reviews referring to Gould as a genius were widespread early in his international career. Even before the *Goldberg* recording, in a review of Gould’s debut at the Phillips Gallery in Washington, D. C., Paul Hume described him as “a pianist with rare gifts for the world” (Payzant, 13). As for the recording itself, in an early review in 1956, *American Record Guide* noted “The Record debut of Glenn Gould, a keyboard genius” (Wodson) The “genius” epithets multiplied from there. “Glenn Gould acclaimed as genius of keyboard,” stated the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* in 1957 (Steinfirst). “Glenn Gould, piano genius, gives spectacular concert” proclaimed the *Lexington Leader* in 1958 (Dickerson), and in 1960,

the *Tampa Tribune* reported that “Eccentric genius, Glenn Gould, produces marvelously-beautiful sounds on the piano” (Sands). As Carr reports, many of these reviews were influenced by Gould’s management and publicity, who were “keen to capitalize on the extraordinary possibilities opened up by a growing multimedia network of communication” and “pushed aggressive new marketing and promotional strategies as keys to artistic success” (8). Gould’s debut album was aggressively marketed; as Bazzana reports, “some in the business were calling it the most hyped recording debut by the most hyped young performer in classical music history” (WS, 153).⁶

As the titles of the articles listed above suggest, Gould’s genius was originally seen as an extraordinary ability to perform his distinct choice of piano repertoire. Like his early Canadian critics, American reviewers applauded his remarkable clarity, dazzling technique, and beautiful, though unusual, interpretations. Particularly striking about these early representations was their focus on the performer, rather than the composer or the music itself, as the locus of interest. The *Goldberg* album was one of the first to put photos of the performer on the cover—in this case, thirty, with only a few showing Gould at a piano. Nor are these images the static, formal head-shot of performers popular then and later. Instead, Gould appears in his shirtsleeves, alternately absorbed by the music—sometimes dancing, sometimes playing—or in intense conversation, apparently with a technician, while standing in front of a score.⁷ The *Goldberg* cover art stresses an important material aspect of Gould’s genius persona. Physical descriptions of Gould abound in early notices, and photos “played up his youthful, doe-like, androgynous appearance” (Bazzana, WS, 156). This intense focus on Gould’s personality and physical appearance in addition to his virtuosic piano skills drew the interest of fans beyond the

classical music world. In the years following the release of his *Goldberg* recording, Gould was the subject of articles in *Life*, *Macleans*, *Glamor*, *Vogue*, *Esquire*, *Newsweek*, and others.

The *Goldberg* album also represents an important first step in Gould's alternate construction of his genius. In a break from recording tradition, Gould himself wrote the liner notes, which briefly discuss the history of the *Goldbergs'* composition, and analyze the progression of the piece from "Aria" through the variations and back to "Aria" again. On his first recording, then, Gould takes the first step in a series of moves which will position him not only as performer, but as musical thinker and scholar, and a commentator on his own musical self. Gould's substantial, even overwhelming body of written work extends the idea of genius from virtuosic performer to musical philosopher. In *Partita for Glenn Gould*, French Canadian philosopher Georges Leroux asks, "If we did not know Gould, if there were no images of him playing, if we did not have Bruno Monsaingeon's marvelous films, would we hear his art differently, would it be diminished?" (5). Leroux focuses primarily on visual representation; I would add that Gould's written work provides a gloss to his music and to his public and biographical image that informs his genius identity throughout his lifetime and beyond.

The young Gould also commented on and performed aspects of his genius and eccentricity for the media. As part of the publicity for the *Goldberg* album and the ones immediately following, he gave interviews and made television appearances. Journalists inevitably asked him to interpret his own musical skills. While the interviewers and reviewers seemed primarily interested in Gould's personality and private life, he insisted on sharing his carefully-considered thoughts about creativity. His interview comments

directly relating to genius reflect a modesty befitting a newcomer on the international music scene. His own writings, and Geoffrey Payzant's biography, which is in many ways an extension of Gould's own work, however, provide greater insight into Gould's ideas on musical genius in general, and on his own creative exceptionality. Though he ostensibly denies his pianistic genius, and questions genius as a category of self particularly in relation to performance, his interview comments and articles, culminating in Geoffrey Payzant's *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, shun the role of a pianistic, Platonic genius, whose creative exceptionality lies in his ability to invoke beautiful music from the piano, and progressively position him as a Longinian genius, focusing on his own agency in his learning process, his ground-breaking musical interpretations, and his use of technology. The Gouldian identity therefore becomes the iconoclastic musical thinker who is in control of his own ideas and whose performances serve his conception of music as a whole.

Gould's comments on and performance of his eccentricities also serve this representation of self. Despite his fast-developing reputation for seeking seclusion, in his early career he regularly represented himself in interviews, his own writings, and radio and television performances. Before he began scripting all his interviews, the young Gould consistently and explicitly contradicts critics' hyperbolic claims of his pianistic genius. This strategy not only creates an appealingly modest persona, but also strategically withdraws him from the intense competition inherent in a concert career. In fact, Gould's early denials of genius show that he privileges composition over performance, foreshadowing his early retirement from the concert stage. During his concert career, Gould rejected claims of genius by listing elements of music at which he

is not successful, or doesn't believe himself to be extraordinary. In later conversations, he theorizes that interpretation, particularly recorded interpretation, is a creative endeavor on par with composition. And yet, though his interviews provide a useful introduction to how Gould managed his own exceptionality, his most telling comments on genius are buried in his writings on others. Due to his modesty, or his desire not to compete with his contemporaries, or even the fact that the interview represents what Daniel Boorstin called a "pseudo-event" meant to "produce and disseminate celebrity" rather than express genuine ideas and information, Gould may have felt unable to represent his genius through interviews (Garber, 22). In his writings about other musicians and in response to less direct questions about his abilities, however, he offers greater access to his understanding of what constitutes genius, and his own sense of his own artistry. Gould's writing about composers he admired, such as Richard Strauss and Arnold Schoenberg, suggest how Gould understood the creative process, often making his arguments for the value of his favorite composers, also comments on his own particular form of creativity. According to these pieces, for Gould, a musical or artistic genius is not afraid to stand outside of the important artistic movements of his time—for example, Gould, whose *String Quartet* is much more Romantic than the modern twelve-tone music he often championed, or whose ideas about recording and technology anticipate many later twentieth-century developments in electronic media.⁸

Before he began scripting his interviews himself, interviewers regularly asked him about his genius—sometimes explicitly, sometimes through questions about his childhood musical development and achievement. Gould consistently denies being a genius or a prodigy. One of the most oft-quoted articles appeared in the *Toronto Daily*

Star on March 28, 1959.⁹ Dennis Braithewaite, the interviewer, notes that Gould has been called a genius and asks if he feels like one. Gould responds:

That's a dirty question. I regard that word with great suspicion. I have never really got into the habit of using it myself, certainly not about myself and rather infrequently about other people. When I do use it about other people they're usually safely dead and they're usually composers. I don't recall using it about a pianist at all, so I don't think I deserve it and honestly I don't really know what it means. I think one should stick to relative terms of some kind. (39)

This passage contains several important elements of Gould's public response to being called a genius. Only one brief line—"so I don't think I deserve it"—addresses his own genius status directly. The rest deflects attention to theoretical considerations, positioning him as a serious musical thinker rather than as a performer. In fact, Gould doesn't consider pianists to be geniuses. For the first time, he distinguishes here between performers, who interpret the work of others, and composers, who create their own. The composer—but only after he is long dead, and his work has remained important over time—can more accurately be declared a creative genius, and this theme recurs in Gould's early writing about musical creativity. This position runs counter to early declarations of Gould's genius in newspaper articles and press releases. Gould's claims that only composers can be geniuses may reflect the fact that he had not yet become the ground-breaking media artist of his post-concert years, and it may also tell us more about his extreme unhappiness with concertizing at the time than it does about his notions of creative exceptionality.

Throughout his early years, Gould's comments explicitly avoid the notion of

genius as a divine conduit, magically bestowed with creative gifts, and instead embrace notions of agency and iconoclasm in the genius himself. In a 1962 conversation with Bernard Asbell, he asserts that he “was not a prodigy, at least not an exploited one,” confessing that although he “was determined to wrap [himself] in music” from around the age of nine or ten as a good way to avoid other kids his age, with whom he was not comfortable, he didn’t think of himself as “a serious professional threat until [he] was twenty and actually earning a living playing the piano in radio and television studios” (185). Rather than passively receiving his gifts from an external force, Gould presents himself as the product of his own determination to surround himself with music. Further, it was not a mystical or spiritual oneness with the music that led him to recognize his own extraordinary talent, but rather that he had become a young professional who could provide for himself. This approach is relentlessly biographical. Gould consistently asserts that rather than thinking of music as a profound calling, he simply thought of it as a way to shut out experiences which made him feel intensely uncomfortable. In fact, this explanation conforms with Simonton’s ideas of genius. Not fitting in with his classmates and having difficulty at school can be seen as signs of a childhood trauma, an element many eminent people share, and Gould’s focus on music as a defense probably led him to clock the many hours of practice necessary to become a successful musician, or in Gladwell’s terms, even a genius. Finally, Gould’s consistent linking of his musical development with his social awkwardness helps to establish one of the primary qualities of his eccentricity: an inability to create and maintain effective relationships.

While part of Gould’s early denial of his own genius may have been modesty, his

comments also suggest that he placed little value on public musical performance, the area in which he achieved his earliest renown. He may therefore genuinely not have recognized the depth of his own talent. Later in the Braithewaite interview, Gould agrees that he “regard[s] concert work as a way of making money temporarily,” and notes that he would like to quit public performing, he plans to continue recording, which is “the closest thing [pianists] have to being creative” (43-44). On another occasion, Gould says that when he was younger he “rather resisted the idea of a career as a concert pianist” because he saw it as a “kind of superficial thing, some sort of pleasant adjunct to a scholastic interest in music” (Asbell, 185). Gould’s comments on his own pianistic skills, however, suggest that the ease with which he mastered the technical skills may have caused him only to register partially his stunning virtuosity. In a 1980 interview with Jim Aikin for *Contemporary Keyboard*, Gould takes his own pianistic skills so much for granted that they seem almost unworthy of any acknowledgment. Gould remarks that “never in [his] life” has he noted fingerings into a score, and “can’t imagine why anyone would bother” (Aiken, 267). Asked how he “gets things flowing” after he hasn’t played for a few weeks, Gould states: “I have never understood the stiff-finger syndrome or whatever it is people talk about, because during all of however many weeks may have elapsed, there is no hour of the day in which some music doesn’t enter my head and instantly get translated into a kind of spontaneous finger system” (269). He seems to place little value on the piano itself, seeing its manipulation as a means to the end of thinking about and understanding music more generally. According to Gould’s own representation of himself, music is cerebral rather than technical: the ideal conception of music was in his mind *at all times*. That his body could translate this mental music easily,

whether he practiced the instrument or not, contributes to the representation of Gould as someone whose skills go beyond simply performance.

Early in his career, Gould also repeatedly devalued his pianistic abilities by identifying areas in which he was not proficient. Though it may have seemed more important in 1980 to stress his hand-mind coordination fifteen years after he stopped performing publicly, as a young pianist his skills spoke for themselves, and he may have wanted to stress his skills in other areas. In a 1960 interview with Vincent Tovell, Gould remarks that he has “never been able to write successfully for the piano” and that he has no “special gift instrumentally either” (81). He also discounts his early Baroque piano skills, saying that he came to this music by way of his organ playing: “I was playing the organ when I was around nine or ten, for the first time. And I was playing mostly . . . no, I would say altogether, to be quite honest, Bach and Handel. The organ was a terrific influence because at that time I had not shown a special predilection for the music of the Baroque on the piano and it was really through the organ that this interest began” (77). As for jazz, Gould firmly insists he has “no ability for it whatsoever” repeating himself almost verbatim twice in the same interview (86). Denying his own genius may partly result from genuine modesty, and partly from a feeling of apprehension about the huge amounts of attention this relatively private individual was getting early in his career. But it was also a savvy publicity move. The media’s intense focus on Gould’s virtuosity and his highly original performances allowed him to take the relatively safe position of modest denial without venturing too deeply in these uncontrolled early exchanges into serious considerations of music or creativity.

His own writings, however, offer a different picture of his views on creative

artistry. Though he seldom spoke specifically about his own genius, his writings deal directly with his understanding of the creative process, and what he felt it meant to be a great artist. As a result, the writing becomes a performative act through which Gould constructs a representation of his musical self. Though some of Gould's comments about creativity might suggest the artist is subject to an unpredictable creative force, most portray the genius as someone who can stand outside of the musical conventions and movements of the time. Taken together, Gould's writing forms a philosophy of music that presents him as an agent in his own construction of what it means to be an exceptional artist and what constitutes exceptional art. The Platonic does make an appearance. In "An Argument for Richard Strauss," Gould refers to both the "*inscrutable pressures* of self-guiding artistry" and the "*terrifying* evaporation of inspiration which plagues the subconscious of all creative people" [my italics] (90). Both phrases represent the creative process as powerful, unpredictable, and outside the artist's own understanding. For example, in the liner notes for the recording of his String Quartet, even though Gould usually claimed to be influenced primarily by the modern twelve-tone composers, he claims that when writing it, he "was not shaping the Quartet—it was shaping me" (229). Certainly, this comment seems to deprive the artist of agency over his own creativity. But it also serves a larger purpose, which is to insist upon the idea that the artist should not resist creating work that stands outside of the prevailing movements of his time.

This impulse is very important to Gould's construction of his own genius, since he saw his departure from the concert stage in favor of a recording career as the way of the future for classical music. In fact, he declares Richard Strauss to be "the greatest musical figure who has lived in [the 20th] century" precisely because of his independence, the way

he falls outside of the Zeitgeist. Strauss “presents to us an example of a man who makes richer his own time by not being of it; who speaks for all generations by being of none. It is an ultimate argument of individuality—an argument that man can create his own synthesis of time without being bound by the confines that time imposes” (“An Argument,” 92). In his interview with Jim Aikin in 1980, Gould applies this argument to young pianists. By this time in his life, Gould is arguing that interpreting others’ work is a creative act in itself. Though he grants the importance of role models for young musicians, Gould bemoans the fact that, as Aikin says, “the pianists that come out of Juilliard tend to sound more like one another than [Gould] sound[s] like any of them” (271). In response, Gould argues that instead of seeing performance as interpretation guided by the prevailing idea of a composer’s work, artists should strive for originality:

At a certain age, of course, we all have idols. . . . That’s fine, to go through that stage and get it out of your system. . . . But for the mature artist, the notion that there is a consensus that must be adhered to, more or less at all costs, and that you have to study various recordings or hear every performance you can in order to find out where the truth lies about a particular work, and that the closer you get to some kind of median performance tradition the better—I just think that’s ridiculous. I refuse to conceive of the re-creative act as being essentially different from the creative act. (272)

Gould’s conception of genius has markedly changed from what he said in early interviews. The youthful modesty is gone, and he speaks with greater authority. While the young Gould refused to see pianists as geniuses, arguing that the real work of music making was in composing and analysis, by 1980, after failing to produce a body of his

own traditional compositions, Gould claims that interpreting others' work, especially while recording, is equal to composition. And as we will see in the performance chapter, in Gould's case it often was.

Gould also frames his comments on his eccentricities to further his notion of the artist. As someone who wanted to be considered a serious musician, Gould seemed frustrated and overwhelmed at times by the attention paid to his on and off-stage mannerism. But as a savvy young self-promoter, he embraced the eccentric characterization as a means for bringing attention to himself and his work. While some representations of his eccentricity seem thrust upon him, Gould actually emphasizes others to varying degrees throughout his life. In the 1959 interview, Braithewaite notes that Gould travels with his own piano chair and wears winter clothes in the summer. Asking if these are "affectations," Gould humorously replies that the eccentricities "have become somewhat exaggerated in a lot of stories. I've never worn galoshes when there is no snow. It is probably a failing on my part that I haven't thought of the publicity I'd get, but I haven't and hence things of that kind are slightly stressed" (41). Gould routinely denies that his quirks are affectations, noting for example that wearing gloves and traveling with his own chair are directly related to making music. In his 1962 interview with Asbell, Gould describes his "eccentricities" as largely unconscious: "Not having been a child prodigy giving concerts, I had never given a thought to the importance, at least to some people, of visual image." According to Gould, it was the release of the *Goldberg Variations* recording and the surrounding publicity that brought his eccentricities to his attention. Until then, his primary performance technique was to "concentrate exclusively on realizing a conception of the music, regardless of how it was

physically achieved” (186). Seven years after the *Goldbergs* recording, as an established international artist, Gould describes when he first became conscious of his eccentricities as “the most difficult year I have ever faced” (186).

Later, however, Gould took charge of his own representation as eccentric with the intention of gaining publicity. This strategy both advocated a particular notion of genius, and kept the more serious aspects of his musical endeavors in the public consciousness. As a student of music history, and an insightful businessman, Gould knew that eccentricities could help him create a recognizable model of musical genius, thereby assigning value to his own work. His 1959 mention of the publicity he would get from actually wearing galoshes in the summer foreshadows his attempts years later to live up to media reports of his oddities. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson argue in *Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography*, Americans “are habitual authenticators of our own lives. Every day we are confessing and constructing personal narratives in every possible format: on the body, on the air, in music, in print, on video, at meetings” (2). Though shocked at first by the media’s designation of him as eccentric, Gould certainly performed striking aspects of his identity late in life. Like Beethoven, the nineteenth and early twentieth century’s icon of sublime musical genius, Gould defied social rules in various ways. Though we now know that Gould had several heterosexual relationships and at least one serious romance with a woman, his intense guarding of his private life opened up possibilities for speculating about his sexuality, acquired for him the label of hermit, and most importantly aroused intense audience interest in his personal life. Gould famously defied rules of appropriate dress. One of the first concert performers to appear in the more casual business suit instead of a tuxedo, like Beethoven, he increasingly lived

up to his reputation for inappropriate, slovenly dress (Kivy, 121). As a genius and more specifically an ecstatic genius—a status Gould aspired to for his entire life—his mind was focused on far more important things than clothing. Later in life, Gould would regularly perform “Glenn Gould” by dressing in his iconic fashion in public, in photos, and on album covers.

While the unkempt and reclusive figure fit with the iconoclastic genius role Gould constructed for himself, his anxiety and loss of control over his health did not; as a result, only some aspects of this eccentricity became part of Gould’s identity before his death. During his lifetime, Gould seldom spoke publicly about his serious concerns about his health. He did not, however, make a secret of his drug use. Though Gould developed and lived up to a reputation for canceling concerts due to illness, such minor ailments all but disappeared after he retired from the concert stage. His drug use was a different story, one that falls into line with the image of the Romantic genius who defies societal norms. The Columbia press release for the 1955 *Goldbergs* mentions that Gould arrived at the studio with pill bottles in hand, and by 1960 Gould was openly admitting his drug use in interviews. For instance, he tells Vincent Tovell that as a young performer, he was “blissfully unaware of the responsibility that this thing [performing publicly] entailed” and admits that “Now you have to accomplish the same thing by sedatives” (70). Conversations with friends and fellow performers about drug use were even more explicit. In 1957 he wrote to Thomas McIntosh, a fellow pianist, following up on his earlier advice that McIntosh use both the sleeping pill Nebutol and the sedative Luminal (Roberts, 5). Gould’s comments on both drugs indicate a close familiarity with them. He may have supplied McIntosh with samples. But the full extent of Gould’s physical

problems, including a profound loss of control over his playing in the late 1970s, and an increasing, almost obsessive concern with his health near the end of his life, did not become clear until after his death, when biographers found Gould's medical diaries. While occasional drug use was part of Gould's public performance of self, the loss of control over his health in later life was not. At least in the 1960s and 70s, while it might be acceptable to make regular use of various narcotics, serious health problems and neuroses were not part of Gould's public construction of "Glenn Gould."¹⁰

Beethoven's image as a defiant rule-breaker extended beyond his personal life into his music, and so did Gould's. He playfully makes light of his unusual interpretations, another aspect of Gould's performance practice that brought him the moniker of eccentric, or supports them by expressing his intentions, or by finding support for his position in the works of others. This is the aspect of Gould's eccentricity that he claims most explicitly as an element of his genius. In one of his most autobiographical written pieces, "Stokowski in Six Scenes," Gould explains why he admires him despite his "eccentricities and deviations from the text":

Stokowski was, for want of a better word, an ecstatic. He was involved with the notes, the tempo marks, the dynamics in a score, to the same extent that a filmmaker is involved with the original book or source which supplies the impetus, the idea, for his film. (264)

Stokowski's view that a score is simply "black marks on white paper" and that a performer must go beyond "mechanically reproduc[ing] the marks" to defending "the composer against the mechanical conception of life" that was becoming more prevalent during the mid twentieth century, could easily be Gould's own, and later in the article, Gould uses it

to justify the artistic liberties he takes with his interview materials in his radio documentaries (“Stokowski,” 264).

Throughout his life Gould used auto/biographical representation to construct and control representations of himself as an artist. While his representations are not always consistent, they do work toward the creation of a genius whose skills go beyond the piano and performance to include new media. Overall, they also give us a man firmly in control of his own musical abilities and ideas. Gould used various forms of self-representation to communicate these ideas: interviews, photos, auto/biographical fragments in his written work. This enterprise created a multi-layered construction of a public self.

Gould as “Poly-Person”: *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind, The First Auto/biography*

Perhaps one of Gould’s most effective acts of self-representation, however, was Geoffrey Payzant’s 1978 biography, *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, which uses Gould’s own writings to construct the first full-length portrait of the musician—one wholly approved by its subject, and which therefore advocates his view of creative genius. Published four years before Gould’s death, the book was well-received by critics. Payzant, a specialist in musical aesthetics, was a long-time professor in the University of Toronto Philosophy Department. In his introduction, he called his text an “intellectual biography,” stating that a traditional exploration of the life and works would be impossible because of how Gould and his friends protected his private life (Preface to 1986 Goodread biography series edition). This book therefore passes over the personal details and elucidates Gould’s musical philosophy as Payzant understood it at that time. Though he received Gould’s permission to write the book based on materials available in the public record, Payzant claimed not to have met with Gould or discussed the book

during the writing. Gould himself reviewed the book for *The Globe and Mail* on May 27, 1978, and in *Piano Quarterly* in the fall of 1978, thus publicly forging the link between biography and subject. Then, in future editions, Payzant points the reader back to Gould's review, creating what Otto Friedrich has called one of several "Chinese boxes" which "contain nests of smaller and still smaller boxes" in the Gould biographical material (9).

It is no surprise that Gould approved of Payzant's portrait, since it focuses on Gould's own writing and presents him as a philosopher. *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* describes Gould as the "poly-person" he himself had long sought to be. Countering the mainstream and music media's portraits of a concert musician, an identity Gould had abandoned in 1964, Payzant introduces us to a multi-talented musician-composer-writer/philosopher. All alternate identities, particularly that of "eccentric," are subsumed within this larger figure, justifying for instance the more bizarre aspects of Gould's behavior and personality as essential to the development or enactment of his philosophy of music. For Payzant, Gould is not the angelic/spiritual genius of the piano often constructed by reviewers; instead, he is a powerful, self-taught Longinian rule-breaker standing outside of his time to develop a musical philosophy for the future. As Gould later noted, he could not have written his life better himself.

Though the preface to the 1992 edition of *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* tries to counter the claims that Gould was personally involved in the writing, Payzant confirms the book was sanctioned by its subject in various ways. Here is Payzant's account of his methodology and his agreement with Gould:

So in late 1974 I wrote to him and told him about my project, that I was going to build entirely on the public record or writings by and about him and that I wanted

there to be no grounds for any suspicion that he interfered in the writing of the book. To this latter end I proposed that he and I not see each other again until the work had reached the stage at which no further alterations would be possible. (xi)

Though Payzant did offer him the right to view the manuscript at any time, and the power to veto the project, Gould found the book, largely a compendium of his own ideas about music and technology, more than satisfactory. Payzant writes that Gould “particularly admired Chapters 4 and 5,” which addressed Gould’s interest in technology and his psychological make up, telling the author that “in these two chapters I had come closer to him than any other writer, and that once they were in print Gould would never again have to explain himself to journalists” (xi). By reviewing the biography, he made his approval a matter of public record, though he did identify elements of it that he would have changed; for example, Payzant’s claim that Gould’s private life is “austere and unremarkable”: “Payzant, in fact, provides ample evidence for this contention with his own first chapter, a quick-and-dirty sketch of Gould’s early years—which is indeed rather boring and by no means as brief as it should be” (Gould, “A Biography,” 445). Almost all subsequent Gould biographers address Payzant’s comment on Gould’s private life, attesting to the power of Gould’s own statements about his life in response to the first biography.

Though Payzant insists that the book is his own work, its composition and history have affirmed Gould’s own version of his biographical self, seemingly preempting any subsequent representations. The formula is simple. Gould communicates his ideas in his published writings, agrees to a biography based on these works, and then favorably reviews the results. The review itself is full of the media play for which he was famous.

Gould praises Payzant's "obvious determination to prepare his portrait without being interfered with, or influenced by, the conversational connivance and media manipulation at which Gould is allegedly a master" (Gould, "A Biography," 448). As a result, "Payzant's *Gould* is drawn sympathetically but with clear-eyed detachment" (448). The irony, of course, is that whatever detachment Payzant tried to maintain is undermined by Gould's sanctioning of the portrait. The very existence of his review mocks the biographical tradition of the writer's independence and authority. Though Gould humorously notes that "there does not appear to have been any interview like contact between subject and author" (447), in a move typical of Gouldian self-reflexivity and ambiguity, he stops short of affirming the author's detachment ("there does not appear. . ."). In the review itself, Gould's self-conscious manipulation of the media only heightens the uncertainty, as Gould's obvious performance of the role of reviewer inevitably raises the question of whether Payzant is merely performing the role of biographer. In any case, whatever level of objectivity and independence Payzant may have had before writing the biography, Gould's authorizing review rewrites the text into his own (auto)biographical statement.

He had good reason for sanctioning Payzant's portrait. Since most of the information comes from Gould's own writings or from articles and interviews in which he spoke about himself, Gould, through Payzant, gets to represent his own genius. The resulting portrait does not appear in the later biographical texts. Payzant/Gould's "Glenn Gould" is a self-made musician whose musical talent is cerebral rather than tied to a particular instrument. His genius is therefore based not simply on his musical ability but in musical philosophy. Payzant's representation of Gould is conscious, coherent, and in

absolute control. Alberto Guerrero, Gould's piano teacher of several years, is introduced and dispensed with in one brief paragraph (5). Instead, Gould is said to have been influenced greatly by Artur Schnabel, *Tristan und Isolde*, Rosalyn Tureck, and Leopold Stokowski—all encountered through recordings and broadcasts rather than personal relationships. These formative influences are significant because they all contribute to Gould's philosophy about music, the focus of Payzant's text, rather than to his performance style. Quoting Gould's claim that Schnabel "didn't really care much about the piano as an instrument," Payzant argues that from this Gould developed his idea of the conflict "between the physical characteristics of specific musical instruments (such as the piano) on the one hand, the purely cerebral music, as it might exist in the imagination or in unspecified open score, on the other" (6). From Tureck's recordings, Gould "found powerful support for his own ideas of how music might be played," which Payzant notes were directly opposed to those of his teacher Guerrero. Rather than looking more deeply into Guerrero's own influences, Payzant quotes his subject: "Gould says that the models for Guerrero's generation of teachers were Casals, Landowska and Edwin Fischer, who played with what Gould considers excessive rubato. By contrast, he found Tureck's playing "upright," with a sense of repose, and I don't mean languor, I mean positiveness" (7). The germ of Gould's ideas about the ecstatic in music come in his response to the work of Stokowski (7). As Payzant explains, Gould

uses 'ecstasy' indiscriminately for a quality of music, a quality of the performance, an attitude of the performer, and an attitude of the listener. But this lack of discrimination is intentional and is the essence of Gould's meaning: that 'ecstasy' is a delicate thread binding together music, performance, performer and

listener in a web of shared innerness. (65)

In this way, Payzant neatly weaves the contradictions in Gould's written work into a coherent overarching philosophy. Payzant's focus is on Gould as the self-made man. Since the biography places little emphasis on Gould's basic pianistic gifts, he is not a passive receiver of extraordinary ability. Taking these gifts as a base point, Payzant explores what Gould does with them. Transcending virtuosity, Gould establishes a new philosophy of music.

Since Gould's true genius is not primarily found in his rendering of beautiful interpretations of composers' works, Payzant relegates Gould's concert life to the "Beginnings" of his career. Told briefly, and primarily through liberally-quoted reviews and accounts from Gould, this section leaves little space for the "child prodigy" theme found in early media representations and later biographies. To introduce Gould's May 8, 1946 performance of Beethoven's Fourth Concerto, his first solo performance with an orchestra, Payzant quotes one of Gould's autobiographical essays that describes Schnabel's influence on his interpretation of the performance. Describing his child self, Gould states, "some or all of the eight 78-rpm sides served as accompaniment for practice sessions in which I faithfully traced every inflective nuance of the Schnabelian rhetoric, surged dramatically ahead when he saw it wise. . . and glided to a graceful cadential halt every four minutes and twenty-five seconds or so, while the automatic changer went to work on the turntable" (9). Gould's wry anecdote about pausing for the changer becomes more significant when he argues that without these moments, he could never have fully understood the architecture of the concerto, a key element in his understanding of music. Gould's own account of his first performance is juxtaposed with numerous quotes from

Toronto critics. When interpreting the reviewers' comments, Payzant has little patience with those who focus on Gould's physical mannerisms rather than his musicianship. The biographer, like his subject, is reluctant to link Gould's genius to his eccentricity.

Of course, no biographer, regardless of how influenced by Gould, could completely ignore Gould's notorious concert behavior: his physical mannerisms, his frequent cancellations, and most unusual of all, his retirement from the stage at the height of his career. When Payzant addresses Gould's widely reported oddities, however, he presents them as logical components of his genius in a way that would be palatable to Gould. Throughout, Payzant gives his subject authority over his own biographical information, frequently noting that he is quoting him by beginning sentences with "Gould says," or "He says." This deference both bestows Gould with authority over his own biographical experience, and suggests that the portrait is highly subjective. Rather than state ideas directly, Payzant attributes them to their source. He approaches negative aspects of Gould's behavior during his performing career very carefully. Here for instance is an account of an early U.S. appearance:

We know very little of events preparatory to these performances: arguments with his agent Walter Homburger; discussions with other musicians; general excitement and last-minute practice and changes in the program. We can only be certain that Gould went about it in his own way. Years later he gave accounts of planning and motives to several interviewers, but it is impossible to separate his after-the-fact impressions from the actual events. (13)

The hints of willfulness, combined with the labeling of Gould's later comments as subjective, are significant. Payzant has no such concerns about accuracy when quoting

Gould's autobiographical writings about his performance of the Beethoven concerto, though even more years had passed between that event and its narration.

In general, Payzant deals with negative elements of Gould's performing career in three ways: by speculating as above; by citing Gould's own comments; and by referring to widely-known Gould information. When discussing Gould's use of drugs to ease his anxiety, for instance, Payzant quotes the Columbia press release for the *Goldbergs*, and then reports that "Gould told an interviewer that he had a recurrence of his chronic fibrositis shortly before this recital and was rescued by a helpful druggist who provided the appropriate remedy. Apart from this, he says, he was completely relaxed before and during the program" (14). Similarly, Gould's frequent cancellations during his performing years resulted from the conflicting demands of his interests in "composing (in several senses of the word) broadcasting, recording and writing" and his concert schedule: "Numerous cancellations of concert engagements and widely publicized hypochondria attest to [this conflict]" (19). Here Payzant doubly protects himself by attributing the behavior to conflicts between Gould's true calling and the necessary evil he will soon abandon, and by noting his widespread public reputation for hypochondria. Payzant therefore assures his audience (Gould) that he is not making this up, nor is he citing it unfairly. That Gould did not veto these accounts of his eccentricity could either mean Gould valued them as part of his public performance of self, as many of his friends and colleagues later claimed, or he decided that removing them would make Payzant's biography—which he obviously highly valued in other ways—seem less authentic to readers.

Proceeding from a conception of the genius as conscious developer of his own

life-long creative project, Payzant presents Gould's withdrawal from the concert stage, his unusual choice of repertoire, his contrapuntal radio documentaries, and his work as a writer as the enactment and espousal of a carefully formulated philosophy of music, teased from fragments of Gould's writings. Unlike most classical musicians, whom Blair Tindall describes as "a glamorous, vulnerable, and largely voiceless population," Gould spoke out frequently in interviews, lectures, liner notes, and articles. Payzant therefore simply assembles Gould's own biographical utterances into the record, creating through this process the kind of multi-talented ground-breaking artist and thinker that Gould himself admired. His musical philosophy is concisely encapsulated for the reader. Gould objects to the "non-take-twoness" of concerts, and sees the audience as predators, waiting intently for the slightest error on the performer's part. Rather than arising from an intense performance anxiety in response to the pressures of concert life, antipathy to concerts arises from seeing them as hurdles to overcome, suggesting it was present from the start. Gould's chief objection to concerts is that they are inherently competitive—something to be avoided at all costs. The performer competes against his own recording; the soloist competes with the orchestra; and the musicians "conquer" and "triumph" over the audience. According to Payzant, Gould leaves the concert stage for a "higher calling": to embody his New Philosophy" of music, which sees the antidotes to the concert hall in technology (33). By contrasting Gould's New Philosophy to the then-current Old Philosophy ideas of music, Payzant stresses the originality of Gould's musical thought. Not something he cooked up as an excuse for falling victim to an extreme case of concert hall jitters, Gould had been developing his ideas for years. And in any case, Gould's recording career is highly stressful as well: "Although from his writings we might never

guess it, Gould is tense and anxious at recording sessions—sometimes desperately so, and much more than when he played concerts” (47). The reason is simple. For Gould, recording is a higher stakes enterprise, because it is an essential part of his musical philosophy.

Once away from the audience, Gould’s eccentricities become necessary elements of his genius. The humming and conducting, the reluctance to play on pianos that do not meet his own idiosyncratic requirements, his unusual interpretations—all are either part of his overall philosophy, or result from those qualities of the self necessary to devise and elucidate such ideas. This explanation emphatically counters the charges of mental illness found in Gould lore from his earliest press coverage, and steers the biographical portrait away from the genius/eccentric dichotomy seen in other Gould biographies. As Payzant explains in his chapter, “The Musical Mind & The Music Itself,” though reviewers have called Gould mad, “‘crazy’ people do not figure out what they want to do with their lives and then arrange things so they can do exactly that. No crazy person could stand the pace at which Gould works. He is *different*, of course, but that does not mean he is crazy” (73). Payzant offers his own experience as biographer in support of Gould’s sanity:

Before I began serious study of his writings I thought he was inconsistent and unpredictable in his published utterances, but in fact he is remarkably consistent in his main lines of argument. He earns a handsome living, but his personal style is austere and private. No reputable psychiatrist would diagnose a person as crazy who was merely different, who seemed inconsistent in his public utterances (but in fact was not), and who did not squander his earnings like a drunken sailor. (73)

Payzant seeks to re-situate biographical interest, suggesting that readers should avoid

focusing on the subject's personal life. Or as he puts it after noting several instances when Gould comes into contact with or refers to psychiatry, "Gould's mental health is, of course, a private matter, none of our concern in this book. But the same cannot be said of his artistic personality" (75). Payzant draws on Anthony Storr's *The Dynamics of Creation* to justify Gould's need for solitude and control. According to Storr, the "schizoid creative personality" must be alone to create, while the "obsessional artistic personality" needs to take charge of both the self and the environment to avoid the threat posed by disorder and spontaneity (75). After placing Gould into these classifications of personality, Payzant concludes that "Creative genius works in solitude, seeks to control the self and the environment and in seeking tries to impose inward order upon outward disorder. It tries to transcend the limitations of the outward and physical, and to maintain active contact with the inner life" (77).

Once again, what many reviewers and later biographers see as eccentricities, in contrast with Gould's genius, here become essential elements of his creativity. For Gould, music is primarily internal rather than external; the ideal music is more important than the empirical reality. So Payzant suggests that Gould began humming along with his playing as a child to help the external music his small hands were capable of producing meet the expectations of the internal music in his head (81). Gould's unusual choices of repertoire also fit the empirical/idealist dichotomy. He dislikes composers who write music "inspired by the specific quality of instruments"—Chopin—preferring those who are "indifferent to the particular sonorities of musical instruments"—Gibbons, Bach, and Schoenberg (82). Gould's interest in transcriptions follows the idealist/empiricist dichotomy as well, since they are the "test of whether [a musical work] was composed

idealistically or empirically” (84). Gould’s mind, Payzant acknowledges, is unique, but its originality is focused upon furthering Gould’s overall philosophy—an assertion probably more palatable to Gould than the suggestions of madness appearing in reviews.

In his last two chapters, Payzant discusses the life work for which Gould was perhaps most misunderstood: the contrapuntal radio documentaries, lectures, and writing that Gould considered such an important part of his career. The chapters are important because of the normalizing work they do in terms of Gould mythology, and because of the further explanation they offer about Gould’s self. As might be expected at this point in the book, Payzant presents the radio programs as the ultimate experiment in Gould’s philosophy of recording: compositions orchestrating interview segments of the human voice with other sounds, like notes, to create a complete piece of music. Editing to construct a controlled reality, as opposed to reality itself, which is aleatory and beyond editorial control, they embody Gould’s philosophy of recording and exemplify his type of creative personality. Because the radio documentaries were not widely known in the late 70s, when Payzant was writing, he devotes considerable space to describing them. One of the key problems preventing them from being evaluated as serious compositions is that they had not been widely or frequently disseminated, either through recordings or radio play, and even though they had been broadcast several times in Canada, as with most contrapuntal or fugal music, they needed repeated hearings to become clear. (The three major radio documentaries were finally released as *The Solitude Trilogy* in 1992.) Payzant also suggests that Gould may have had unrealistic expectations of his audience, perhaps because of his own nature as a “poly-person”:

Gould is able to divide or partition himself, to have one part at work on one task

and another part on another, both at the same time. . . . He is what we might call a poly-person in yet another sense. He is a one-man repertory company of fictitious characters, people of different types, accents and ethnic origins. . . . His Mozart finales display much the same thing. They are like the Act I finales of Mozart's comic operas, with several characters rushing around the stage singing earnestly. Gould sustains a distinct dramatic personality for each musical line or motive throughout all the interchanges and ramifications. (137)

Since few share Gould's ability to multi-task, his radio documentaries are inextricably linked to his writing about them. For Payzant, "There is nothing wrong with this—Gould's lengthy explanations are like T. S. Eliot's famous notes to his poems: they are not external to the works of art but are integral parts of them" (137). In the end, though, Payzant admits that the radio documentaries are art in as much as art is play and play is art.

His final chapter focuses on Gould's work as a writer and intellectual. We should pay attention to Gould's work as a writer, says Payzant, because his central thesis can advance our ideas about music:

His thesis is that recorded music is an autonomous art, an art having its own conventions, techniques, history, mythology, morale and criteria. Recorded music is to concert music as film is to the dramatic stage: a younger cousin, not an offspring and not a dependent. (144).

In a few brief chapters, then, Payzant neatly encapsulates Gould's major professional preoccupations and contributions to music. By providing a representation of Gould's genius that goes far beyond pianistic skill, Payzant subsumes the characteristics typically

seen as opposed to Gould's musical capabilities. For Payzant, a musician's life is his professional output combined with his philosophical ideas, and not, as later biographers will assert, his personal life. For this reason, Gould's life can be written neatly and resolved. Later biographers will struggle to address and move beyond this conclusion—partly because Payzant's strong thesis of a unified Gouldian self results in a biographical representation that corresponds in many ways to the paradigms of traditional musical biographies. Though many later biographical portraits will challenge the conventions of musical biography by questioning their ability to represent Gould as subject, Payzant's text—even when considered on its own and separate from Gould's intervention—does not.

A Context for Genius: Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange*

It would be almost twenty-five years before another biographer would compose such a unified portrait of the musician, in part because Gould's positive response to his first biographical portrayal would so confound later efforts. Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, proposed a similarly unified portrayal. Through a detailed study of the context surrounding Gould's upbringing and career, Bazzana locates Gould's genius in his work as a multi-dimensional musician. As many reviews have stated, Bazzana's 2003 biography *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould* is likely to be considered the definitive version of Gould's life for some time to come. Compared to other biographical representations of Gould published between Payzant and Bazzana's texts and since then, *Wondrous Strange* is measured and careful in elucidating the context surrounding Gould's life and work, and in refusing to sensationalize Gould's eccentricities. Bazzana takes his title from Shakespeare's A

Midsummer Night's Dream. Theseus asks:

Merry; and tragical? Tedious, and briefe?

That is hot ice, And wondrous strange snow.

How shall we find the concord of this discord? (5.1.66-68)

With this quotation as his epigraph, Bazzana looks for concord in the multiple and conflicting narratives of Gould. Another major Gould biographer, Otto Friedrich, emphasizes the discords; in fact, between Payzant's and Bazzana's books, all the major Gould biographies focus on the contradictions: ecstasy vs. tragedy for Peter Oswald, never ending layers of Chinese boxes for Friedrich, and the numerous variations leading to unanswered questions in *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. Bazzana's biography stands out from the others because while conforming more readily to the conventions in traditional music biographies, it also performs the biographical task Pekacz sets out: "to historicize radically the subject through analyzing the cultural web in which he or she functioned, viewing the work of art as the product of the interaction between the composer and the institutions and practices of society" (80). For Bazzana, earlier biographies emphasizing the mysteries of Gould's genius have fueled the Gould cult, which in turn has mythologized him even more, making accurate biographical representation nearly impossible. Bazzana finds concord in the discord by examining the various cultures and institutions Gould's identity developed within. And as a Canadian scholar, Bazzana also recognizes that, aside from a few later (and obscure) writers, few have acknowledged "the importance of the theme of Gould as Canadian" (13).

Preempting the charge that his work is simply patriotic, Bazzana states that Gould's Canadian-ness was "the starting point" for his research not because of flag

waving, but simply for “accuracy” and “comprehensiveness” (13). Here is the resulting thesis:

For all his originality [Gould] was identifiably a product of the country, the province, the city, the very neighbourhood—the times—into which he was born. Many of his admirers seem unwilling to believe that a milieu as apparently bland and provincial as middle-class Anglo Protestant Toronto between the wars could have yielded so wondrous strange an artist unless his relationship to his upbringing was entirely one of resistance. In fact, he remained, all his life, in fundamental ways, an old Toronto boy—he never did leave town—and his work incarnated Canada in unmistakable if sometimes unusual ways. (13)

Though I will examine Bazzana’s biography more closely in the “icon” chapter, his context-based approach also provides useful insights into the topic of Gould and genius. Though closest in many ways to Payzant’s, Bazzana’s understanding of Gould’s genius is markedly different from other biographies. For Bazzana, Gould’s genius was not exclusively linked to his pianistic or even his musical skill; instead, Bazzana looks at how a favorable configuration of institutions—familial, cultural, and media—produce an iconoclastic artist whose skills ranged from performing and recording to producing music, electronic media, and printed text. This union of circumstances led Gould to be the musician he was.

In this way, Bazzana breaks from the traditional Platonic or Longinian myth of musical genius. By portraying Gould as the fortuitous result of his particular circumstances, he anticipates the theories Gladwell later popularized in *Outliers*. Bazzana certainly doesn’t see Gould as a conduit for some divine expression of beauty, but neither

does he see him primarily as a rule-maker and breaker. Gould undoubtedly possessed extraordinary capabilities; he also produced meaningful, groundbreaking work through which he achieved eminence. Bazzana therefore focuses not just on the nature of Gould's gifts, but also on *how* he achieved renown, which links this biography to such psychological considerations of genius and eminence as Simonton's.¹¹ Gould is a *specifically* Canadian artist who emerged from a very *specific* moment in Canadian history: the post-war period. Not just a highly skilled performer who abandons his talent when he leaves the concert stage, Gould is a multi-dimensional iconoclastic musician and composer whose genius prevailed to the extent that it did because he operated within the contrasting but parallel cultural domains of a religious musical community, and the provincial classical musical community of Toronto.

Of all the print biographies, Bazzana's most convincingly positions Gould as the product of a particular Canadian culture and history, thus presenting him as a representative figure for Canada. What is especially interesting for this chapter is how Bazzana's biographical form follows his conception of the subject. By representing Gould's genius as an understandable phenomenon, Bazzana is one of the few biographers who professes to solve the mysteries of the musician—a claim perhaps made possible by Bazzana's own position in a long line of biographers, and by his own moment in history, almost twenty-five years after Gould's death, when material on him abounds, and a broader perspective is possible.

While Bazzana's fascinating, insightful, and engaging text in many ways follows Pekacz's suggestions for musical biography, it goes against others. Bazzana's Gould is more unified than other biographers' because a minute examination of resources about

Gould's life, music, and times, leads him to believe he can produce a truthful, coherent biographical self. As a music history scholar at the University of California Berkeley, he had earlier produced a doctoral dissertation, *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work*, that was published to considerable acclaim. But both before and after its completion, Bazzana spent time working with Gould's papers in the National Library of Canada's Glenn Gould Archive. Bazzana's occupation and his time help to establish his authority. Already a Gould scholar, time also grants him a vantage point from which to examine both his subject's life and his posthumous legend. In his "Postlude (*In the Form of a Prelude*): A Posthumous Life," Bazzana contrasts his even-handed authority with the numerous bizarre responses to Gould, suggesting that the continued adulation has been fueled by gaps in earlier biographical representations. Key aspects of the Gould legend endure because biographies have failed to report on Gould accurately; Bazzana then counters these misconceptions with a tease from his own research: "After all, it is easier to sustain an image of Gould as an autodidact, hermit, and puritan when his biographies neglect to stress that *he was fundamentally influenced by his piano teacher, enjoyed the company of other people, and had sexual encounters*" (13). Bazzana also claims that one negative effect of "the posthumous cult has been a reluctance to see him in any kind of context" (13). Countering previous representations of him as mysterious, unknowable and anomalous, Bazzana portrays Gould as an exemplary Canadian, placing his biography at the intersection of what Nadel has identified as the "history of an individual" and the "discovery" paradigms of biography (104). Unlike Michael Clarkson's text, which reveals previously unknown and largely unsuspected aspects of Gould's private life, Bazzana explores an influence on Gould's self that has always been there, but that

previous biographers chose not to emphasize: his Canadian-ness, which Bazzana can address effectively in part because he is himself a Canadian scholar. The result is not just a history of an individual, but the history of a nation of which the subject is a product and a participant, and one who affected future historical representations.

The form of Bazzana's biography veers from other biographical models used to represent Gould. Bazzana's desire to create a strongly unified portrait can be seen in his claim that the biographical film *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* is "a salad of unexamined legends and clichés" which is "stylistically too arty for its own good." Further, Bazzana argues that "Girard's insistence on elevating rather than humanizing his subject—'ARTIST, PHILOSOPHER, MADMAN, GENIUS,' the ads proclaimed—yielded some sequences that I find embarrassing to watch" (7). Unlike Girard, Bazzana tries to humanize Gould by downplaying and explaining the typical Gould legends in chapters devoted to aspects of his identity: "Beach Boy: The Prodigy," "Vaudevillian: On Tour," etc. Each chapter corresponds to specific years of Gould's life, and the text's chronological organization notes exactly how and when the myths earlier biographers and fans use to sensationalize Gould arose. Bazzana's Gould undeniably displays those elements of self that became famous or notorious, but he did so during specific historical periods, and he progressed and changed as he developed his life and career. Throughout, Bazzana sets himself up as a biographer with an even-handed broad perspective of his subject. Not the least of the interpretations Bazzana has to deal with are Gould's own, and while he consults carefully Gould's own words and those of his other biographers, he also relies on a vast number of sources about Gould himself, about the music industry, and about Canadian culture.

Bazzana consistently downplays Gould's eccentricities by insisting first that Gould was not nearly as strange as many people believed, and also by maintaining an even, analytical tone. He agrees with Payzant that Gould's private life was "austere and unremarkable," and he also includes an eighty-eight page chapter called "Portrait of the Artist" which evaluates various aspects of Gould's private life—his eccentricities, his romances, his religious beliefs, and his hypochondria. Bazzana's task here is to recuperate the "misanthropic, paranoid hermit, perhaps autistic or mentally ill" found in previous texts, and he concludes that "in some respects he was standard-issue as eccentric artists go, and in some respects he was downright normal" (316). Throughout this chapter, he downplays myths of Gould's eccentricity, suggesting that many legends are "exaggerations or misinterpretations of mundane facts, though admittedly he sometimes abetted the legend-making by selectively overstating or suppressing aspects of his real personality for public consumption" (317). Bazzana relies on archival material, such as Gould's 1980 private diary, and the famous Dell letter, a fragmentary text found in Gould's papers that has become famous among his fans—something like Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved" letters. It begins "You know, I am deeply in love with a certain beaut[iful] girl[.] I asked her to marry me but she turned me down but I still love her more than anything in the world and every min[ute] I can spend with her is pure heaven; . . ." The letter not surprisingly has become a matter of speculation for biographers and has helped to contribute to the mystery of Gould's romantic life. Bazzana concludes that the letter is probably not even written by Gould, but writers like Clarkson, constructing their portraits of Gould after the Cornelia Foss revelation, have found various ways of asserting that Dell is actually Foss. Much of Bazzana's insight into Gould's eccentricities,

though, is gleaned from accounts of “the friends and colleagues who knew Gould best,” and Bazzana notes that those friends found him a “more balanced personality” than the legends would suggest (317). Bazzana also claims that such supposed Gould eccentricities as his hermetic lifestyle actually resulted from his Canadian culture. Like many Old Torontonians, Gould was “a confirmed homebody whose idea of a good time was to stay in alone, or meet with at best one or two friends” (318).

Bazzana also makes use of his belated position in Gould’s biographical tradition to distinguish between real stories of Gould’s eccentricities and moments when Gould was “feeding his own legend” (320). In particular, Bazzana disputes biographers’ representations of Gould as a madman, focusing primarily on Peter Ostwald’s argument that Gould was a genius tormented by psychosis. While acknowledging that Gould “was hypochondriacal, and had obsessional, schizoid, narcissistic, and perhaps melancholic traits,” Bazzana questions whether “a diagnosis of personality disorder or mental illness, of real psychological damage” is warranted (378). In a series of “yes, but” paragraphs, Bazzana admits the value of Ostwald’s observations, but questions whether these psychological traits were extreme enough to warrant the focused attention devoted to them. He notes that the biographical information changes significantly depending on the source, and that “much writing on Gould has leaned heavily on recollections from people who were not among his closest friends.” For example, “Some such sources remember only a narcissist . . . who seemed to take no real interest in the person on the other end of the line except as a sounding board” (381), Bazzana argues that Gould had “other closer relationships, with people in whom he took a genuine interest, that endured for many years with give and take on both sides—ordinary friendships, in other words, which did

not necessarily come to an abrupt end whenever some conflict or tension arose” (381). In these various ways, Bazzana consistently breaks down components of Gould’s eccentricity legend, leaving us with a portrait of a more balanced, normal Canadian artist. The chapter “Portrait of an Artist” begins with a photo of Gould in what became his symbolic uniform—cap, scarf, overcoat and boots—walking through the snow in Caledon, Ontario in January 1970.¹² This image accurately foreshadows Bazzana’s approach by capturing Gould in an outfit that came to symbolize his eccentricity, but which also located him in a Canadian context where warm clothes make perfect sense. And since a caption identifies the photo as Gould’s “favourite picture of himself,” perhaps the normalizing portrait presented in Bazzana’s chapter, and his biography, would also have been approved of by their subject.

“Chinese Boxes”: Otto Friedrich’s *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*

Payzant and Bazzana both present unifying portraits—one actually authorized by Gould, and the other a response to myths that Gould himself often made space for and helped to construct through his auto/biographical play. The numerous biographies between these two texts, however, are fascinating examples of how form mirrors the notion that Gould’s self is ultimately unknowable, and his genius beyond explanation even by the subject himself. Because Gould effectively had promoted a sense, though admittedly somewhat contradictory, of his own genius, through his writings and his playful management of Payzant’s text, the first biographer after Gould’s death faced a challenging task. This was Otto Friedrich, whose biography was authorized by the Glenn Gould estate, and who therefore also faced Gould’s posthumous biographical intervention. The result, however, was a strikingly different portrait from Payzant’s,

largely due to an alternate construction of Gould as artistic genius. Payzant represented Gould as a driven, rule-breaking musician whose entire life and work explored and advanced his unique philosophical ideas, Friedrich portrayed Gould as a child-prodigy whose stunning pianistic gifts remained a mystery even to himself. To further his portrayal of Gould as a genius with inexplicable, divine gifts, Friedrich plays down the radio documentaries, his most ground-breaking compositions, and foregrounds the eccentricities, including Gould's manipulation of biographical material. In this way, the sense of mystery Friedrich establishes around Gould's genius gets extended to all aspects of his life. Unlike Payzant, Friedrich isn't sure that a unified Gouldian self exists, and the mystery and fragmentation of the life is mirrored by the form of the biography itself.

To establish the need for a second full-length biographical study that would consider both the work *and* the life, Friedrich wards off Gould's biographical interventions, and justifies himself in the face of Payzant's book. As Kevin Bazzana notes in his review of *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*,

Glenn Gould saw Otto Friedrich coming, and amused himself no end trying to shape in advance his own biography. Not content with a brilliant and iconoclastic career as a recording and broadcasting pianist, writer, and thinker, the late Canadian musician sought to control public perception of his private life, using his considerable skills in media manipulation selectively to publicize or suppress personal data. Not surprisingly, he raised numerous barriers to unbiased biography long before Friedrich arrived on the scene. (Rev., 386)

Bazzana of course will later portray Gould's manipulation of his public image as another aspect of his genius. Friedrich sees Gould's interventions in his "life" as aspects of his

eccentricity, and his desire for privacy clashing with his interest in media and recording. Forced to contend with both Gould's own ideas about genius and biography and with Payzant's earlier text, Friedrich begins his book with three epigraphs. The first cites Gould on biography: "The really important things in any biography are what someone thinks and feels and not what he has done. . . ." The second is the well-known passage from Payzant about the impossibility of a "'conventional' biography" of Gould. The third comes from Gould's review of Payzant, which refers to that "quick-and-dirty sketch of Gould's early years—which is indeed rather boring and by no means as brief as it should be." By sandwiching Payzant's comment between two of Gould's, Friedrich points to the great influence Gould wielded over his earlier biographer, and therefore challenges the objectivity and authority of Payzant's portrait.

While Payzant's biography is revealing about a biographer's relation to his living subject, and Bazzana shows how an author maintains a scholarly distance from the subject, Friedrich sheds light on a biography "authorized" by an estate. In his Preface, where Friedrich justifies his position as the official biographer and explains his relationship to the Gould Estate, he invokes the various overlapping communities with an interest in the life of this particular artist: most notably the music community, the Canadian cultural community, Gould fans, and the Estate. An American journalist and a senior writer for *Time*, Friedrich had no clear link to Gould. Instead, he responded to a call from his daughter, a literary agent. Stephen Posen, the executor of Gould's estate, was concerned that "criticisms might arise about his surrendering one of Canada's great cultural heroes to an outsider." He also anticipated "criticisms about putting a great artist into the hands of a mere journalist." Posen therefore gave Friedrich the contract under

certain conditions, one of which was that he would consider the importance of Canada in Gould's life (xi). Establishing his independence and authority, Friedrich reports the contract declared that the content of the biography would be of his choosing, but that the manuscript would be sent to Posen for his "inspection," and Posen would have "the right to point out anything he considered inaccurate or defamatory." It also required that Friedrich "act reasonably in considering any such notice." (xii). This contract bears similarities to what Payzant describes in his foreword to *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*. But this time Gould is represented by the Estate, and though his own engagements with his biographers were playfully troubling, the Glenn Gould Estate is notoriously protective of its interests. (Its court challenge to Jock Carroll's book of photographs, *Glenn Gould: Some Portraits of the Artist as a Young Man*, claiming that Gould held the copyright over the conversations that took place between Gould and Carroll, and which later formed the basis for the book's text, is a case in point.)

Though an outsider to most of Gould's communities, Friedrich does declare himself a Gould fan, who "like most people discovering that incredible performance," was "overwhelmed" by the first recording of the *Goldberg Variations*. Though he does not divulge the extent of his musical background, Friedrich also identifies himself as an amateur musician. After hearing the *Goldbergs*, he "bought a copy of the music and practiced it for months, knowing perfectly well I would never be able to play it, or anything else, the way Gould did" (ix).¹³ As Matt Hills writes in *Fan Cultures*, fandom "is always performative . . . it is an identity which is (dis-)claimed, and which performs cultural work. Claiming the status of a 'fan' may, in certain contexts, provide a cultural space for types of knowledge and attachment" (x). In Friedrich's case, declaring himself a

Gould fan and amateur musician, rather than an academic or musical scholar, not only distances his text from Payzant's earlier portrait, but positions him as an enthusiastic observer and investigator of Gould, like many of his potential readers. The scholar Payzant had unequivocally stated that Gould's private life was his own business and had no bearing on his work. The fan and journalist Friedrich had no desire to separate the life and work—and neither would his reader.

In fact, Friedrich's construction of Gould's genius demanded that he provide information about the childhood and adult private life. Early in his text, Friedrich declares that Gould's desire for privacy was inconsistent with how he publicly performed his identity throughout his life, and with his interest in electronic media. "The Legacy," Friedrich's first chapter, begins with Gould under scrutiny—"The television cameras came to watch the memorial service for Glenn Gould, to observe everything and to record everything they observed" (3)—and Friedrich constantly emphasizes the public gaze on Gould's life. Furthermore, Friedrich defends his method by noting that Gould himself valued technology's ability to record events:

But the television cameras deserved their place as observers at the Gould service, for though the celebrated pianist had lived an unusually private and solitary life, though he had abandoned his extraordinary career as a concert performer, he had never abandoned what he once called 'my affair with the microphone.' To him, the microphone and camera brought a kind of artistic freedom that could be achieved in no other way. (3)

Cameras, however, only record; they don't narrate or synthesize. It is time now, Friedrich concludes, to "start examining the legacy" (7).

“The Legacy” establishes Gould’s life as multiple, complex, and difficult to synthesize. Because Friedrich had been granted access to the Gould archive at the National Library of Canada, he had a wealth of previously unavailable information and documents. His descriptions of the archive lay bare the raw material of the biographer:

He saved all things. He saved a check stub for ten dollars, the first money he ever earned by playing the piano, when he won a Kiwanis prize back in the 1940s. He saved four battered leather wallets that the archivists have now labeled A through D, and a small earthenware mug that offers the familiar plea: ‘Please don’t shoot the piano player. He’s doing the best he can.’ And then there is a box containing several of those famous scarves and mufflers that he wore around his neck on the hottest days of summer. And a tancovered book filled with blank pages and bearing the ‘humorous’ title, *Essence of an Enigma*. (12)

Friedrich also notes that “Somebody tried to use paint to bring light to this vault, but there is no real light except what comes from three or four unshaded bulbs hanging in the darkness and silence” (12). As the authorized Gould biographer, Friedrich must come up with the essence of an enigma, but shedding light on his subject is nearly impossible, because of the complexity and sheer volume of the materials.

As he foregrounds the impossibility of coming to one true unified understanding of Gould, Friedrich also suggests that Gould was beyond even his own understanding. Although he draws on the manufactured genius theory recently popularized by Gladwell—for example, when Friedrich describes Gould’s mother’s work in his chapter entitled “The Prodigy,”—he regularly suggests that what the Goulds created was beyond their comprehension. Suggesting that Gould’s genius arose out of his parents’ support and

training and Gould's own unique gifts, he repeats the familiar stories of the childhood prodigy—the distant relationship to Edvard Grieg, the child who hummed instead of crying from birth, the baby who waved his arms as if conducting, the child who was never allowed to play a wrong note—only to deconstruct them: “This is the stuff of legends, of course, a Christ child raising a hand to bless his worshipers, a boyish Napoleon brandishing a sword” (15). Obviously more like cultural myths, these “legacy” stories are present only because no better explanation for Gould's talents exists.

And yet, while Friedrich admits the mythical nature of the stories that foreshadow Gould's musical skills, by emphasizing the unusual nature of these abilities, he contributes to creating this mythology. “There was something uncanny, unnatural, about Glenn Gould's gift,” Friedrich writes: “Most child prodigies work like galley slaves, many of them driven by authoritarian teachers, but Gould largely created himself” (16). Friedrich mentions Gould's mother's early sense that her son would be a concert pianist, but he downplays her own musicality. Bert Gould's musical background gets more attention, but since Bert only claimed to be an amateur musician, Gould's aptitude for music seems even more unusual. The motifs that dominate Friedrich's chapter on Gould's early musical gifts are his spiritual quality and his separateness. References in early reviews to Gould's appearance lead Friedrich to describe him as someone who “could play like an angel” and “looked rather like an angel too” (13). Implicitly denying that musical capability results from endless hours of practice, Friedrich provides little context for Gould's gifts, emphasizing instead their strangeness and the resulting strangeness of Gould himself. Gould's gift was virtually unimaginable: “He seems to have heard and perceived and taken in sound in a way that was quite different from the way things are

done by ordinary people” (18). Quoting Elizabeth Fox, a CBC producer who became Gould’s friend and visited him at his parents’ house, Friedrich also emphasizes how the parents were astonished by the musical abilities of their son: “Well, when you were at the Goulds’ house, you’d think, these people have produced something that is not of them . . . they were constantly in awe” (24). Only after comparing this account with other biographies, and especially Bazzana’s 2003 text, can we clearly see just how constructed Friedrich’s account is.

His claim that Gould’s talents were unprecedented and strange even to Gould himself also further legitimizes Friedrich’s own role as the authorized biographer. “Despite a certain amount of theorizing and rationalizing, Gould seems to have been unable to understand the mysterious workings of his mysterious gift”; Friedrich will now take up the task (20). The sensational nature of Friedrich’s revelations about the strangeness of Gould’s gifts is clear when he discusses Florence Gould’s decision to enroll her son at the Conservatory. Those familiar with the classical music tradition in Canada know that enrollment there is by no means extraordinary. Friedrich writes that “Mrs. Gould took her son to the Toronto Conservatory to be examined like some musical wonder” (30). Throughout his chapter on Gould’s youthful musical ability, Friedrich frequently compares Gould to the young Mozart, and regularly calls him a “prodigy,” though the Goulds themselves were cautious of this term. By presenting him as a “musical wonder,” Friedrich also erodes Gould’s authority, control and understanding of himself—a strategy which heightens Friedrich’s own authority while he also deflates Payzant’s, whose book was sanctioned by Gould himself. In fact, Friedrich approaches Gould’s own statements with skepticism, thus dividing Gould’s self into the one who

acted, and the one who later explained or justified the action. *A Life and Variations* frequently highlights such contradictions in Gould's character—"Like any boy who announces a hatred of competition, Gould also hated losing"—and identifies moments when Gould runs counter to his own understanding—"He easily persuaded himself, as he often told interviewers, that he liked animals better than people" (25) and "Gould's health was to remain something of an enigma throughout most of his life, to himself as well as to his doctors, his friends, and his public" (28). By distrusting Gould, his friends, and those publications printed during Gould's lifetime, Friedrich composes his portrait of an enigma, about whom it is impossible to come up with a definitive conclusion. There can in fact be no definitive portrait of Gould because Gould didn't know himself, and his various representations of himself, and his manipulation of the media and earlier biographers, have only served to obscure the portrait.

As he struggles with Gould as a mystery, Friedrich's inventive narrative form foregrounds this biographical process. Foregoing a chronological organization, Friedrich writes chapter-length essays on various Gould identities—"The Prodigy," "The Virtuoso on Tour," "The Composer," "The TV Star"—on his creations—"The *Goldberg Variations*," "The Romantic Records," "The Movies," "The Idea of North,"—and periods and aspects of his life—"The New Life," "The Private Life," "The End" (xv). As the book nears its end, when Friedrich might be expected to provide some unifying account of Gould's identity, the non-chronology becomes only more noticeable. The later chapters circle back and overlap information drawn from the earlier ones. Accounts of interviews describe the time, place, and atmosphere, then present the conversation in question-and-answer format. Inconsistencies in the biographical information get highlighted. Finally, in

an interview with Margaret Pacsu, she addresses the issue of Gould's control over his own biographical self, suggesting that Gould had "set this all up" (297). I quoted part of this interview in my introduction. Here is what follows:

Q: Are you talking about us?

A: I'm talking about you, the chosen biographer, who now has to sift through all of this material. Did this man—look at that face on the jubilee album. Didn't he just set this all up so you'd be sitting here asking—

Q: It *is* a rather malicious-looking face.

A: Well, but it's naughty too. Could you imagine that you'd be asking questions about Barbra Streisand? Or that he had carefully set this up so that historians and biographers in future years would be asking *these* very questions? (297)

The passage is significant in various ways. The interviewee suggests that the biographer has been manipulated by the subject. The biographer seems to agree, but is corrected by the interview subject. In this way, Friedrich dramatizes for the reader some of the challenges typical to musical biography—the possibility of misinterpreting a source—and to Gould—the subject's preemptive manipulating of the biographical record and process. For Friedrich, part of Gould's genius was his ability to guard his life from submitting to definitive biographical representation. And despite Friedrich's reluctance to create a unified sense of Gould, his thoughtful and formally groundbreaking biography did serve as the authoritative Gould life for some time, and set the tone for such future texts as the first Gould full-length biographical film, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*.

The Genius-Enigma on Film: *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*

Though there is no acknowledgment, Francois Girard's and Don McKellar's

Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould is quite similar to Friedrich's text, and often seems based on his material. *Thirty Two Short Films* occupies an important position in the biographical representation of Gould. Released eleven years after his death, it is one of only two feature films at present devoted to Gould's life, and the recent *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould* is a much more traditional documentary. Combining documentary and dramatic representations of Gould, *Thirty Two Short Films* draws on and responds to the multiple versions of Gould presented while he was alive, and to the eruption of biographical material that came after his death. Like *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, *Thirty Two Short Films* both highlights and questions the biographical process by constructing a representation of genius which argues for the unprecedented and mysterious nature of Gould's gifts, and ultimately like Friedrich's text, declaring that Gould is in important ways unknowable.

Modeled after the *Goldberg Variations*, *Thirty Two Short Films* presents Gould's life in thirty-two brief biographical scenes—some documentary, some drama. The film shows his young musical ability as comprised of a very early intense concentration on music, a high level of intelligence, a talent for hearing music in supposedly non-musical sound, and an intense emotional response to music. Though Gould's parents, and especially his mother, get credited with nurturing his musical creativity, Gould's advanced musical sensitivity and understanding is set in contrast to his parents' more everyday experiences. In one scene, Gould sits on his mother's lap at the piano, playing single notes and listening to them "with almost religious concentration" (Girard, 17). As the scene progresses, Gould, in voice-over, supplies anecdotes he had been told by his mother—that he had decided when he was five years old to be a concert pianist, although

“*she had decided sometime earlier;*” and that his mother played the piano to him in the womb. This emphasis on Gould’s mother in guiding his interests and early training might seem to support the manufactured genius theory, but the next scene quickly challenges this. A slightly older Gould, his back to the camera, sits in a Muskoka chair on a dock reciting times tables. He begins with the 9 times tables, but soon he is multiplying consecutively higher numbers by 87. Clearly, Gould’s mysterious gifts arise from more than just his mother’s encouragement. This performance of the times tables with “*astonishing confidence*”—the screenplay describes Gould as “*hypnotised by his own recitation*”—when combined with the camera’s apparent inability to gain access to Gould’s face, creates a sense of inexplicable musical genius, by combining an unusually high level of intellect, as borne out by the complexity of the times tables and his ease in reciting them, and a remarkable ability to hear music in everything, as demonstrated through the rhythm and musicality of the young Gould’s recitation (Girard, 19). Further complexity is supplied by Gould’s voice-over:

People always seem to make a great deal out of these early signs but they hardly constitute miracles, in my opinion. I simply have a facility with a certain kind of minutia. I always have. (Girard, 19)

The interplay between the voice-over and the scene suggests just how Gould attempted to control his own genius persona. These two early scenes showing us a young child’s unusually serious interest in music, and his remarkable intelligence and ability to hear music in everything foreshadow the “*nascent but indisputable*” genius of the mature Gould. But the older Gould, through the voice of Colme Fiore, unconvincingly tries to distance the childhood gifts from the adult artist (19).

The childhood vignettes end with a slightly older Gould listening to Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, which has been playing as incidental music throughout the scene. Gould's mother is "pressed against the wall beside the door frame" (20), standing still as if mesmerized by what is going on in the next room. Bert Gould enters the shot with firewood and appears to be about to drop it on the floor, but she cautions him to be quiet. He leans around Flora to see what is going on in the next room, and the camera shifts to Gould, who is listening to the music. The voice-over narrativizes the event:

I often think how fortunate I was to have been brought up in an environment where music was always present. Who knows what would have become of me otherwise. It's a question I often ask myself. But, I've yet to come up with an answer. (20)

The scene closes with Gould moved to tears by the climax of the piece. These childhood vignettes set in play some contradictory ideas of genius. Though framed by scenes which emphasize the role of Gould's parents and of his surroundings in developing his musical gift, the scene in the middle, when Gould recites ever higher times-tables as if in a trance, portrays the mysterious nature of his talent. These vignettes also stress isolation and community. The scene opens with a shot of an empty Lake Simcoe, the location of the Goulds' cottage, in the fall. Because winter is coming on, the lake is largely deserted, and the Goulds form a close-knit family unit in their isolation. But Gould himself alternates between being a product of his parents' teaching and encouragement, and something beyond at least his father's understanding. Gould's mother is with Gould at the piano and in the cottage listening to Wagner, but the film frequently portrays Bert away from his wife and child. Thus Gould is a product of his environment in the sense that he is brought

up in a nurturing, musical home, as the center of his parents' attention. But he is also isolated from them by his extreme musical and intellectual talent. He is alone when on the dock reciting times-tables, or when in a separate room listening to the Wagner. And in both cases, Gould is the object of the gaze of his parents and the camera, which intrude on a private moment, even though Gould remains oblivious to the gaze. As for the voice over, it is countered by what the camera shows us, making what the voice says ironic. Like Friedrich's book, the film suggests that although the mature Gould narrativizes it constantly, he does not understand his own history, or his own genius.

This Platonic representation of Gould as a genius prevails throughout the film. The "inspiration" as opposed to "perspiration" view of genius clearly governs the scene called "Practice." In a rehearsal space, Gould begins by briefly and nonchalantly flipping through a score of Beethoven's *Tempest*, but gesticulates with more and more emotion as the music surges on the soundtrack. For Gould, the music is apparently internal—a part of his being—and his ability to play beautifully comes naturally, without the need for practice. This almost otherworldly involvement with the music is highlighted again in "Passion According to Gould." Based on the recording session and photographs from the *Goldberg Variations*, Gould appears in a studio, clothing in disarray, listening to a playback of Bach's *Gigue* from the *English Suite #2*. It's obviously the end of a long recording session, and Gould at first appears exhausted. But when the music starts he "lets loose a series of involuntary gestures" which become progressively more animated throughout the scene (70). Juxtaposed with Gould's trance-like movements are the mundane activities of the engineers in the sound booth—drinking coffee with cream, attempting to read the newspaper, and reviving each other with back rubs. The vignette

portrays Gould as existing in another world from ordinary people, and suggests that the way the music affects him is entirely involuntary. Though clearly exhausted, Gould is unconsciously revived by the music and thrown into a state of ecstasy, while the equally tired engineers resort unsuccessfully to coffee as a pick-me-up.

This understanding of Gould's genius in *Thirty Two Short Films* influences the portrayal of his eccentricities as well as his profound gifts. Gould's body, its role in the production of music, and its status as a constant source of trauma, are portrayed in various ways. In her landmark text on the subject, Elaine Scarry argues that physical pain is impossible to articulate by those experiencing it and impossible to conceptualize fully by those not living in that "invisible geography" of another's body (3). Proof of the "absolute split between one's sense of one's own reality and the reality of other persons," pain would therefore appear to be the ultimate obstacle to biographical representation (4). Though most of the biographical texts necessarily wrestle with representing the physical pain that Gould struggled with throughout his life, Scarry says that the problem is language itself: "physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not *of* or *for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (5). To represent Gould's physical pain and hypochondria, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* therefore resorts to metaphor and analogy. In "Pills," the pain gets represented through images and descriptions of the various pills Gould took throughout his life. In "Diary of One Day," x-rays of a body playing the piano get juxtaposed with segments from Gould's medical diaries. "Pills" represents Gould through voice-over as knowing the purpose for each of the various medications. But the close-up, full-screen images of

pills suggests the overwhelming quantity of substances he took on a daily basis. “Diary of One Day” is an extremely powerful representation of Gould’s loss of control over his health. The x-rays show the internal workings of “Gould’s” body as he plays, while the medical diary where Gould records his self-medicating and blood pressure readings (sometimes up to six times in one hour) represents a desperate striving for bodily knowledge and control of self. Later texts would borrow from *Thirty Two Short Films’* visual use of Gould’s medical diary to represent his constant stress, and ultimate loss of control, over his body’s function.

In keeping with its creative use of form to represent the near-unrepresentable body of the musician, *Thirty Two Short Films’* treatment of Gould’s mysterious genius is reinforced by the form of the film, which questions biographical narrative itself, by suggesting we can never definitively know its subject. Gould’s elusiveness is established in the second vignette, “Forty-Five Seconds and a Chair,” in which Colme Feore as Glenn Gould sits facing the camera with his eyes open as *The Two Part Invention #13* from Bach’s *Two and Three Part Inventions* plays. The screenplay explains that the camera is to continue moving closer until “we have come close enough to challenge the strength of Gould’s gaze. Gould’s gaze continues for a few more seconds. The music stops. He closes his eyes” (23).¹⁴ The scene forcefully asserts that the way to know Gould is through his music. As long as it plays, Gould’s eyes are open, if still somewhat impenetrable. Further, Gould’s challenge of the camera’s gaze echoes the way he observed, head on, his own biographical process—through his influence on Payzant’s biography, but also through his attempts to control media representations through fully-scripted interviews and self-conscious manipulation of photo-ops and filming. Gould

chooses his own terms when he closes his eyes as the music ends, not allowing the camera to penetrate further. But even as the music plays, he remains impassive. As the scene suggests, though the best way to know Gould may be through his music, he may remain unknowable.

The Limits of Platonic Genius: Representations of Gould in Bruno Monsaingeon's *Glenn Gould: Hereafter* and Rhona Bergman's *The Idea of Gould*

Friedrich and Girard and McKellar suggest that the only way Gould could control his genius was when he manipulated the biographical process. Drawing on Platonic myths of genius, they question the limits of biographical representation for Gould, and for his chroniclers. But other texts on Gould test biographical boundaries in both content—through extreme representations of Gould as an instrument of the divine—and through even more unusual biographical forms. Such texts often approach the limits of musical auto/biography, partly because Gould's own manipulation of his biographical representations, and his fans' strong reactions to him, have necessitated new biographical forms. When Gould's genius is the issue, the result can be extreme Platonic representations of divine inspiration. Here Gould appears as a conduit for a divine message, though as we will see, just who is using Gould as a conduit varies from text to text. Gould's spiritual power is the subject of many biographical representations, and his own religious upbringing and performance of self as “the last Puritan”—a teetotaling homebody who abstained from sex, claiming his ecstasy was in his music, foremost among which were his interpretations of Bach, a deeply religious composer—fits nicely with this focus. In Rhona Bergman's and Bruno Monsaingeon's texts, Gould is both a spiritual musician and a figure who helps his audiences transcend their material

existence, and enter into a more spiritual realm.

One source for this type of representation appears in Otto Friedrich's biography, when Timothy Findley refers to Gould as one of "the god-people." In the following passage, Findley defines this term that can help us understand representations of the far-reaching limits of Gould's creative exceptionalism:

Q: What are the god-people?

A: Well, the god-people are truly, absolutely gifted, almost beyond all human dimension or comprehension. And they are. . . the Mozarts and the Shakespeares. There are probably, you know, ten of them in the whole history of the human race. But the substrata, just under them, and so far up they're beyond all of us, are the people like Beethoven, and I would put Gould almost in that category. It's a quality of mind. When he talked about music, he was incapable of talking about it as a man. He was incapable of talking about it in any terms but his own. And you had to rise to that or you were lost. And as with all of those god-people—not unlike God himself, if you have that kind of belief—if they say things, your striving to understand them delivers what they're saying to you. (300)

Friedrich finds this explanation useful, because it reinforces his own claim that genius is beyond human understanding, even including the understanding of the geniuses themselves. But it is also useful when looking at representations that focus upon a listener striving to understand the message of the genius in order to reach another level of consciousness. The two texts most illustrative of this purpose are Rhona Bergman's *The Idea of Gould*, a hybrid which includes interviews with Gould's friends and acquaintances along with stories from Bergman's own life, and especially after she

discovers Gould and undertakes the biographical process; and Bruno Monsaingeon's *Glenn Gould: Hereafter*, which concentrates on how Gould's music is received the world over, long after his death. Both Bergman and Monsaingeon consider Gould's genius in the context of its effects on what Philip V. Bohlman has called the "'unremarkable in music': the situation of music among the conventionalized cultural practices of a given society, against which (but also through which) the extraordinary that constitutes the canon and the singular lives of its creators assumes meaning" (Pekacz, 14). By combining with their own auto/biographical representations of Gould the profound, life-changing effect his music has had on the lives of his listeners, both texts assign Gould a transformative spiritual power, while at the same time expanding current notions of the auto/biographical in the study of music and musicians.

Bergman's *Idea of Gould* represents a musical biography limit-case because of its representation of Gould's genius, its method of documenting Gould's life, and its autobiographical representation of Bergman's spiritual journey through her relationship with Gould the subject and his music. Published in 1999 by Lev Publishing, *The Idea of Gould* tells the story of the Philadelphia nurse's spiritual awakening through Glenn Gould's music, and of her subsequent attempts to research and document his life. Bergman interviewed several of Gould's friends and acquaintances, many of whom had been widely quoted in articles and other biographies. But Bergman focuses her questions on Gould's musical gifts and their meaning for listeners. Though the book is multi-vocal, and interviewees address different aspects of Gould's genius, several key concepts arise: Gould's tremendous intellectual gifts, including his talent for concentrating on multiple tasks at one time; his ability to reveal the architectural structure of a piece of music; his

ground-breaking use of technology; and his capacity to work intensely for long periods of time without interruption. These are of course all common elements of the Gould genius myth, but Bergman pays special attention to an element that appears fleetingly in earlier texts like Friedrich's biography and *Thirty Two Short Films*: his transformative spiritual power over his listeners. Bergman essentially portrays Gould as a divinity, whose listeners become like disciples, evangelizing through Gould's music. While Bergman's Gould starts out as a passive conduit for divine artistic expressions, the representation of his genius shifts somewhat as Gould gains more control over the purpose for his music, ultimately turning him into an evangelical power. What remains consistent, though, is the representation of Gould as someone who, despite his fascinations with technology, stood outside of his time, striving to resist the material aspects of twentieth-century life. Avoiding materialism and embracing a higher purpose in life—in Gould's case his music—is the essence of Bergman's own spiritual message to her audience.

Bergman's text begins with a "Prelude" which cites a pamphlet found in the National Library of Canada's Music Division—presumably amongst Gould's papers, though this is unclear. Entitled "Evangelizing Through Your Profession," the pamphlet quotes Bert Gould saying that he and his wife had "always prayed that Glenn's music might be able to touch men's hearts in such a way that it would be a turning point in their lives," and that their prayers had been answered when a mother told them that her son only came to believe in "a hereafter and a life eternal" after hearing Gould play (1). This passage sets up the main theme of the book. Bergman acknowledges that hers is a very personal representation of Gould, since being profoundly affected by his music has moved her to tell the story of "how his life changed mine and the lives of others" (4).

Though the pamphlet she quotes links Gould and evangelism together, it is important to note that it is not Gould's hope to change lives through his music, but his parents'. As devout Presbyterians, they pray, and God answers their prayers by showing them Gould's music's effect on another young man. In this case, Gould is the middle man, a vessel for divine music which carries out work his parents would like to see done in the world. Bergman herself affirms this idea of Gould as passive vessel when she describes her own first encounter with his music, stating "The music had chosen him for its expression. When he played the sound surged through his body, making him its puppet" (5). Here Gould is the "possessed" genius that Kivy identifies with Mozart as portrayed by Schopenhauer. Many aspects of Bergman's text support this representation. For example, Schopenhauer sees the Platonic genius as a perpetual child: in Bergman's text, interview subjects focus on Gould's perpetual youthfulness. Paul Myers describes Gould's tendency to walk away from relationships that disappointed him as part of the "child-like" aspect of his character (51). Judith Pearlman describes his "child-like enthusiasm" (63). Lorne Tulk describes Gould's interest in playing games like twenty questions even as an adult, and notes that Gould was "like a little boy" (77). And Verne Edquist, Gould's piano tuner, recalls his "child-like naiveté" (87). Though this characteristic of Gould's regularly appears in biographical accounts, the almost word-for-word repetitions in Bergman's text make it all the more powerful.¹⁵

But as the text progresses, Bergman enlists Gould for her own evangelical ideas, drawing on details from his relationships with others and their memories of him to turn Gould into an evangelical agent whose musical and personal philosophy was ultimately aimed at improving the lives of others. Though her interviews seemed to be arranged

chronologically over the year she conducted her research, the organization is also clearly strategic. While early interview subjects like Robert Fulford discuss Gould's Canadian upbringing and involvement with the CBC, his childhood relationships, and his early music education, they offer only small hints at the divinely-inspired idea of music that will become Bergman's thesis. Later subjects, like Howard Dyck and Bruno Monsaingeon, more directly confirm Bergman's idea that Gould was attempting to reach people spiritually through his music, his writings and his radio documentaries. Bruno Monsaingeon most clearly declares Gould a prophet. When he heard Gould's 1964 recording of Bach's *Two and Three Part Inventions*, "a voice in my mind said, 'Come and follow me'" (145). Monsaingeon, a young musician and filmmaker, wrote to Gould, eventually heard back, and entered into a musical relationship in 1972 that he describes as transformative. Like many of Bergman's interview subjects, Monsaingeon describes meeting Gould as "uncanny," because Gould "had already formulated a philosophy which was exactly the one I had been trying to formulate" (146). Meeting Gould was also life-changing for Monsaingeon because "from that time on," he "started to do the kind of work I wanted in film and music" (146). Though the exact nature of Gould's message remains unclear, Bergman's later interview subjects stress Gould's "humor and warmth," his genuine concern for others, and his "wonderful sense of education" (148). They also refer with increasing openness to what they see as Gould's link with Christianity.

Near the end of the text, Bergman presents Howard Dyck, a Mennonite whom Gould interviewed for his radio documentary, *The Quiet in the Land*, as speaking autobiographically for Gould—at first within the documentary itself, but as the interview unfolds, his views implicitly represent Gould's there as well. What makes this section

even more complex, however, is that Dyck rarely expresses an idea about music and spirituality of his own accord. Instead, he listens to Bergman's theses regarding Gould and then agrees—an example of the rather subjective way that interviews supposedly arrive at biographical truth. Bergman suggests to Dyck that Gould is “evangelizing through music. Through his musical genius and philosophical application, he helps the listener transcend the here and now of their existence in order to realize a state of ‘ecstasy’. He writes that we can learn, through listening, to ‘awaken to the challenge that each man contemplatively create his own divinity’” (177). Dyck responds that she “may be right,” adding on that Gould may “have been the ultimate proselytizer” (177). And yet, in a fascinating meta-textual reflection on the biographical process, Dyck refuses to corroborate fully the biographer's thesis, noting only that “Gould was certainly not content to leave his listeners where they were. He wanted you always to hear the music in a new way” (177).

The ironic result of Bergman's transformation of Gould from unknowing conduit of a divine message to an active proselytizer is actually a return of Gould to the status of vessel, though now the conveyor of Bergman's own evangelical Judeo/Christian message of transcendence of the physical world. Her text ends as follows:

The image of Glenn Gould most manifest is that of musician, of visionary, of prophet. Uncomfortable in the physical world, he strove to transcend it. He was a man whose spirit is somehow yet alive, infused throughout his work. A being not to be worshipped but to be cherished. Not all recognize this. But for those who do, for those who will listen, though he cannot properly offer them Grace, Glenn Gould . . . yes, Glenn Gould can teach them to live. (221)

While probably unconvincing to most in its representation of Gould as a kind of Christian/humanist evangelist, her book clearly demonstrates his effect on not only one fan (Bergman) but many of Gould's friends, who report their lives were profoundly changed by their relationship with him and his music. Bergman's account of Gould's genius is therefore less notable for what it says about musical genius itself than for what it suggests about the relationship between musicians and their listeners, and about the complexity of the biographical process. And ultimately, Bergman's text affirms Findley's suggestion that attempting to understand "geniuses" grants people the sense of transcending their own potential.

Like many texts about Gould, Bergman's book departs significantly from what Jolanta Pekacz describes as traditional musical biography. Avoiding omniscient narration, with its implied notions of the biographer's authority and the text's truthfulness, Bergman is a consistent autobiographical presence in the text, exploratory in her suggestions about Gould, and both influenced by and manipulating her primary sources. Though printed by a minor publishing company, badly in need of a good editor, and not widely reviewed, her book is a valuable source for "first-hand" accounts of Gould by his friends and colleagues, and stands as an example of the challenge to "historiographical premises and narrative techniques" that Pekacz believes is called for in musical biography (*Musical Biography*, 6). Both multi-vocal and partial, Bergman presents snapshots of Gould as seen by his friends and colleagues. In fact, many interview subjects destabilize the biographical portrait by commenting on how memory is often unreliable. Howard Dyck, for instance, questions his own memory, and confesses his fear that "you're getting my interpretation and not Glenn's" (172–73). Several of Bergman's interview subjects also

state that their own understanding of Gould remains partial, because Gould not only protected his private life, but also obstructed biographical portraits by creating and maintaining a public persona for himself. Dyck reports that throughout their entire five year telephonic relationship, the musician “never talked about himself directly. There was no autobiographical information being given out at all” (173). Robert Silverman concludes that “Glenn definitely decided . . . that he was going to become a persona. In order to get noticed. That was his way of competing. Very indirectly” (116). In the end, Bergman draws a series of autobiographical portraits of her interview subjects’ experiences with Glenn Gould into her own personal, spiritual, and intellectual autobiographical portrait. The text remains fragmented and unstable, because Bergman offers theories on Gould which her interview subjects sometimes corroborate, sometimes dispute.

Even though the text seems to expose the biographical process by unveiling its raw materials, occasionally Bergman’s comments point to subtle and concealed layers of mediation. The interviews are transcribed as conversations, including some of Bergman’s questions for her subjects, yet it is clear that some questions have been edited out. At the beginning of her interview with Dyck, for instance, Bergman says that because she “wanted to know what Gould personally believed about the relationship of Art to the Divine,” she had “posed this question to nearly all of my interviewees” (166). But the question appears nowhere else in the book, so Bergman’s disclosure of her process this late in the text casts doubt on how her thesis has developed—seemingly from her subjects’ spontaneous comments since the beginning of the text. The result exposes the constructedness of biographical representation, and how even the raw materials are

contingent upon the biographer's beliefs. This layering of biographical mediation is even more obvious because of Bergman's autobiographical presence in the text. Through its many accounts by people in Gould's life whose achievements have been far less monumental than his, and through their collection by a biographer with no status in the classical music world, *The Idea of Gould* suggests that the life of the genius is a series of interactions with the unremarkable, who then supply accounts of those interactions. My understanding of the "unremarkable" in music comes from Philip Bohlman, who defines the ambiguous term as "'popular' or 'shared by all who constitute society and social contexts'" or "'quotidian' or 'everyday,' a devalued aesthetic experience,'" and from David Gramit, who uses the term in his article, "Unremarkable Musical Lives: Autobiographical Narratives, Music and the Shaping of the Self" (205). In this sense, Bergman's text is a collection of stories about unremarkable lives that have been affected by Glenn Gould.

Though many of Bergman's subjects distinguished themselves in their own lives and careers, their achievements pale when compared to Gould's. But Bergman's subjects also seem unremarkable because at least at the time of the text's publication, they were living, breathing, speaking individuals, who have not been absorbed into the world of textual rather than material existence, myth rather than lived reality. Bergman interviews Gould's friends and colleagues, including other lesser known musicians, journalists, technicians, and engineers, and even ordinary audience members about their experiences with Gould. And while her text focuses on the spirituality inherent in Gould's music and life, she constantly provides reminders of the physicality of her subjects. Her interviews are grounded in geographical space and images of the body, particularly of eating. She

meets Robert Fulford at his home in Toronto, and their interview is cut short by his “dinner engagement” (12). She shares a “lavish chicken dinner” with one subject. She eats at Astoria on Toronto’s Danforth Avenue with Lorne Tulk and his wife, Mel, and then walks with them to the nearby Chester subway station. She fully develops her thesis on Gould as she shares a steak dinner with her husband, Ira, in Paris after meeting with Bruno Monsaingeon at his apartment. She avoids referring to Gould’s personal life or eccentricities, focusing instead on more aesthetic and philosophical issues, but inserts her own personal life as a wife and mother routinely into the text. The interviews themselves are punctuated by short vignettes entitled “Spring,” “Summer,” “Autumn,” “Winter,” and “Spring Again.” Each presents a philosophical idea about Gould through an anecdote from Bergman’s life. “Spring” describes her first Gould listening experience. “Summer” describes a dream in which a man, kneeling before an altar, calls her to join him. “Autumn” describes Bergman’s first ecstatic listening experience, when her harpsichord teacher played for her shortly after the birth of her daughter. Bergman’s biographical process is also assisted and disrupted by her family. Her daughter Rennie accompanies her to New York to meet Tim Page. Her daughter Shira chooses the moment right before Bergman’s interview with Bruno Monsaingeon to shave her head. Her husband Ira travels with her to Paris for the weekend to meet with Monsaingeon again, and passes the time during the interview “in another part of the apartment, watching videos and dozing” (185). These material facts of Bergman’s existence remind the reader that the genius’s interactions with his fans are with ordinary people outside of the artistic world the genius inhabits, and further, that the biographer’s own experience influences and is influenced by the telling of the subject’s life. Thanks to its combination of auto- and biographical

representation, Bergman's text thus becomes an enactment of Liz Stanley's assertion that "biographers are at least as active as autobiographers in the re/de/construction of self in the writing of a life" (126). *The Idea of Gould* shows how music can become profoundly wrapped up in an autobiographical subject's own performance of identity, and perhaps because of the spiritual elements in his work and life, this has occurred with Gould to a great extent.

Bruno Monsaingeon, a later interviewee who was instrumental in corroborating and developing Bergman's *Idea of Gould*, himself explored the notion of Gould's genius and its effect on his listeners in the 2005 film, *Glenn Gould: Hereafter*. Here, Gould's music not only spiritually awakens his listeners, but creates a kind of convergence of spirit in which the listener *becomes* Gould. A polyphonic, auto/biographical film in which documentary and drama converge, *Hereafter* is another musical biography limit-case, perhaps even more marginal than Bergman's to traditional musical biography. Though it does not expose the biographical process in the way Bergman does, the film argues for an inextricable convergence between life, work, and the audience's reception of both, which dramatically opposes the idea of music as an autonomous art form. For Monsaingeon, not only does the genius profoundly affect his audience's lives, but his listeners' reactions to his creations are what allow them to survive his death, and take on a posthumous life of their own.

Monsaingeon is a French violinist and filmmaker who met Gould in the early 1970s. He has created several films about the pianist, including his famous documentary of the 1981 *Goldberg Variations*. *Hereafter*, a joint Idéale Audience and Rhombus production, affirms Gould's genius through his profound effect on audience members

who, like Rhona Bergman, came to know Gould after his death through his recordings. By explicitly linking Gould's philosophy of recording to the transformative power he exerts over listeners' lives, the film suggests that Gould's real genius went beyond playing the piano beautifully, and became only fully realized in his theories about listening and recording. In his films made when Gould was alive, Monsaingeon worked with him to share his ideas about recorded music. These included his belief that the recorded interpretation was a kind of composition, that the concert hall was a thing of the past, and that in the ideal relationship between audience and performer the two met only through technology, since the audience members assume power through their ability to engage with the music using their own listening equipment. It is clear then from his earlier work with Gould that Monsaingeon's conception of his genius goes far beyond the virtuosic piano skills, much like Payzant's. Where Monsaingeon's text goes further, however, is in its representation of Gould as a priest, prophet, or god with the power to transform the lives of those who encounter his music and life, just as the audience member through access to recordings can transform Gould's posthumous existence.

Like Bergman's text, *Hereafter* claims that Gould's genius took on "magical, mystical proportions," but instead of trying to decide whether Gould was a vessel for a religious message or a god himself, the film portrays the effect Gould continues to have on his still-expanding audience. This influence appears as the understandable consequence of Gould's musical philosophies. Confirming Gould's interest in "unremarkable" people, very early footage from the film shows him against the backdrop of a fall day on Lake Superior, expressing his disinterest in spending time with artists. Artists, he says, are too interested in "stratification," and "use their own imagery to such

an extent that they exclude a great deal of the world.” As a result, he finds diplomats, foreign service people, “journalists sometimes,” whom he perceives to have a broader view of the world, much more interesting to have around. This statement immediately precedes the opening credits, which also against a backdrop of autumn leaves, list the cast of unremarkable people whose relationships with Gould the film will document. Fall and winter footage of rural Canada pervades the film, and when juxtaposed with footage of Gould performing, seems to represent his interest in the ordinary as opposed to the art world, and also the later years of his life, which are not only the years in which Monsaingeon knew Gould, but those immediately preceding his life in the “hereafter.”

The unusual form of Monsaingeon’s film itself invokes Gould’s own formal experimentation and the unusual ways that his audiences have responded to him. The film shows Gould’s effects on his audience through six representative members culled from the many letters Monsaingeon continues to receive describing the influence Gould has had on his listeners’ lives. The first is the “Italian Pilgrim,” a woman Gould apparently came to in a dream, and who subsequently has visited Gould landmarks in Toronto, and carries on a conversation with the Gould statue outside the CBC’s Glenn Gould Studio.¹⁶ Another is Monsaingeon himself, “The Go Between,” who has been profoundly affected by Gould, but who also knew him personally and worked with him. He therefore acts as a bridge between an audience who never knew Gould’s music while he was alive and the musician himself. The next, “The Woman with a Secret,” is a young musician who is so affected by Gould when visiting Toronto that she has the motif from his String Quartet tattooed on her back along with Gould’s signature in initials.¹⁷ The final three audience members are “The Moscow Propagandist,” a Russian woman who attempts to

“gouldianise” her friends and acquaintances; “The Messenger,” a Japanese scholar who delivers responses to fan letters written by Gould but left unsent to his astonished fans; and “The Active Listener” a Dutch man who uses electronic media to construct elaborate conversations and interviews between himself and Gould.

While these listeners may seem to represent the musical absurd, their adulation is a more subdued version of 1950s teenage girls’ love for Elvis, or the Trekkies for all the trappings of *Star Trek*. These stories also create a meaningful collage of the effects recorded music can have on its listeners, and Monsaingeon portrays his subjects as embodiments of Gould’s philosophies about recording and the ideal audience. Invoking the notion of genius as spiritual power, at least two of Monsaingeon’s subjects explicitly claim that Gould’s music changed their lives. Monsaingeon himself, “The Go-Between,” has covered some of this same territory in Bergman’s book, but here he explicitly states that Gould’s music helped him to believe in a hereafter. In footage of a radio interview which Monsaingeon gave about Gould, the interviewer reads the letter to Bert Gould mentioned in Bergman’s text, in which a woman describes her son’s sudden belief in a hereafter upon listening to Gould’s music. Monsaingeon replies that he didn’t know about the letter, but it accurately describes what happened to him and to “many of us.” Along with constructing a biographical portrait of Gould’s life, the film therefore tells the story of that “many,” as represented through Monsaingeon’s characters. The “Russian propagandist” (Natasha Gugina), who appears to be in her 60s, explains that after suffering two strokes and other unnamed misfortunes which left her incapacitated, she one day heard Gould’s music on the radio and “came back to life.” The soundtrack underscores the link between Gould’s music and her recovery. As Gugina states that she

came back to life, Bach's *Partita No. 5* begins softly, then gradually increases in volume. Gould's genius in *Hereafter* also takes on a religious power through his Bach. Though Monsaingeon states in his liner notes that he wants this film to shatter "the absurd but often-repeated truism that Glenn Gould played nothing but Bach" (6), the film assigns tremendous importance to the composer it implicitly identifies as Gould's favorite.¹⁸ Bach undeniably did occupy an ordinal place in Gould's career, and Bach's religiosity further sustains the idea that Gould's music has transformative religious power for his listeners. Or as Gugina puts it, "Gould plays it like a prayer. He's a kind of ecumenical priest and brings us Bach's gospel. He had a direct link to God. He had received the kiss of God."

Monsaingeon's text lies on the outer limits of Gould biography not only because of its representation of his genius, but because of its biographical form. This representation of Gould melds the selves of the composer, the performer *and* the audience, an idea drawn from Gould's philosophies of recording and the ecstatic. Bach and Gould converge first in a segment in which the young Gould describes Bach as a man who stood outside his time, representing a moment in the enlightenment when the "achievements of mankind could coexist with the magical, mystical, fearful rights of belief." Immediately following this statement on Bach, Gugina talks about "gouldianising" her friends, noting that because of the lack of accurate biographical information, and the subsequent proliferation of Gould rumors and exaggerations, he "grew into a kind of mythic, mystic figure." The near repetition of language suggests that a similar religious mysticism surrounds both Bach and Gould. Later Gugina conveys her belief that Gould's identity converges with Bach's: "In everything [Gould] acts as a

composer and transforms himself into a composer. When he played Chopin, Chopin became Gould. When he played Bach, only Bach remained.” Monsaingeon agrees. Describing an interview during which Gould played Bach’s last, unfinished, fugue, Monsaingeon recalls that Gould stopped mid-piece and noted that Bach had made a mistake in the counterpoint, and would have fixed it had he lived to complete the composition. Monsaingeon concludes that Gould “had actually become Bach.” A similar convergence takes place between Gould and his audience. In a continuation of the radio interview shown earlier in the film, Monsaingeon claims that when he worked with Gould, “I was Glenn somehow,” and goes on to describe how when a listener encounters Gould’s music, “you lose some of your individuality and become part of a totality of experience.” In this light, “The young woman with a secret” (Natalie Flood), described as “an ex-rocker, pianist and composer from Birmingham, England” who has Gould’s music and initials literally inscribed on her body, and Jorg Scheuven, the man who constructs “elaborate fictional dialogues with Gould for his own satisfaction,” can both be seen as attempting to represent their own loss of individual identity through listening to Gould’s music. Just as when Gould plays Bach, when Monsaingeon’s characters perform their identities as fans, they are both asserting and dissolving themselves.

Monsaingeon’s unusual ideas about Gould’s genius lead to experiments with film biography form that diverge significantly from both the typical documentary and the dramatic musical biopic. Like many documentary film makers, Monsaingeon combines archival footage of Gould with interviews and footage of several dramatized interlocutors whose lives have been transformed by Gould in various ways. But Monsaingeon adds an autobiographical element, because he is present in the text through his involvement in the

archival footage from the films he made with Gould, and through his tapes of interviews and lectures given about Gould. The dramatized interlocutors appearing throughout the film are also involved in auto/biographical representation, since each one performs a reconstructed version of him or her self. These are, of course, based on Gould's own auto/biographical forms found in his radio documentaries and in his final interview with Tim Page, who performs himself interviewing Glenn Gould. The polyphonic, auto/biographical form of *Hereafter* argues that Gould's life and work are inextricably connected—still quite uncommon in musical biography—and that Gould's own genius and his posthumous identity depend on the involvement of his listeners. Far from separating the life and work, Monsaingeon even hints at the autobiographical possibilities in instrumental music through his characters' comments about the slow, autumnal feel of Gould's later work, particularly the 1981 *Goldberg Variations*, and the connections suggested between Gould's parents' religious devotion and his own predilection for Bach.

The film also links the musical life and the work in a stunning sequence which juxtaposes footage of Gould and Yehudi Menuhin arguing about the future of the concert hall and recorded music with footage of their 1966 performance of Arnold Schoenberg's *Fantasy for Violin and Piano*. The music plays throughout, linking the visual footage of both conversation and performance. When Menuhin asserts that "there is something in the concert hall that is compelling," both piano and violin take on a dissonant, frenetic sound, as if in disagreement. But the visual images of the conversation show the two men acutely focused on each other's expression, and the footage of performance captures the two intensely engaged with the music, working toward the same aim. The conversation between Gould and Menuhin sets up something of a climax for the film. Gould talks

about his disdain for the concert hall, and his sense of the ideal relationship between music, performer and audience. Gould says that “en masse” he “detests audiences,” believing “they are a force of evil,” because they see the performance more as a competition than as “an effort by the performer to perform a powerful identification with the music.” Instead, Gould tells Menuhin that “there is no greater community of spirit than the guy who sits at his modest control panel at home and communes with the music.” In this sense, Monsaingeon’s characters, who all commune with Gould’s music in very personal ways, come to represent an enactment of Gould’s musical philosophies. They may not be Gould’s ideal audience, because what they do with his life and music may not be what he would have wished, but they nevertheless embody some of his musical ideals, and therefore represent Gould’s legacy, his life after death. Wolfgang Iser wrote that “the convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence” (956). In *Hereafter*, the text is not only Gould’s music, but his life, and Gould’s existence in his hereafter, our present, depends upon the interaction of his audience and his music.

In a final sequence of the film, the self-identification between Bach, Gould, and the listener becomes more pronounced, and this convergence of self with other becomes entwined with the notion of eternal life. When discussing Bach’s final fugue in footage from *An Art of the Fugue*, one of the earlier films Monsaingeon made with Gould, the two represent Bach’s own work as autobiographical. Gould links divinity, Bach’s life, and the final fugue, insisting that the piece “has a sense of peace, a devotional quality that for Bach is really overwhelming. It never modulates in any conventional sense. It never comes to rest in any one key, you know, but it leaves the extraordinary impression of an infinitely expanding universe.” Gould notes that by using the BACH motif,¹⁹ Bach was

“literally signing his name to the piece that he knew would be the work that summed up his life.” It would be difficult to miss the implied link to the recording that summed up Gould’s own life: his 1981 version of the *Goldberg Variations*. The final segment of the fugue immediately precedes the scene when Monsaingeon asserts that during their recording session, Gould had “actually become Bach.” As evidence, the film then moves back to the footage of Gould playing the final fugue, focusing specifically on his playing of the BACH motif, when Gould himself is signing Bach’s name. Just as Gould’s ideal listeners interact with the music on a creative level, Gould here takes on the roles of audience member and creator of Bach’s music. As a way of further layering the identification between the key players in a musical transaction, the film moves to a dramatized representation of Gould’s car “Longfellow,” driving through rural Ontario in the fall, while the fictionalized Gould on voice-over discusses his own belief in a hereafter. The film then returns to Gould’s performance of the fugue, which ends abruptly mid-bar—the point which Bach had gotten to at the time of his death. The image of Gould playing Bach’s final fugue near the end of his own life—the film was made in November 1980—is particularly poignant. As most audience members know, Gould’s own life ended mid-bar, cut short when he no doubt had numerous statements left to make.

The final layering of divinity, Bach, Gould, and audience occurs when the film, in one of the final scenes, returns to “The Italian Pilgrim,” who places flowers at Gould’s grave and makes the following prayer-like statement:

Glenn Gould, 1932–1982. I finally found you, I am close to you. I thank you for all you gave me. The most beautiful thing in my life will always be listening to

your music.

The film ends with a close-up side-profile of Gould's face placed against the backdrop of a gently flowing lake, then moves outward to a figure dressed iconically as Glenn Gould walking along the waterfront in fall. Far from an autonomous text to be examined only for its formal elements, music in Monsaingeon's film results from a complex interaction between composer, performer, and audience. Though the representation of Gould's genius in the film is clearly related to transformative spirituality, and harkens back to the notion of the genius as divine conduit, this notion in fact becomes an argument *for* various levels of musical biography, since the transformative effect passed from composer, to performer, to audience, and then refracted backward from audience, through performer, to composer again, becomes an essential part of the meaning of the music itself.

While Bergman and Monsaingeon's texts take the link between genius and spirituality to the extreme—in Bergman's case, by arguing that Gould and his music represent a Judeo-Christian message of spiritual rather than material existence, and in Monsaingeon's case, by claiming that the key figures in a Gouldian musical transaction achieve a profound totality of spirit—they also shift notions of musical biographical expression to take account of the importance of fan responses to musicians' lives. As Ira Nadel has noted, biography not only “provides meaning for an individual's life, transmitting personality and character through prose,” but also “nourishes the author's sense of identity and vitality through the act of recreating the subject's life” (155). These two texts both portray layers of auto/biographical responses to Gould's music coming from those within and distinct from the field of music. Along with pushing the boundaries of genius representations, the texts affirm that music is often an elemental part of both a

performer's and a listener's narratives of self.

The Other Side of the Partition: Eccentricity in the Lives of Gould

In a recent *New York Times* article, Larry Rohter notes that “During his lifetime, Gould was often portrayed less as a real person than as a collection of tics.” Because his eccentricities were so much a part of his public image during his lifetime, biographers cannot ignore them, but the extent to which they focus on the more unusual aspects of Gould's performance practice and behavior varies widely, depending upon the biographer's attitude toward Gould and conception of his particular form of genius. Bergman and Monsaingeon, for example, pay little attention to Gould's eccentricities. Like Georges Leroux in *Partita for Glenn Gould*, they do not “resist the idealization of beloved figures,” but instead “endorse a kind of overt emotional sympathy” with their subject (11). Others are not so generous. They see Gould's eccentricities as the tragic consequence of his outstanding abilities, a normalizing factor that helps audiences to identify with him, or both. Few texts address this issue more thoroughly than Peter Ostwald's *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, a psychobiography written by his one-time friend. Other texts with a strong focus on Gould's reported tics are Michael Clarkson's *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love* and Michèle Hozer and Peter Raymont's film, *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*. All of these deal with the famous Gould eccentricities: his unusual performance practice, and especially his withdrawal from the concert stage at the height of his career; his various health problems, both physical and psychological; and his lack of traditional relationships, which recently has received the most attention. Gould's need for solitude has long been portrayed as a sign of his genius, and by keeping his private life a closely-

guarded secret, Gould himself contributed to the idea that he was highly unorthodox in how he related to others. During his lifetime, he publicly minimized the romantic role of women in his life, which led many to conclude he was gay. Recent texts that focus on Gould's eccentricities have necessarily reconsidered female relationships in Gould's life. While Ostwald started this trend, because his psychobiography approach emphasizes the role of Gould's mother in his musical development, *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould* and *Genius Within* both rewrite his biography to integrate his now public relationships with women. The specific women in Gould's life and career force biographers to reframe the musical history surrounding him as a performer in the mid-twentieth century, since the women he had relationships with were often talented musicians and artists themselves. And yet, instead of normalizing Gould, these texts emphasize even more strongly his eccentricity by suggesting these relationships were doomed because of the extraordinary needs of his creative life. In many cases, these biographers also reinscribe conventional gender roles familiar from music biography. Though Gould's relationships with women have recently become the central focus of texts emphasizing his eccentricities, these works often adopt this focus to raise even larger issues in Gould biographical representation. How a biographer handles Gould's eccentricity is ultimately a matter of control. Those who heighten his strangeness wrest various kinds of control from their subject: control over his musical philosophy and destiny, control over his relationships and his body, and above all, control over his biographical representation.

Genius has long been associated with madness, and texts that explore the link between genius and psychosis often cite Dryden's poem that serves as my epigraph, or such chestnuts as Aristotle's claim that "Those who have become eminent in philosophy,

politics, poetry and the arts all have tendencies toward melancholia,” or Seneca’s belief that “no great genius has ever existed without some touch of madness,” or of course, Shakespeare’s notion that “The lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all compact” (all quoted in Simonton, 284). The idea that great achievements are linked to great suffering has long been part of Western genius myths, and as Kivy has shown, this connection has been part of the myths of musical genius at least since Handel, and is especially pronounced with Mozart, who has been portrayed as everything from the “eternal child,” to “the ecstatic,” to “the imbecile” (see Kivy chapters VI and IX). Beethoven’s familiar appearance as someone with a “complete lack of interest in those ‘mundane’ conditions of ordinary life” also advances representations of the genius as madman (Kivy, 130), and Schumann’s genuine and confirmed episodes of psychoses have sustained the portrait.

The representation of high achievement as having a terrible downside pervades contemporary musical biography as well. Psychobiographers like Peter Ostwald have made careers out of exploring the two. A psychiatrist, he is also the author of *Schumann: The Inner Voices of a Musical Genius* and *Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap Into Madness*, co-wrote *The Pleasures and Perils of Genius: Mostly Mozart*, and edited *The Threat to the Cosmic Order: Psychological, Social and Health Implications of Richard Wagner’s Ring of the Nibelung*. Representations of musicians as highly creative and successful, yet subject to great mental anguish, also abound in film. In Jim McBride’s Jerry Lee Lewis biopic *Great Balls of Fire* or Scott Hicks’ acclaimed story of David Helfgott, *Shine*, the fine line between creativity and madness often wavers—and of course in *The Music Lovers*, *Mahler*, and *Lisztomania*, Ken Russell erases it. Whether or not a psychological

link can be established between genius and eccentricity is not the subject of my study. My interest is in how the portrayals of Gould's eccentricities have shaped his biographical representations, but also contributed to the field of music and life writing.²⁰ While almost all Gould biographical texts address his eccentricities, I will look here at those that focus on Gould's eccentricities in and of themselves, or in close relation to his genius.

The 1959 interview in which Dennis Braithewaite asks Gould if he has a girlfriend or is engaged has become a frequently quoted source in later biographical representations asserting that Gould had limited relationships with others, particularly women. In *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, this section of the interview is hinted at as a journalist struggles to glean information on Gould's personal life by asking a series of "Questions With No Answers." In *Hereafter*, it is part of Jorg Scheuven's constructed conversations with Gould. Gould's lack of traditional relationships is often presented as arising from an artist who alternately sought to control his own surroundings to such an extent that he could accept no interference, or whose efforts to protect his privacy succeeded to such a degree that his relationships with others, particularly women, remained beyond confirmation. Gould fiercely guarded his personal life, and persuaded his friends and acquaintances to do the same. As a result, his life became the stuff of rumors. Kevin Bazzana notes in *Genius Within* that Gould's reticence created the impression that he had a "private dark secret," even though new biographical information has shown that he had "really normal relationships of an ordinary kind." This "private dark secret" has generally been assumed to be asexuality or homosexuality. Though neither seems particularly scandalous in a twenty-first century context, both seem to be unlikely. At the time Gould was performing and recording, however, such "secrets"

sustained public interest in him, while at the same time casting Gould's musical world as overwhelmingly male. For example, the appearance of Howard Scott and another man in the photos from the original *Goldberg* recordings, and the 1959 National Film Board documentaries *Glenn Gould: On the Record* and *Glenn Gould: Off the Record*, all portray the musical world as distinctly male. Though biographical texts occasionally pointed to the mysterious "Dell" letter, women for the most part remained nameless potential romantic interests or talentless amateur musicians. Gould's own self-representation as someone whose "ecstasy" was music has undoubtedly fueled visions of him as homosexual or asexual, but Martin Stokes argues that similar representations of male musicians are common "in societies in which gender hierarchies simultaneously constitute the basic symbol and fact of domination." In such cases, "Male musicians are with great frequency portrayed . . . as men without social power, passive homosexuals or transsexuals, or at the very least, inappropriate choices for a husband." Since "the moral order of many societies is entirely predicated upon the separation of gender and the control of sexuality," Stokes concludes that "Culturally desexing musicians is one way of effecting this control" (23).

Sexual ambiguity, however, was also part of Gould's performance of self designed to sustain public interest in him and his recordings. His ability to manipulate his public image through careful framing of his sexual identity demonstrates in yet another way Gould's marketing savvy. As Marjorie Gabor has noted, bisexuality has long been perceived as a part of celebrity culture (13). Gould's reticence regarding his romantic relationships, and the subsequent rumors of asexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality his silence generated, allowed his image to borrow from the long tradition of celebrity

bisexuals ranging from many of the stars of the Golden Age of Hollywood to the later pop and rock music stars of the sexual revolution. Gould's sexual ambiguity so successfully became a part of his public and biographical image that, as Bazzana reports, texts like Kevin Kopelson's *Beethoven's Kiss: Pianism, Perversion, and the Mastery of Desire* take Gould's homosexuality as a given. And in "Constructions of Identity in the Life Stories of Emma Albani and Glenn Gould," Robin Elliot similarly seems to take Gould's homosexuality as fact, though a fact often strangely denied by biographers, noting, "As there is little significant scholarship yet on Gould within gay and lesbian studies, the field has been left to writers who for the most part have been anxious to downplay or deny the possibility that Gould was anything but heterosexual." Elliot goes on to elucidate the various biographical strategies writers have used to "head off the issue of potential homosexuality" (116). Gould's biographers in this case can be seen to work both with and against Gould, as on occasion Gould explicitly denied his homosexuality, famously responding to the question of whether he was gay with the following: "I always quote Horowitz, that there are three kinds of pianists: homosexual pianists, Jewish pianists, and bad pianists. And I add, pianists who play better than Horowitz" (Bazzana, 340). Gould's silence about his romances, publicity photos that focused on his androgynous beauty, and the perception of his piano style as feminine (both from reviewers who praised and those who criticized his work), however, heightened speculation about his sexuality.

Yet some of the most recent texts addressing Gould's eccentricities, through their representations of women in the music world, begin to rewrite his musical history to include not only the issue, but also the voices of the women in Gould's life. This

inclusion might be expected to have a normalizing effect, but the result is often the opposite, as Gould's relationships with women more firmly link the artist's genius with other elements of his eccentricity, and position various elements of his identity as beyond his own control. Peter Oswald's *The Ecstasy and the Tragedy of Genius* is a case in point, because it highlights the importance of Gould's relationship with his mother to suggest that his genius and eccentricities were largely predetermined. Oswald's biography rises out of his lifelong interest in music and psychosis. In 1968, he formed the Health Program for Performing Artists, an organization devoted to research, education, and clinical treatment of the physical and mental problems artists in various genres experience. An amateur violinist married to concert pianist Lyse Deschamps, Oswald met Gould in his youth and maintained a friendship with him until Gould abruptly ended it a few years before his death. Though Oswald never treated the musician himself, he helped Gould find treatment for various disorders. Oswald sees Gould's genius as exclusively and inextricably linked to his success as a pianist, and especially as concert performer. The biography takes into account all three primary areas of abnormality attributed to Gould, but stresses his relationship with his mother, Florence, whom Oswald sees as the driving force behind Gould's musical achievements. Gould's musical history therefore gets recast to include the important contributions of women, who as Pekacz has noted, are frequently absent or misunderstood as subjects of musical biographies (12). Like Otto Friedrich, Oswald titles his chapter devoted to the early development of Gould's musical talent "The Prodigy." The key players are the same as Friedrich's: Gould's parents. But as a psychiatrist, Oswald provides a Freudian interpretation of Gould's childhood that emphasizes Florence Gould's role. Noting that

Gould's grandmothers were musical, Ostwald advances a distinctly female musical history for Gould. His mother appears as a talented amateur musician and an excellent teacher. Ostwald cites an interview in which Gould's father Bert states that her students who took Conservatory exams "nearly always came highest in the class or best in the province" (50). Gould's achievement therefore seems less surprising than in other biographies: "Flora's incessant grooming of Glenn's taste and attitude must have enormously enhanced his precocious musical development. By the time he was three, she was giving him regular piano lessons" (45). No longer Friedrich's naively provincial woman who doesn't understand her unusual child, Ostwald's Flora is an intelligent, musically articulate force behind Gould's early success—a reconfiguration that diminishes the mystery surrounding Gould's pianistic skills, and also negates Gould's own presented idea that he was largely self-taught.

But Flora's musicianship and early training play a part in accounting for Gould's eccentricities. In his detailed psychological explanation of Gould's unusual posture, his need to vocalize, and his correctness at the piano, Ostwald states that seated on her lap, "Mother, child and piano quickly became unity," and that Gould's "need to be very close to the piano would recall the warm feelings and earlier proximity of both mother and instrument" (43). Similarly, "Playing correctly became firmly associated in Gould's mind with pleasing his mother long before he could think consciously about what he was doing," and "He also assimilated very quickly her demand to sing every note that he played at the keyboard, a pedagogical device that Flora strove to ingrain in all of her students" (45). Through her teaching, then, Flora becomes responsible for Gould's musical skill but also for his abnormalities. By the time Gould can "think consciously"

about his playing, Ostwald claims his habits are long-established. Locating Gould's talent and love for the piano in his relationship with his mother answers the question posed in other biographical works such as *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations* and *Thirty Two Short Films* of what would have happened had Gould not been born into a musical family, and had not had his musical talent nurtured. For Ostwald, it is precisely the triangulation of mother, child, and piano that allowed for Gould to become as accomplished as he was because in Gould's case, artistic creativity is linked to childhood psychological and physical pleasure. But since Gould's genius comes from the same maternal source as his eccentricities, Ostwald makes a case for the impossibility of achieving one without the other.

The connection between Gould, the mother, and the piano also causes Ostwald to place clear limits on Gould's genius. If the piano became Gould's safe haven, reminding him of the nurturing of his mother and his childhood home, then Ostwald predictably disregards Gould's later experiments with electronic music. In fact, everything outside his piano performances becomes eccentricity. Relatively early in his text, Ostwald insists that what made Gould outstanding as a youth were not his composition skills but "the miraculous quality of his piano playing, his perfect pitch, his uncanny ability to read and memorize music at sight and his enthusiastic singing" (68). Ostwald bemoans Gould's decision to leave the concert stage, stating that "The problem as everyone who worked with him soon came to realize was that Glenn didn't have the same natural flair for these electronic media that he had for playing the piano" (219). Although Ostwald may be referring specifically to Gould's skill as a creator of radio documentaries, this claim directly contradicts what others have actually said about Gould's skills in editing

recordings. Bazzana reports that Kevin Doyle, one of the editors for the 1981 *Goldberg* recording, said that Gould “was achieving splices on his analogue copies of the tapes that the New York technicians, even with their digital equipment, deemed impossible” (WS, 453). Nevertheless, Ostwald insists that Gould’s decision to abandon the concert stage was a tragedy because it fits the ecstasy/tragedy dichotomy of a psychoanalytic reading. Though Ostwald seldom expresses such harsh thoughts himself, maintaining a relatively even tone throughout the biography, he quotes Dr. Stephens, a friend and psychiatrist who occasionally treated Gould: “It was a terrible tragedy that this musical genius felt so compelled to fritter away his energies by making radio documentaries for which he was far less gifted than he was as a pianist” (245). Ostwald himself casts Gould’s departure from the concert stage as a significant loss of self:

In my opinion, Glenn’s retirement had the great benefit of allowing him to go in new directions and explore aspects of his creativity that had lain dormant for years but Gould’s loss of interaction with musicians, critics and audiences meant a kind of diffusion of Glenn’s identity, a certain loss of the primary image of himself as a pianist, an image that had been built up in childhood under his mother’s guidance. (243)

Here is the familiar theme of Gould not knowing himself, but Ostwald takes the idea further: Gould’s lack of self-knowledge, and his inability to clearly separate his philosophies from his anxiety about performance, leads him to engage in self-eroding behavior. If Gould’s genius exists exclusively in his piano playing, all of Gould’s endeavors outside that constitute a breakdown of his early essential self that his mother helped to establish. Ostwald therefore dismisses the most groundbreaking aspects of

Gould's career, and Gould's own notions of his genius, raising the question of how much any analysis of Gould's genius is tied to the biographer's own opinions about music itself. Those devoted to a more conservative musical tradition may find Gould's gifts in experimental music difficult to recognize.

After Gould's withdrawal from the concert stage, Ostwald tempers the accomplishments with the eccentricities, eventually focusing on Gould's own mental and physical decline after the death of his mother in 1975. Ostwald has little sympathy for Gould's innovative recordings or his philosophy of music, concluding they are "at best startling and at worst outlandish" (248). Ostwald attributes Gould's "peculiar attitude" toward Mozart as "determined by childhood conflict." Linking life and work, Ostwald suggests that Florence Gould's resistance to comparing Gould's childhood musical accomplishments with Mozart's "kept Glenn as a boy from forming a more positive view of one of the greatest musicians of all time" (249). Of course, locating the root of Gould's disdain for Mozart in his subconscious dispossesses Gould's own philosophies of music, depriving him of agency.

Ostwald portrays Gould's mother as largely responsible for that other eccentricity that remained out of the musician's control: his hypochondria. Gould's real, imagined, and self-generated illnesses are a major focus of Ostwald's book, and early in the text, he quotes Robert Fulford as saying "if hypochondria could be inherited, we know who the villain was. His mother was constantly worrying about his complexion" (59). Gould also appears to have inherited his hypertension, the illness that ultimately ended his life, from his mother. Immediately after describing Flora's own death from a massive stroke, Ostwald describes Gould's own difficulties with high blood pressure. A doctor himself,

Ostwald consistently sees Gould's psychological perceptions of his physical ailments as one of the great tragedies of his life. Early in the book, Ostwald declares that Gould was "trying to be a sort of medical expert—without the benefit of formal education in the field. He read voraciously about clinical symptoms, diseases, and treatments. He repeatedly attempted to diagnose himself" (42). The body and Gould's sense of its tragic unruliness become major themes, as Ostwald responds to the formal challenge of representing bodily pain by quoting Gould's own medical diaries and interpreting the medical language of Gould's many practitioners for the reader. His physical ailments become signs that Gould's genius is tragically flawed beyond his own control. "Bodily dysfunction is perhaps the most common threat to the appealing belief that one controls one's own destiny" (9), Timothy Dow Adams has noted, and throughout the *Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, Ostwald works to eliminate the sense of control that Gould sought in both his life and work by suggesting that both his genius and eccentricity were inherited qualities, developed in childhood through his relationship with his mother, and impossible for him to control or deny. By contrast, Ostwald as biographer controls his subject by wielding Gould's childhood as the key to his adult identity, and by deploying medical language to exercise control over Gould's body—the one aspect of self over which Gould felt no illusion of mastery.

In 2007, twenty-five years after his death, Gould's control over his private life was significantly eroded, and his posthumous "life," particularly with regard to his eccentricity in personal relationships, changed dramatically. On August 25, *The Toronto Star* ran a front-page story that identified Cornelia Foss, a California artist and the wife of pianist/composer/conductor Lukas Foss, as the mystery woman with whom Gould had a

relationship in the late 1960s. Former staff writer Michael Clarkson interviewed Foss at her summer home in the Hamptons—her first public statement about Gould, and therefore, the first time their relationship had been confirmed. The media and online reaction displayed the lightning swiftness with which the celebrity self can be revised in the 21st century. The thread “Cornelia Foss Revealed!” appeared on “F_Minor: A Glenn Gould Mailing List.” Gould’s Wikipedia entry suddenly had a “Relationships” section, significantly appended to the section on his health. Various blogs addressed the new Gould information; one noted that no new Gould films were in the works that could incorporate this element of his life, but offered the link for Gould’s Russian tour on YouTube. Toronto’s *NOW* magazine ran the headline “Glenn Gould Not Gay” (Davey). In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Kevin Bazzana claimed that the only reason he hadn’t included Foss’s name in his biography was “out of niceness” (Cherney). Foss had declined to be interviewed for Bazzana’s book; now that she had talked to someone else, Bazzana was debating whether to add her name to his upcoming Japanese edition. And in 2008, Katie Hafner’s *Glenn Gould: A Romance on Three Legs* became the first biography to describe his relationship with Foss, and to speculate on the effect its breakdown might have had on his career and health.

The most detailed consideration of Gould’s life with Foss and other women, however, comes from Clarkson himself in his 2010 biography, *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love*. Clarkson claims this highly speculative and sensationalistic work was inspired by his grand-daughter, who when playing in Toronto’s Glenn Gould Park asked “Who was he, Papa?” (xii). Unsatisfied with his answer—“He was a famous pianist from years ago”—Clarkson began researching, and after a six-month search, he

tracked down Cornelia Foss, who agreed to speak with him.²¹ The lack of representations of women in history justifies his larger project. He quotes Kathy Chamberlin, from the *Writing Women's Lives Project* at the City University of New York, who bemoans the fact that many women have been “left out of history, because they’ve been left in the shadows,” and notes that “Often . . . the woman is also creative and perhaps has played the role of muse” (Clarkson, xiv). And yet, although progressive in terms of music biography because it represents the women in Gould’s life as having successful careers in their own right, Clarkson’s biography also reinforces gender stereotypes through its detailed and frequent references to the women’s bodies and general appearance. It is the most sensational of all Gould biographies in topic and tone, heightening rather than dispelling Gould’s eccentricities by dwelling on women’s personal accounts of his oddities, and suggesting that his relationships failed because of his drug use and paranoia. By treating these women’s stories as largely more evidence for Gould’s eccentricities, Clarkson not only suggests Gould’s life was beyond his control, but denies the women themselves control over their own biographical representations.

The same critical paradigms that relegated biography to the sidelines of musicology did the same thing with issues of gender, and although recent work has looked at how gender plays a role in our understanding of the lives and works of composers, the Gould lives have remained focused largely on male achievement, with women playing supporting roles, if any. The Foss story changes this narrative. Though still occupying a supporting role in the larger Gould narrative, whereas Foss was once a nameless figure known only through rumor and perhaps Gould’s “Dell” letter, she is now an embodied subject, visible in films and photographs. And most importantly, she speaks

for herself, opening up important new avenues for investigation into Gould's life.²²

Clarkson peoples Gould's life with independent women of talent—a demographic previously almost non-existent in Gould research—but Clarkson's descriptions of these women tend to be patronizing and objectifying. (It should also be noted, of course, that physical descriptions of Gould as a young, androgynous performer abound in his early public relations material and reviews, casting Gould himself as feminine, and particularly with regards to his eccentricity.) Because the book promises to be about Gould's romantic life, his female friends all get presented as love interests, even though many of the women Clarkson talks about never had romantic relationships with Gould, or refuse to confirm them. Many of these women also had careers that were groundbreaking for their generation. Frances Batchen, Gould's first girlfriend, was a young pianist and music teacher who achieved some success in the Kiwanis Festival, a graded competition for amateur Ontario musicians. Gould was friends with the journalist Gladys Riskind, who consistently emphasizes how her achievements defied the gender roles of the time. Perhaps his most important romantic connection, Cornelia Foss, is an accomplished artist. And many other women in Gould's life—Roxolana Roslak, Monica Gaylord, Cynthia Millman Floyd—were musical performers and teachers at major institutions.

Clarkson makes passing reference to these women's careers, but his book is far from a feminist revision of Gould's life and work. Gould's female friends and acquaintances are distinguished by their appearance, and particularly their hair color. Frances Batchen is “a petite brunette with a subtle yet seductive smile” (23), Elizabeth Fox is “a cheery blond who worked at the CBC” (27), Cornelia Foss “was blond, with blue eyes and a graceful presence, yet an independent streak for a married woman of that

era” (121).²³ Though Gould’s friends and colleagues have testified to his belief in gender equity, Clarkson’s emphasis on the women’s appearances usually precedes any mention of their skills and accomplishments, suggesting that much of Gould’s attraction to them was based on looks. And since these women, and particularly those who are concert pianists and other musicians, do not achieve the level of Gould’s success—but has anyone?—Clarkson’s biographical portrait still leaves the women on the margins of music history.

The presentation of Cornelia Foss is particularly illustrative of how Clarkson relegates women to the sidelines. Ever since she identified herself as the woman in Gould’s long-rumored affair in the 1960s and ‘70s, biographers have seen her as Gould’s most important female companion after his mother and his cousin Jessie Grieg. In 1967, Foss left her husband Lukas Foss and moved to Toronto with her two children to be closer to Gould; she returned to her husband in 1973. Clarkson usually focuses his attention upon the woman with whom Gould was involved. When describing Gould’s relationship with Verna Sandcock, his manager Walter Homburger’s assistant, for instance, Clarkson does not launch into a long biography of Homburger. Apparently because not one, but two powerful male musicians are involved, Clarkson’s portrayal of Foss is different. He begins with a long biographical account of Lukas Foss, positioning him as part of a triangle of young, ground-breaking male musicians—Glenn Gould, Leonard Bernstein, and Foss himself. Cornelia Foss’s relationship with Gould becomes possible because of the men’s mutual admiration. She first learns about Glenn Gould while driving in Los Angeles, when Lukas is “enraptured” by a radio broadcast of Gould’s *Goldberg Variations* (120). Gould in turn was “in awe” of Lukas Foss because

“the latter was proficient in conducting, composing and piano playing,” whereas Gould had “developed only his playing to an international level” (120). Gould and Lukas Foss were therefore musical “soul mates” (122). As for Cornelia, “Gould was attracted to her by her striking looks, intelligence and independent streak, as well as the stability she fostered as a mother of two children” (121). At least at first, she is clearly the least important corner of the triangle.

Since Clarkson is describing the heterosexual relationships of an artist usually portrayed, and often by himself, as hermetic, we might expect the result to be normalizing. But for Clarkson, Gould’s relationships only intensify the pianist’s eccentricity, at times presenting us with a borderline psychotic. Despite Angela Addison’s warning that she “didn’t find him that eccentric at all,” but that he “didn’t discourage the myth; he played it to the hilt” (29), Clarkson emphasizes how the women in Gould’s life witnessed aberrations seemingly beyond Gould’s control. For instance, “in 1955 and 1956, he told Batchen and others that he had developed an eating disorder,” which made him ill when he ate around other people (45). Verna Post recalls that when she knew Gould, “He had all the eccentric mannerisms about the cold—whenever we were in his car he’d roll up all the windows and when we got to a restaurant he’d ask them to turn off the air conditioning” (77). And in 1968, shortly after she left her husband and joined Gould in Toronto. Foss witnessed a “serious paranoid episode”: “It lasted several hours and then I knew he was not just neurotic—there was more to it. I thought to myself, ‘Good grief, am I going to bring up my children in this environment?’” (155). The typical narrative pattern Clarkson follows is to dispel rumors of Gould’s solitude by describing a relatively normal private relationship, but then use women’s eye-witness accounts to

confirm rumors of Gould's physical, social, and emotional problems. The result is a sensationalized portrait of genius with tremendous psychological and physical challenges.

Clarkson supports this version of genius in ways which are not always convincing. He regularly calls Gould a genius, but relies on the already established myths. When he does discuss Gould's musical achievements, he often downplays them. Though Gould's String Quartet was "the most significant composition of his life," Clarkson reports that it received "mixed reviews and to many . . . resembled a work of one of Gould's favorite composers, Richard Strauss" (41). The radio documentaries appear only because Clarkson compares the "overlapping voices" of women in Gould's life to his "'contrapuntal radio,' in which several people's voices would be heard over one another" (71). With regard to Gould's Russian tour, Clarkson notes only Gould's dismay at learning that Van Cliburn received a ticker-tape parade in New York after winning the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in 1958, while Gould himself had received nothing (64). Instead of analyzing Gould's music or the particular facets of his genius, then, Clarkson repeatedly asserts that eccentricity was the unfortunate side-effect of Gould's extraordinary abilities.

Like Ostwald's text, however, *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould* does perform some significant biographical work in its representation of music and the body, a key element of Gould's eccentricities. While some biographers suggest that his cerebral search for the ecstatic in music diminished the importance of the body, those who discuss Gould's eccentricities inevitably address its importance to music making. Clarkson certainly transforms Gould from asexual to sexual being. Whether to deflect attention from his personal life, or to increase audience curiosity about his relationships in order to incite

public attention to his career, Gould frequently declared that his ecstasy was in his music. Though speculation had long circulated about Gould's physical relationships, Foss confirmed the relationship and therefore Gould's sexuality in Clarkson's *Toronto Star* interview and biography. In fact, Clarkson claims he will refute "the long-held belief that Gould was asexual" (xiv) to challenge the "larger fallacy still alive today – that deeply creative people and other geniuses ignore sex to pour all of their talent, drive and attention into their work" (34). That Gould was a sexual being proves that "even the geniuses among us are at best sophisticated animals with sex drives as well as needs for complex thinking, for writing scores and operas" (34). And Cornelia Foss agrees, calling the idea that Gould could not have had a successful relationship with a woman because he was too preoccupied with his work "nonsense. Everybody has several sides to them" (164).

But Clarkson goes on to suggest that Gould's physical and psychological challenges were so extreme that they prevented longstanding relationships with women, who found life with Gould simply too daunting. Clarkson reports that Gould "was seeking psychiatric help for pains he was having in his arms" (49), and quotes chiropractor Dr. Herbert Vear as confirming Gould's "back problems were legitimate; his posture leaning over the piano was atrocious" (69). Gould's prescription drug use comes up again and again. Cumulatively, all of these details affirm the connection between the music and the life of the musician. Since making the music evidently did put Gould's body under tremendous strain, the focus on his drug use and physical ailments undercuts the idea of music as an autonomous art form. During the concert years, his many ailments and perceived ailments actually caused him to cancel numerous concerts, and Gould's

own chiropractor also attributed his lifelong back problems to the way he hunched over the keys (Bazzana, 354). And even if Gould's chronic health problems did not actually affect the sound of his music, they certainly affected his output, since as a recording musician he was also occasionally forced to break because of pain and the need to treat it.

In its attempt to construct a coherent new narrative of Gould's romantic life, yet confirm audiences' existing sense of Gould's debilitating eccentricities, Clarkson's biography displays many of the traits Pekacz suggests are typical of the traditional musical biography. None of the formal play found in other Gould texts appears in Clarkson's biography, and Clarkson never seems to consider that Gould's relationships might be another example of his complex meta-autobiographical manipulation. As a portrait of a musician under acute mental and physical distress that puts forth a divided Gould self, Clarkson's text is one of the most conventional in the comprehensive Gould "life." Its chronological presentation of the relationships, combined with a novelistic use of repeating themes and motifs, attempts to compose a unified portrait of Gould. Clarkson also seeks to dispel myths found in earlier portraits, and especially Gould's intense need for solitude. Clarkson represents Gould again and again as reaching out to women romantically, only to have the relationships fall apart due to his psychological problems. As a way of authorizing his interpretation of Gould's genius, Clarkson also frequently cites psychobiographer Peter Ostwald and Ostwald's psychiatrist friend, Dr. Joseph Stephens, who both treated Gould, and maintained brief friendships with him in the 1950s. But Ostwald and Stephens are rather weak witnesses, since they knew nothing about the majority of Gould's relationships, so Clarkson turns to Toronto "relationship expert" Rebecca Rosenblatt, a.k.a. Dr. Date, who has worked in both television and radio,

and currently hosts a nightly sex talk show for Toronto's AM 640 and a live call-in TV show "Sex @ 11." Clarkson's recourse to the host of tabloid entertainment shows agrees with his resorting in the biography to speculation and suggestion about Gould's love life, as opposed to "verifiable" fact. Though the book is supposedly a biography of Gould's romance and sexual life, and Batchen and Foss describe sexual relationships with him, many of the women to whom Clarkson devotes chapters claim not to have been romantically involved with Gould, or refused to speak with Clarkson at all. The result suggests that while new information certainly emerged when Foss revealed the story of her relationship with Gould, there may not have been enough to warrant a new biography. Justin Kaplan once claimed that "[b]y current standards, biographies without voyeuristic, erotic thrills are like ballpark hot-dogs without mustard" (1). Clarkson's text comes dangerously close to being all mustard—a rarity in the Gould biographical oeuvre.

A richer, more substantial portrait of Gould, which includes the Foss revelation and other new details about Gould's romantic life, but does so to ask more nuanced questions about genius and eccentricity, is Michèle Hozer's and Peter Raymont's 2009 film *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*. The first full-length documentary devoted to Gould's life, *Genius Within* has been marketed both as a "discovery" biography that includes "an unprecedented array of never before seen footage of Gould, photographs and excerpts from his previous home recordings and diaries plus personal interviews with Gould's most intimate friends and lovers." Furthermore, its press release claims the film will "pierce through the myths" created by other documentaries "distracted by his eccentricities" to reveal "the man beneath the icon." During a question and answer period after a public viewing of *Genius Within* at the Royal Ontario Museum

in Toronto in October, 2010, William Littler asked Hozer and Raymont what they could “offer that hadn’t already been offered.” Raymont replied that when Michael Clarkson came to him with the Cornelia Foss story, Raymont recognized a whole other world that hadn’t been covered in previous Gould biographical films, thus locating the “discovery” aspect of the story primarily in the Foss revelation. Later in the conversation, Raymont also said that he believed Gould’s undoing was his solitude. The documentary therefore tries to answer the question “Can you be a genius and still be a social being?” Initially, *Genius Within* seems to answer “yes”; by the end of the film, though, the answer is unclear. Along the way, however, the film provides not only new information, but shifts Gould biographical methodology to include the actual voices of the women in Gould’s life—and more significantly than Clarkson had, because they are not just romantic partners, but active participants in the world of music in their own rights. And yet, like other texts addressing Gould’s eccentricities, *Genius Within* ultimately denies its biographical subject control over his own genius, his eccentricities, and his biographical representation. Though initially portrayed as a multi-faceted creative artist and philosopher, Gould eventually falls prey to his own abnormalities.

Unlike *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould*, which treats Gould’s genius as a priori knowledge, *Genius Within* attempts to determine what exactly it was that made Gould extraordinary. The answers range from Vladimir Ashkenazy’s response to the *Goldberg Variations*, which locates Gould’s genius in his “clarity and absolutely unaffected Bach structure,” to Fred Sherry’s response—“It’s a machine. No it’s a human being playing in a way that no one else has ever played before”—to Cornelia Foss’s comment that Gould took the *Goldbergs* apart as if the music was a clock, and put it back together in a

different way. Consistently, Gould's genius is represented as being beyond human achievement. Echoing Sherry's confusion over whether Gould's Bach was played by a machine or a human, the film also notes that Gould's first recording was a "phenomenal performance that seemed to come out of nowhere,"²⁴ and cites James Wright's comment that Russians described Gould's 1957 visit as a "Martian . . . coming to their world."²⁵ Not only is Gould himself other-worldly; he can remove his listeners from the here and now as well. For these commentators, Gould's genius can achieve "transcendence" a "serene, sort of ecstatic vision that takes us away from troubles of the world." He also appears as someone outside of his own time, a very important thinker who anticipated some of the important developments in electronic media during the late 20th and early 21st century.

Juxtaposed with this portrait of an otherworldly or inhuman genius are representations of Gould as the lover and family man. No biographical representation normalizes Gould more than *Genius Within* does in the extensive interviews with Foss and her children, both of whom spoke lovingly and movingly of Gould's fatherly attributes. Photos of Gould and Foss together—on a boat, at a hotel in northern Ontario, at dinner with the children—attest to the seriousness of their relationship. But it is the interviews with Foss's grown children, Christopher and Eliza, that most significantly translate Gould from otherworldly genius to the fatherly "Uncle Glenn." Both of Foss's children express their love for him and their pain at learning of his early death, and Eliza's tears become a tangible symbol of the affection she had for her one-time step-father.²⁶

More generally, the documentary's focus on his relationships gives us Gould as a

social being, significantly recasting his reputation as a hermit. Though previous biographical texts had talked about Gould's mother, and presented testimony from his cousin, Jessie Grieg, other women had largely been written out of Gould biographies, thanks to the fallacious myth of the disembodied genius married to his work. The women in *Genius Within* all serve to rewrite this narrative by offering windows into Gould's important relationships. Though not a romantic partner, Ruth Watson Henderson, who was Alberto Guerrero's student at the same time as Gould, reveals that Gould was significantly influenced by Guerrero's ideas. A close-up of Henderson's hands demonstrating Guerrero's "tapping" technique not only emphasizes his importance to Gould's early development, but reminds audiences that women pianists were Gould's contemporaries.²⁷ Unlike Clarkson, Hozer and Raymont show that Gould's romantic partners often have more to add to Gould's biography than accounts of his intimate life. For example, Frances Batchen Barrault not only rewrites Gould's relationship history—she tells the camera that Gould told her he loved her—but also dispels the myth that Gould never practiced, revealing that he practiced the *Goldbergs* at her apartment.²⁸ Similarly, before Foss describes her relationship with Gould, she provides informed opinions on Gould's work and image. And according to Ray Roberts, Gould's relationship with Roxolana Roslak was one of his happiest because of their musical collaboration.

As the film progresses, however, the normalizing effect diminishes, and Gould's life changes significantly in his later years. Here too, Gould appears as someone who used his celebrity image and his eccentricities to his own advantage, but who eventually became prey to his own psychoses. The dissolution of his relationship with Foss marks

the beginning of this descent. Foss describes the early Gould as “pragmatic” and “a businessman” who “knew perfectly well his image was going to sell records,” but she reports that later in their relationship, as Gould took more and more pills, his “personality began to change rapidly.”²⁹ Describing Gould as paranoid, Foss cites the limits he placed on her life as being one of the reasons their relationship ended. From this point forward, Gould’s need to dominate becomes prominent, with Lorne Tulk saying that Gould was a “control freak,”³⁰ and Kevin Bazzana noting that Gould became much less interesting to listen to in his interviews and broadcasts because of how heavily he scripted himself and others.³¹ So feverishly does he seek ultimate control that he loses it completely.

Repeatedly, the film shows how Gould’s efforts to sustain workable relationships with others fall victim to his eccentricities. In an extremely moving scene, Lorne Tulk recalls that Gould asked him to be his brother, even to “go down to city hall and make it official.” When Tulk explained that his own brothers might want some input into this decision, Gould dropped the idea. Because of his need to escape Gould’s tendency to work constantly and intensely, Tulk would also go to his local bar, knowing it would be the only place Gould, with his concern for morality and reputation as a teetotaler, would never attempt to find him.³² Through various accounts of how Gould’s eccentricity prevented him from reaching out to people—his paranoia ending his relationship with Foss, his hypochondria keeping him from visiting his mother in the hospital while she was dying—the film ultimately answers Raymont’s question “Can you be a genius and still be a social being?” in the negative. Despite its various groundbreaking elements, *Genius Within* affirms the familiar trope of the genius ultimately undone by madness.

And yet, like many Gould biographical texts, the film subtly undoes itself. Near

the end, for instance, even though Ray Roberts says that Gould told him his days with Roxolana Roslak were the happiest of his life,³³ John Roberts suggests that “a light had dimmed in his life” when Foss left, and Gould was unalterably transformed.³⁴ And the credits are accompanied by Gould’s “So You Want to Write a Fugue”—a fascinating inclusion, because its meta-narrative about the process of writing a fugue parallels the similar meta-narrative about biography and autobiography running through Gould’s life and his biographical legacy.³⁵ In the question-and-answer session after the ROM screening of *Genius Within*, Michèle Hozer casts doubt on her film’s ability to provide a coherent Glenn Gould. By comparing him to Romeo Dallaire, the subject of Raymont’s previous film *Shake Hands with the Devil*, she apparently affirms *Genius Within*’s thesis that “if you want to live to the limits of human potential, it’s at a cost. For Gould, maybe it was his private life. Maybe it was his early death.” But she also confesses that “the more you read about Gould, the less you know,” and discounts the film’s own representation of the beginning of Gould’s paranoia, dryly noting that since Foss was going home every weekend to her husband, “that would make anyone paranoid.”

As the newest additions to Gould’s textual “life” confirm, the ever-evolving consideration of what constitutes creative exceptionalism, where it originates, and what its downsides are, continues to provoke audience interest in Gould almost thirty years after his death. Though familiar tropes appear and reappear, Gould biographical texts collectively present a continually shifting portrait of a musical genius. Gould is a Platonic or Longinian genius, occasionally moving from one to the other within the same text. His portraits assume alternate approaches to music as well. Some writers remain conservative in their understanding of what constitutes a musical text, and therefore locate Gould’s

genius primarily in his pianistic skills, while others validate his skills with electronic media, and the philosophy of music he developed from his experiments. For those who locate Gould's genius in his concertizing, his eccentricities seem overwhelming and destructive, while for others he stands midway on the spectrum between normal to abnormal behavior. In some texts, despite his extraordinary creative abilities, he is much like the rest of us. In others, he is tormented by physical and mental anguish. And because Gould has achieved exalted status as a musician and representative Canadian, each new exploration of his genius and eccentricities rewrites North American, and particularly Canadian, music history. Gould's collective life bears out Ira Nadel's assertion that biography "unsettles the past," but it also shows how notions of genius and madness shift and persist over time, and poses important considerations for the study of musical lives.

The Gould biographies often significantly challenge musical biography generic conventions. His own auto/biographical play, which biographers sometimes see as an element of his creative exceptionalism, provokes changes in biographical form, though ironically enough the most effective biography of Gould to date is Bazzana's, which conforms to many of the formal conventions of musical biography that Pekacz argues need to be challenged. What grants Bazzana such a perspective, however, is that other Gould biographies have so pushed the limits of auto/biographical form in their representations of their subject that they have created what Nadel has described as "necessary stages in the evolution of the genre as well as the understanding of the subject" (103). In their representations of Gould as genius and eccentric, Gould biographies have repeatedly traveled to the limits and back again. And by responding to

the still relatively new information on Cornelia Foss, they will set out on a new journey.

CHAPTER 2: “Endless Vistas”: The North and Canadian Identity in Life Writing

About Glenn Gould

A Glenn Gould Fantasy

On an oil rig in the Canadian Arctic,
 beyond the circle of everlasting night,
 a concert grand sits on a platform
 fifty yards high, orchestra chairs
 folded in tundra waste, sound piped
 in the space through overhead speakers
 hanging from poles buried in permafrost,
 sound self contained by dry ice
 and blizzard winds; a progression of modern
 music, dark tones by Webern, Alban Berg,
 and Schoenberg, ice breaking notes that
 shatter the will of sound.

Alan Catlin

Postcard in Fugue

It's nice to be in Canada
 To be in Canada it's nice
 It's nice, in Canada, to be
 To be, it's nice, in Canada

In Canada it's nice to be
 It's nice to be
 It's nice to be Canada
 In nice in nice in nice in nice
 It's Canada to be nice in
 To be in, it's Canada
 Nice in, to Canada
 In Canada, to nice
 Be Canada, in nice
 To be to be to be to be
 Nice Canada, nice Canada
 I hope this finds you well

J. D. Smith

These poems from *Northern Music: Poems about and inspired by Glenn Gould*, are only two of several in the collection that explore Gould's link to Canada and specifically its north. The first refers to a strange radio drama in which Gould staged an "Hysterical Return" to concert life, performing on an oil rig in the Arctic Ocean. Narrated by some of Gould's created personae and showcasing his sometimes questionable humor, the drama parodies Vladimir Horowitz's "Historic Return" to the concert hall after twelve years of retirement, and as Catlin's poem suggests, juxtaposes public concert life with the solitude Gould associated with the north. Invoking the fugue form that fascinated Gould, the second poem positions him as speaking outward from Canada about Canada in a play on both personal and national identity. Like the other biographical representations I will

discuss in this chapter, these two poems on adjacent pages link Gould, the north, and Canada. Gould's Canadian identity and connection to the north is one of the most common motifs in auto/biographical texts devoted to his life, and a key factor in sustaining public interest in his work, and for Canadian audiences in particular, since for them representations of Gould are virtually inescapable. Though he rose to fame playing music in a European tradition, though he led for a time an active international concert life and recorded on a major American record label, throughout his life, Glenn Gould remained intensely interested in his Canadian heritage. And in turn, Gould has reached iconic status in Canada. National news sources at the time of his death called him one of the most important Canadians of all time. He appears in Canadian curriculum materials and children's books series, and his name is bestowed upon streets, institutions, and various national arts projects devoted to his memory.

Though he claimed not to be a nationalist, "Canadian" was an identity Gould performed throughout his life. His maintenance of Toronto as his home base, his work under the auspices of cultural institutions like the CBC and with other Canadian artists, his imaginative preoccupation with the Canadian North, both in his major composition *The Idea of North* and in autobiographical fragments found in his writing, and even his notorious cold weather uniform all marked him as Canadian. Since his death, cultural institutions like the CBC and *Maclean's Magazine*, whose role is to define Canadian culture for Canadians, or like the National Library, which maintains the Glenn Gould Archive, have insisted on his national identity. And so have many of the major biographical texts. This chapter investigates Gould's status as a Canadian icon, first by exploring Gould's own performance of his national identity, and then by examining the

various cultural projects that represented him as Canadian during his lifetime, and have kept him in the Canadian imagination after his death.

The first part of this chapter looks at auto/biographical representations by and about Gould during his lifetime, including two National Film Board documentaries on Gould, and his own radio documentary, *The Idea of North*, to see how Gould's Canadian identity appeared in his early media coverage, and in his own work. The second part looks at how the print and film biographies produced after Gould's death alternately affirm and challenge his role as a Canadian icon. Throughout his lifetime, Gould drew on his own Canadian-ness to distinguish himself in the competitive world of performance, and to explore his own interests in solitude and egalitarianism. In addition, though, both before and after his death, Canadian cultural institutions mandated to establish an "imagined community" for a geographically scattered and culturally diverse population put forward Gould as a symbol of a developing world class arts scene in Canada. Biographies and biographical films like Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, François Girard and Don McKellar's biopic *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, and Mark Kingwell's *Glenn Gould in the Extraordinary Canadians* series all foster Gould's link to Canadian identity in various ways, while two biographical novels, Tim Wynne Jones' *The Maestro* and Joe Fiorito's *The Song Beneath the Ice* question Gould's appropriateness as a Canadian cultural icon. All of these texts deploy Gould's biographical self to shape and explore notions of Canadian cultural identity.

Though the "Gould as Canadian" persona takes various forms—hometown Toronto boy, average rural Canadian, world class performer, ground-breaking

technological innovator—the most powerful version arises from Gould’s links to the Canadian North. His status as a national icon is often predicated upon a relationship between the musician and the region advanced by himself, his media relations people, and Canadian institutions seeking to construct a notion of Canadian-ness based on territoriality—the “true” North, the “great white North.” In Gould’s self-representations, the north becomes a complex metaphor, a topography for the musical/philosophical/electronic self. These representations then figure in succeeding “lives” which identify Gould with northerliness in several senses—north as frontier, north as sparse emptiness, north as Canada. Sometimes less conventional auto/biographical texts challenge the idea of Gould as north or as Canada as part of a larger questioning of dominant national, political, and cultural assumptions. In these cases, questioning Gould’s status as monumental Canadian artist accompanies questioning the North as synonymous with Canadian identity.

Gould’s constant auto/biographical play, however, which numerous biographers acknowledge has created a highly unstable subject, may have tied him even more closely to the North than he imagined. As Sergei Medvedev argues in “Blank Space: Glenn Gould, Russia, Finland and the North,” in many parts of the world, including Canada, definitions of north are unstable and multiple:

the North is more often communicated than experienced, imagined rather than embodied. Talking of the signifier and the signified, Ferdinand de Saussure used the metaphor of the sheet of paper: the *signifié* and the *signifiant* are inextricably linked as two sides of the same sheet. In the North, this structuralist link is far less obvious; indeed the North may be a one-sided sheet of paper, a

signifier without a signified. The North is the emptiness we are filling with our imagination, narratives and texts; a blank sheet of paper, on which words are written and erased; an empty snow field on which lonely figures emerge, pass, and disappear. (2)

Gould's own status as a "one sided sheet of paper" for biographical representation may be what he has most in common with the North, and with Canadian identity. Even the most traditional Gould biographical texts considered in this chapter find themselves stretching the limits of music biography by positing a communal self or by foregrounding and questioning the effectiveness of biographical process as a method of defining nationhood. The tensions in such texts between institutional and individual selves shed a strong light on how the lives of musicians and celebrities can be co-opted for political and institutional purposes.

Throughout Canada's history as a nation, its national identity has been notoriously difficult to define—and especially by Canadians. This conundrum is perhaps best illustrated by a 1960s CBC radio contest organized by Peter Gzowski that asked the nation to "Complete the adage, As Canadian as" Though most entries tried to capture some essential Canadian quality or image, paralleling the U. S. model, "As American as mom and apple pie," the winning entry was "As Canadian as possible under the circumstances." The difficulty of defining a specifically Canadian identity that Canadians felt in the 1960s continues today. The reasons for this quandary are fairly obvious. The dual English and French colonial histories of the country, the continuing existence of two distinct cultures and languages, the indigenous population's struggles within the nation, and the official policy of multiculturalism all stand as obstacles to

identifying any common facets which unify us as a nation. As Eva Mackey explains in *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*, “From colonial times to the present, intellectuals, politicians of every hue, activists, state institutions and businesses have sought to define, defend and differentiate Canadian identity. . . . Yet if we listen to people, the project of creating identity has been terribly unsuccessful. Everywhere, Canadian identity is seen as crisis-ridden, as a fragile and weak entity constantly under attack and in need of vigilant defense” (9). Yet nationalist yearning is not lacking, as the instant popularity of the 1994 “I Am Canadian” advertisement for Molson’s Canadian beer bears out.¹ Joe, a young Canadian, defines his national identity by rejecting American stereotypes of Canadians, and defining his difference against an American other. Quoted in parliament, parodied in numerous ways, and eventually the subject of a CBC documentary, this ad testifies to intense Canadian interest in giving voice to a sense of national selfhood (Manning).²

During Gould’s youth, however, Canada seemed caught in a vice of powerful and external cultural influences. While still very much a British colony, with most of its artistic, cultural, and political values traceable to the mother country, it was also increasingly influenced by its much more powerful neighbor to the south. But Canada’s sense of its own performance on the world stage during the first and second world wars had created a feeling of national identity which encouraged the government to seek ways to develop an even greater sense of shared culture and history within the country’s geographically dispersed and culturally diverse populations. As Mackey explains, the idea that Canadian identity needs to be “protected and produced” rests upon a longstanding notion that “Canada is marginal to and victimised by various forms of

colonialism” (9). Always worried about the possibility of national dissolution, Canadian institutions have long sought to define Canada for Canadians, and thus build their citizens’ sense of identity.

As Andy Bennett has noted in *Music, Space and Place*, not only does music “play an important role in the narrativization of place, that is, in the way in which people define their relationships to local, everyday surroundings” (2), but “the power that can be invested in music as a statement of identity has also led to music becoming an instrument of nationalism” (5). As an international celebrity playing music primarily originating outside of the country he later came to represent, Glenn Gould is a particularly interesting subject for studying the relationship between music and nationalism. Gould established himself by playing European art music which he then disseminated through American recording technology—hardly the obvious credentials for becoming a Canadian hero. But from the outset of his career, he consciously constructed himself as a Canadian who was much more than the sum of the music he performed. Through his auto/biographical representations, Gould turned himself into a national myth—a personality often deployed for reasons quite separate from the music through which he became famous.

Many critics have argued for biography’s historical importance as a nation-building tool. Lives about individuals, and biographical collections like the *Dictionary of National Biography* and *Who’s Who*, are the building blocks for the histories of nations. Furthermore, biographies and memoirs of exemplary citizens become repositories of the values shared by a nation’s people. As Marita Starcken notes in “Personal Stories and National Images: Memory, Reenactment and the Image,” “within national discourse the stakes of biography are high; the meaning of certain life stories helps to shape the ways in

which the nation and its history are defined” (31). And Gillian Whitlock has described how memoirs by Islamic women read widely in the West function as “soft weapons” in the U. S. “war on terror.” Such texts show that life writing is a powerful tool for shaping national identity. The lives of musicians have played their role in this nation-building function. In “Musical Biography and Its Discontents,” Pekacz points out numerous cases when a composer’s biographical details are shaped to conform to the political needs of the biographer, or to dominant political, national, or cultural ideology. Philipp Spitta, for example, used the dating of compositions to present Bach’s life as culminating in his work on the cantata. This emphasis tied Bach’s greatness to his role as “Protestant ‘arch-cantor,’” which appealed greatly to nineteenth-century orthodox German Protestant scholars who had a reverence for religion. In the 1940s, however, when new evidence emerged about when Bach actually composed his pieces, Spitta’s representation was challenged (52). By ignoring plentiful evidence of his homosexuality (55-56), Franz Schubert’s nineteenth-century biographies also show how musical biography “reflected the cultural and ethical norms of the time” (54). As for nation-building, Pekacz has shown elsewhere how Frederic Chopin’s biographers have interpreted his life as that of a uniquely Polish composer, even though he spent much of his adulthood and artistically formative years in France (“The Nation’s Property,” 46).

As a Canadian musician who foregrounded aspects of his own national identity during a time of crucial ferment in the arts in Canada, Gould’s performance of self made it easy to appropriate him as a national symbol. And yet, as the image of “Glenn Gould” began to inform ideas about Canadian culture and nationhood, Gould, himself, not unlike the subjects in Steven V. Hunsaker’s study *Autobiography and National Identity in the*

Americas, creates his public identity by “selecting, rejecting, shaping, and reimagining the nation to suit [his] own political and ideological goals” (6). As I hope to demonstrate, Gould therefore did not just become a convenient symbol for defining Canadian identity and culture. Through his own very public performance of self as Canadian, he also deliberately attempted to shape the nation. In his 1965 “Conclusion” to the *Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English*, literary critic Northrop Frye, who with Marshal McLuhan and Gould is often identified as one of the most groundbreaking Canadian thinkers of his time, identified several themes in Canadian literature that reflect important ideas in the national consciousness. The vast and dangerous geographical frontier surrounding Canadians on all sides, the garrison mentality developed in response to the uncertainty of the landscape, and the pastoral myth that Canadians could find peace and protection in the face of such dangers have all informed Gould’s representations of himself, and those of the various institutions using him to create a sense of national pride and identity. And since Gould, the North, and Canada itself are all shifting signifiers that have pointed to different geographical locations and ideologies at different times, some of the most recent biographical work presents Gould as unknowable, and therefore questions the use of Gould or even the North as symbols for contemporary Canada in all of its cultural complexity.

Gould arrived on the Canadian and international arts scene at exactly the right moment to be taken up as a symbol of Canadian identity. In 1951, just a few years before his New York debut and the *Goldberg Variations*, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences issued the Massey Report, which brought about a sea-change through its recommendation that Canada should develop a program of

government arts patronage administered by a Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences. According to the report, the way to create a unified, distinct Canadian nation was by nurturing a Canadian culture focused on high art that would be distributed to the masses. The enemy was explicit: American mass culture, then washing over Canadian citizens. Though recognizing some growth in the arts in Canada in the previous twenty-five years, the report outlined the dismal conditions for artists attempting to live and work within the nation's borders. Music received special attention. Almost all professional musical activity was concentrated in the four largest cities, but because of the high costs of touring such a geographically expansive nation, and U.S. agency dominance over concert promotion in the major cities, it was difficult to live as a performer without emigrating.

Other arts looked even worse. In 1948, only fourteen works of fiction and thirty-five books of poetry and/or drama had been published in Canada (Canada, 228). But because every art seemed to be in dire straits, the report concluded that the arts in Canada would consistently need assistance to combat American cultural imperialism. The Canadian Arts Council of the time agreed, testifying in a brief that “[n]o novelist, poet, short story writer, historian, biographer, or other writer of non-technical books can make even a modestly comfortable living by selling his work in Canada. No composer of music can live at all on what Canada pays him for his compositions. Apart from radio drama, no playwright, and only a few actors and producers can live by working in the theatre in Canada.” As a result “Canadian artists must be content with a precarious and unrewarding life in Canada or go abroad where their talents are in demand” (Canadian Arts Council Brief qtd. in Canada, 182). The Massey Commission's recommendation was a large-scale

government arts patronage program, operated through the Canada Council, which would provide scholarships for those in arts and letters, underwrite concert tours, commission music of national importance, and establish awards for young artists that would build on the already existing system of national festivals. The Massey Report was groundbreaking because up until this time, except in the province of Quebec, the idea of government arts funding was extremely unpopular in North America. But public perception of Canada's wartime achievement had fostered a sense of national pride, which proved to be a key element in the Massey Report's success (Litt, 17). In 1957, at the height of Gould's concert career, the Canadian government established the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities, and Social Sciences.

Looking back in 1980 at Canadian literary history over the preceding fifty years, Northrop Frye declared that the Massey Commission report "was a landmark in the history of Canadian culture, not merely because it recommended a Canada Council, but because it signified the end of cultural *laissez faire* and assumed that the country itself was responsible for fostering its own culture" ("Across the River," 4–5). Composer Godfrey Ridout wrote that the Canada Council "had an extraordinary effect" on music: "It financed commissions by Canadian performing artists or groups for new works by Canadians, so that the composers were now receiving fees for their works commensurate with what the composers felt were the right ones—even if they were not" (132). Ridout also notes the importance of the Canadian content rule, "and the insistence of the Canada Council that performing bodies supported by its grants perform some Canadian music" (133). Because of these developments, Gould lived and worked in Canada during a time of cultural growth. When he quit concertizing and decided to remain almost entirely

within his home country, he distanced himself from his concert audiences. And yet, even though it would become a major theme in his constructions of the nation, Gould was far from working in solitude. By living in Toronto, and working with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, he was operating within a rich and developing cultural environment open to the kinds of formal experimentation and musical-technological play he was drawn to at the time. Occupying the scene with other Canadian cultural icons like Marshal McLuhan, and surrounded by generous institutions like the CBC, Gould recorded and broadcast within an artistic and intellectual community sure of a pay check and an audience accustomed and receptive to experimentation. From this perspective, and certainly from Gould's own, the high points of his career therefore came *after* retiring from the concert stage, although Canadian institutions seeking to establish Gould as a national icon still often emphasize his early career. And furthermore, Gould's work in Canada corresponds with a larger cultural project that helped to create his reputation as exemplary Canadian.

Gould can even be thought of as a prototype, since his earliest biographical representations—press releases, reviews, and liner notes—portray him as a distinctly Canadian musician. Numerous factors contributed to this characterization. First, he was lucky enough to be born into an affluent family that was extremely supportive of his musical endeavors, thus saving Gould from many of the problems the Massey Report identified. Unlike many musicians of his time, Gould could study in Canada—first in his own home with his mother, and later at the Toronto Conservatory under Alberto Guererro.³ Since he could subsidize his own concert tours, Gould had already been playing in Canada for some time, and received considerable national press before he

debuted in New York. One of the first biographers to emphasize Gould's Canadian heritage, Geoffrey Payzant, noted that Gould "had toured the western provinces as a recitalist, and had further Canadian tours on his schedule in the near future. And he had played seven or eight network radio performances with the CBC" (12). Gould was known in Canada as a "Toronto Pianist," and local papers like the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* had made much of his genius even before his legendary 1955 Town Hall New York City debut. Early American publicity materials also highlighted Gould's national origin, seemingly as a way of distinguishing him from other performers. "Glenn Gould: Canadian Pianist" proclaimed the Town Hall poster, and his manager, Walter Homburger, frequently identified Gould as Canadian in his Canadian and American press releases. Columbia Records also distinguished Gould from other artists by somewhat condescendingly making much of the fact that he came out of a provincial Canadian background to shock the world with his remarkable and unexpected musical skills. Forging an early link between Gould and the Canadian North, the famous press release for his 1955 *Goldberg* recording described a "young Canadian pianist" who, on "a balmy June day" showed up in "coat, beret, muffler and gloves," casting one of Gould's famous eccentricities in distinctly national terms.⁴

Like Gould's early comments on his own genius, because he became at least a hometown celebrity at such an early age, it's hard to find comments about his nationality that aren't heavily mediated. Certainly, though, while Gould was being marketed and represented as distinctly Canadian, he affirmed aspects of that identity through his own early performances of self. The cold weather gear is an obvious example, but there were others. The young Gould drew attention to his Canadian-ness by publicizing his own

origins, always locating himself within Canada and connected to the North, though even at this early stage his own idea of North differed subtly from that of others. As Bennett has noted, music “plays a significant part in the way that individuals author space, musical text being creatively combined with local knowledges and sensibilities in ways that tell particular stories about the local, and impose collectively defined meanings and significance on space” (5). Though Gould’s music itself was not part of a “local” Canadian tradition, as he attempted to present himself as a unique concert pianist, Gould regularly performed “local Canadian” as part of his own public identities. When interviewers asked him where he was from, he sometimes responded that he was from Uptergrove, Ontario, the rural site of his family cottage, which perhaps made him even more “exotically” Canadian than if he had answered with the more internationally-known location of Toronto (Addison). During his concert career, and especially after his retirement, Gould continued to live and work in Toronto, and frequently identified himself as a Toronto boy in his writing. By the mid-1960s, he was refusing to fly, and was less and less apt to make the long drive to Columbia’s recording studios in New York to record. Instead, he purchased his own recording equipment and set up a studio in Toronto. By his mid-career, then, though he remained contracted to a major American label, Gould had moved almost all his production to Canada.

Gould was a fixture around Toronto, frequenting Fran’s restaurant on College St., working regularly at the CBC, and recording in his studio at the Inn on the Park at Don Mills and Eglinton. This decision to remain within the country’s borders explains in part why he became such a powerful symbol of Canadian identity. As the Massey Report had indicated, artists of Gould’s time often had considerably better opportunities elsewhere,

and although the arts patronage of the Canada Council somewhat alleviated this problem, artists continued to pursue more lucrative careers and richer artistic communities elsewhere, and especially south of the border. As Lorraine York notes in *Literary Celebrity in Canada*, a common theme in Canadian authors' performance of celebrity that emerges "with remarkable consistency, in different guises, involves citizenship. For Canadian writers, this tension is exacerbated by their positioning next to the large American English-language market" (5).⁵ Citing Nick Mount's work on early Canadian writers, York also explains that "the decision to leave [Canada] was often figured by the home audience as a desertion of national culture" (5). Of course, whether to remain or go abroad has not been a choice limited to artists. Canadians of various occupations have faced this decision to such a degree that it has actually become an element of Canadian identity. For much of Canada's history, national media has focused on the "brain drain," the migration of highly educated or extremely talented Canadians to primarily U.S. centers, and accusations of deserting of national culture confront workers in other arenas. Take for example recent online advertisements sponsored by the Federal Progressive Conservative Party attacking former Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff. These ads present Ignatieff, who spent several years in the U.S. as a professor at Harvard, as "Just Visiting" Canada. ("Canada and Me"). On the other hand, "ordinary Canadians" are "committed to Canada." It's "not just an address of convenience" ("Canada and Me"). Conversely, Gould's commitment to his home culture often results in representations of this eccentric and extraordinary individual as one of the "ordinary Canadians." As a classical musician, perhaps more than any Canadian of his generation, artist or otherwise, Gould's career could have been furthered by living and working elsewhere. With the major recording

studios in New York, and the opportunity for years of public performance on international stages, relocating might have seemed inevitable for Gould. And certainly, many other Canadian classical musicians have moved abroad to further their careers. That he not only continued to live in Canada, but actually became less and less willing to leave physically or imaginatively, and continually positioned himself as a rural Canadian in his written work, made him an easy figure for Canadian cultural institutions, and Canadian audiences, to embrace.

An Extra/ordinary Canadian: Gould and the NFB

It was not just Gould's own performance as Canadian that established him as one of the foremost national treasures; he was also marketed as a Canadian artist to Canadians through institutions like the National Film Board. Founded in 1939, when Gould was only seven years old, its function was "to make and distribute films across the country that were designed to help Canadians everywhere in Canada understand the problems and way of life of Canadians in other parts of the country" ("The NFB"). Under the direction of John Grierson, the NFB first produced patriotic films and wartime propaganda, but after the war, it took up the challenge of helping to establish a common Canadian identity by promoting national culture. The NFB also sought to limit the influx of American culture through films, by unsuccessfully recommending that the Canadian government force Hollywood to reinvest 30-40% of its annual Canadian-made profits in the Canadian film industry. The NFB was buoyed by the praise it received in the Massey Report. Recognizing that "Nearly all Canadians go to the movies; and most movies come from Hollywood," which "refashions us in its own image" (50), the Massey Report also declared that Canada had been developing a strong documentary film tradition that could

be instrumental in developing a specifically Canadian identity.

In 1959, Wolf Koenig and Roman Roiter directed two half hour films on Gould for the *Candid Eye*, a series of brief documentaries broadcast on CBC television. These films were a new development in Canadian documentary form. Produced with no scripts, and influenced by the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson (Jones, 82), the films made use of new mobile, lightweight camera equipment to shoot on location. With the exception of the Gould films and one that followed Canadian contralto Maureen Forrester to a music festival in Puerto Rico, the *Candid Eye* recorded ordinary events in the lives of Canadians, so at least within the larger series, the Gould films are presenting him as a normal Canadian conducting his day-to-day business—however unusual that business may be.⁶ Even in celebrity portraits like the Gould and Forrester films and in the *Lonely Boy* documentary on Canadian pop star, Paul Anka, the focus of the *Candid Eye* is always on the individual's role in the larger Canadian society. In *Image and Identity: Reflections on Canadian Film and Culture*, R. Bruce Elder links the *Candid Eye* form to emerging Canadian notions of selfhood. Unlike comparable *cinéma vérité* American documentaries, the *Candid Eye* did not use a “crisis structure,” because that narrative form did not fit the Canadian notion of self:

Whereas American thinkers typically have claimed that individuals have natural qualities which bring with them natural rights . . . Canadian philosophers such as William Lyall, John Clark Murray and John Watson have stressed that the individual is not a natural phenomenon, but a social product. Their view collapses the distinction between the public self and the private self on which the crisis structure depends. (109)

For Canadian filmmakers then, the new lightweight, mobile camera technology was not a tool for gaining access to the private sphere of the individual, but instead provided “instruments that could go out into the real (social) world and capture reality as it truly is” (109). *Glenn Gould: Off the Record* and *Glenn Gould: On the Record* seek to show us Gould in what were then his two primary worlds: the small-town Canadian setting of Uptergrove on Lake Simcoe, where the Goulds’ cottage was located, and the fast-paced music world of New York City. A pastoral and a frontier myth are at play in these films. Gould is a quintessential Canadian who emerges from, desires, and continues to function successfully in the quiet world of rural Canada. Yet he also ventures out into the unknown and complicated territory of the classical music world, and holds his own there. The lesson for Canadian viewers? Home-grown musical talent emerges from Canada and can succeed in the international arena while remaining steadfastly Canadian.

At the same time, through interviews with Gould and his own seemingly candid participation, these films also show us Gould representing himself. The films also present Gould as represented by employees of Columbia Records and others within the music industry, creating a layered representation in which Gould and Canada take on various, sometimes conflicting meanings. *Glenn Gould: Off the Record*, the first and shorter of the two films, draws heavily on a rural Canadian setting, following Gould to his parents’ cottage in Uptergrove, where he walks with his dog in the woods. But Gould also appears practicing the piano, sharing his views on the concert world with an interviewer, and talking with musician and CBC producer, Franz Kraemer, about the modernist music of Webern. *Glenn Gould: On the Record* features Gould at a Columbia studio in New York recording Bach’s *Italian Concerto* and also in conversation with Howard Scott, the

engineer on the album. Emerging at a time when the NFB had undertaken several biographies highlighting the lives of important Canadians and especially writers, both Gould films are efforts at nation-building. As Gould often did in his own writing, the films emphasize Gould's Canadian identity, linking the life of a world class performer to the lives of ordinary Canadian citizens, and suggesting that Gould in fact can be both. *Off the Record* treats Gould as a world class artist, but places him in a rural Canadian context seen as essential to his development, and to his continued ability to achieve a balance between celebrity and solitude. *On the Record* emphasizes his international standing by showing his recording work in New York. Both films educate Canadians about their own history, by showing us a subject who walks among his fellow citizens unnoticed, but garners the utmost respect from the more worldly music industry executives in New York City. Three different levels of auto/biographical narrative also identify Gould with the North but in different ways. An American north-of-the-border view comes from Howard Scott, Gould's Columbia producer. The filmmakers present north as north of Toronto, in Ontario cottage country. And in his interview scenes, Gould represents himself as both of the above, but also reconfigures north into a generalized vast expanse by discussing the creative possibilities inherent in a barren landscape. All three norths define Gould's identity, though the films and Gould both seek to replace Scott's view of Canada/North as an empty, provincial nation with the portrait of a nation with a welcoming quiet landscape and nurturing community, with its own form of cultural vitality and openness to experimentation, *and* with a vast expansive landscape that makes possible a unique relationship to music and a new form of musical thought.⁷

The American view of Canada as a cultural void finds its voice in Columbia

producer Howard Scott's comments about the young pianist. In one of the few segments of *On the Record* clearly staged for the film crew, over tea with an interviewer, Scott begins describing Gould as follows: "In the four years that I've known Glenn, he's gone from a small-town hick . . ." Gould interrupts jokingly, "Now just one dog-gone minute," but Scott continues, characterizing Canada, through Gould, as rural and provincial:

Scott: Well, I mean after all, as a kid that came out of Toronto, and I don't think you'd ever been out of Toronto. . . really, since I met you four years ago. . . .

Gould: My dear sir, I had toured the Canadian provinces widely.

Scott: That's what I mean, you were a provincial hick.⁸

For Scott, Canadian-ness is equated with inexperience and youth. Later on, when Gould is shown relaxing in the sound booth, reading the newspaper. Scott comments on the difference between the Gould of his 1955 recording debut, who not only didn't care about, but couldn't read the financial page of the *New York Times*, and the sophisticated Gould of 1959, who reads the *Times* to "find the value of the Canadian dollar," an indicator of his newfound business savvy.⁹ For Scott, the film's representative American, because Canada is a culturally empty space, Gould's emergence as a mature, talented artist is a conundrum ripe for use as a publicity tool. His lack of worldliness makes his artistic genius all the more extraordinary, and his Canadian heritage is simply one of several factors that make up Gould's burgeoning legend: he came out of nowhere as a young man, played the piano beautifully, and chose for his first recording *The Goldberg's*, an obscure, cerebral piece which in his hands instantly became a bestseller. Scott even grudgingly admires Gould's decision to stay in Canada despite his international success,

crediting him with being one of the few artists who “recognizes the value of getting out of this rat race.”

Gould’s response refocuses the legend Scott creates onto the relationship to music an artist who emerges from a rural environment such as the Canadian North can have. In response to Scott’s comments, Gould allows that “There’s something slightly exotic about coming out of the Canadian snows, I admit,” but associates his distinctive musicality to his experience of the Canadian landscape, noting that, “First off when you get in the country, your whole relation to music—mine anyway—changes.” Gould then creates a connection between the North, winter, and musical excellence, by mentioning that he associates the regular Sunday afternoon CBC broadcast of the New York Philharmonic with the “great vast fields of snow – white and grey,” that he saw as he and his parents drove back to Toronto from Lake Simcoe. In this way, his Canadian parents and Canadian institutions planted and nurtured the young musician’s musicality in a specifically Canadian time and space. Similarly, Gould and the NFB documentaries create a notion of place through music, and a notion of music through place. Gould sees his approach to classical music as an outgrowth of his home landscape—“grey, endless vistas of snow, frozen lake, horizon, that sort of thing.” Both Scott and Gould agree that Gould is a unique phenomenon, and for both it is because he emerged out of nowhere. Gould’s stark, solitary landscape is not a void, however, but a fertile space for developing musical thinking—a silence which allows room for the music to emerge.¹⁰

In their overall narratives, *Off the Record* and *On the Record* work to refute the idea of Canada as cultural absence. *Off the Record* juxtaposes New York and the rural Canadian landscape to show how Gould, the small-town boy, moves easily between

everyday rural Canadian life and sophisticated New York musical culture, implicitly suggesting the first landscape is what allows him to traverse the second. In doing this, like other musical biographies seeking to advance a particular political thesis, the film takes liberties with the facts. Though Gould grew up, attended school, and made his home primarily in Toronto, the documentary links him to the Canadian north by filming him in his rural “retreat,” his parents’ cottage on Lake Simcoe near the village of Uptergrove. This scene sharply contrasts with opening images of the New York cityscape and the frenetic movement of cars through the streets, while the soundtrack blares out the cacophonous noise of traffic. As we follow Gould to Steinway and Sons in search of a piano for his next recording, the voiceover establishes his credentials as an international artist, claiming that “to win acclaim in this fiercely competitive city is the seal of approval for musicians. But few make it. One who has been accepted into the charmed circle at the top is the Canadian pianist, Glenn Gould.”¹¹

Surrounded by a selection of pianos while two Steinway employees hover nearby, ready to move his special chair from one piano to the next, Gould shifts from instrument to instrument, sometimes playing more than one at a time, and passing judgment. Meanwhile the voiceover speaks of his childhood gifts and young adult successes, claiming that “rare” musicians like Gould “enter a very special world with its own peculiar problems, difficulties, rewards, and professional preoccupations.” A segment showing Gould joking with the Steinway employees about their collection of famous artists’ special piano chairs somewhat surprisingly suggests that the 27-year-old Gould should be considered in the same breath with Josef Hofman and Ignacy Paderewski. And yet, though clearly an international artist of considerable acclaim, Gould’s upbringing and

his desire to remain Canadian gets presented through the stunning contrast between New York's Steinway and Sons and the rural landscape of Lake Simcoe. "When Gould is not on tour or recording," the voiceover tells us, "he spends most of his time at his retreat: a cottage on the shore of Lake Simcoe, 90 miles north of Toronto."¹² Panning along the shoreline, and across a grassy, tree-lined lawn to the modest cottage, the camera then makes its way inside to reveal Gould in a small practice studio, looking out at the Canadian landscape. As the camera later shows us the Doolittle family next door and other images of small-town life, the voiceover confirms that the Canadian cottage is essential to the artist's creativity: "Gould needs the undistracting tempo of rural life to concentrate completely on his one love."¹³ Here the film establishes a theme that pervades representations of Gould as Canadian: He needs the landscape and its people, to feed his particular form of creativity. In this way Gould, a longtime resident of Canada's largest city, comes to embody a rural, pastoral myth already central to Canadian identity, and therefore confirms the link between Gould and "ordinary Canadians."

The film even suggests that the ordinary people of Lake Simcoe, who act as caregivers, nurturing the homegrown talent, or who remain oblivious to the hero who lives among them, actually make Gould's success possible. The Doolittles occasionally clean up for Gould and bring him meals, and the voiceover reports that Gould is often so absorbed in his musical thoughts that "the local storekeeper likes to tell of crumpled banknotes dropped absentmindedly and frozen in the snow" which he "automatically" saves for Glenn.¹⁴ Gould often drives into the local town of Orillia for dinner, where a restaurateur is "so proud of him that his Wurlitzer often plays recordings of Bach and Krenek at full volume to the astonishment of the tourists." Though assisted by some of

his neighbors, Gould also benefits artistically from the anonymity he cannot achieve elsewhere. As the camera focuses on Canadians of all ages enjoying the nearby beaches, the voiceover shares that “Gould is not well known locally and most people are unaware that a young man living down the road draws rave notices when he plays in San Francisco or London.” In the film, Gould never appears as the object of the public’s gaze, shown instead alone at the piano, walking with his dog, or in conversation with other artists and interviewers. The Lake Simcoe community therefore makes Gould’s musical career possible because in this space, aided by the kindness of neighbors, he can collect his thoughts and practice, far away from the concert hall. Gould is both an ordinary and extraordinary Canadian—a local boy so part of the landscape that he’s scarcely noticed by the locals, and yet an extraordinary musician who brings an element of Canada to the world. Clearly Canadians do not need to worry that Gould has sold out, become an elitist, or plans to leave. In fact Gould claims to “envy” his neighbors their regular jobs and ability to stay within Canada’s borders. In *Off the Record* at least, the North is both a benevolent landscape and rural community that supports its own, and thereby creates a Canadian identity that unites extraordinary artistry and everyday acts of kindness and generosity. As Smith’s poem states, “to be in Canada it’s nice.”¹⁵

In his interview segments, however, Gould constructs Canada as a different kind of north, and himself as a different kind of Canadian. *Off the Record* follows Gould to his parents’ cottage during the height of the summer season. In this early opportunity for self-representation, Gould instead establishes a connection between himself and a colder, more northerly landscape. It is difficult to tell just how much influence Gould had on these NFB films. Given his well-known insistence on controlling his media appearances,

however, it's safe to assume that Gould was not a passive participant, and he certainly uses the interviews as an opportunity to perform his understanding of himself as a Canadian, and his own definition of Canada. Through his appearance and responses to the interviewer's questions, he associates himself with the North. Although during a photo shoot in *On the Record*, Gould refuses a producer's suggestion that he put on a scarf while at the piano, stating "I've had quite enough of that sort of picture,"¹⁶ throughout *Off the Record* he wears his cold weather gear, even though the film was obviously shot during the summer. The contrast is a source for humor. During an interview scene, the camera cuts from a man and child who appear to be at a nearby cottage, wearing only swim trunks and splashing in the water, to the musician, sitting by the lake in overcoat, scarf and gloves.¹⁷ Another scene shows children paddling a small rowboat, bare legs hanging over the side into the water, as Gould in coat and hat drives his motorboat. For Canadians familiar with the local climate, Gould's overcoat and cap are eccentric, setting him apart from his fellow citizens. But when asked to discuss concert life, Gould describes a recurring dream he had when faced with going back to school after Labor Day. Gould wakes up at the lake, but "instead of seeing grass," he sees rock "as one would see 100 miles to the north of here." He describes the vision as so appealing that he was extremely disappointed upon awakening.¹⁸ What's fascinating about this sequence is how he unites his opinion of concert life with his well-known terror of being amongst his peers as child, and apparently proposes a barren, northern Canadian landscape as the antidote. Though Gould constantly wears clothing that would protect him from the harshness of the landscape that offers him salvation, his gear also becomes iconic, a constant visual reminder of Gould's link with the North.

Though *Off the Record* perpetuates a vision of Canadian identity founded on a vast, empty landscape, through Gould's interviews the film also affirms the value of Canadian arts institutions. According to Gould, most performers feel uncomfortable in the recording studio, because they realize their work becomes permanent. He, however, feels "quite the opposite," because of his comfort with the microphone, thanks to years performing on CBC radio:

When I was in my teens and still at school, I didn't do any travelling at all. The only city in which I really played was Toronto and perhaps once or twice a year there, and so if I did any performing at all it had to be on the radio, or from 1952 on, on television when we had it in Canada. And um, I became so used to these media, to being alone in the studio, um that um, that nothing else mattered. In fact, I've often wondered if, um, the justifiable complaints that I sometimes hear about my platform manner isn't a result of the fact that um, for many years, formative years, I could be completely uninhibited and it didn't matter what I did as, as long as the music got across.¹⁹

Gould therefore not only first became known through the CBC, but he found these radio performances a purer experience of the music, because he didn't have to respond to the needs of a viewing public. Of course, this conviction would become an essential part of his philosophy of recording—another famous element of Gould's life that is presented as the result of his Canadian origins.

On the Record also educates Canadians about the arts; however, this film places Gould on the world stage, or rather, the part of that stage Gould values most: the recording studio. This film refutes the American view of Canada, and Gould in particular,

by showing him easily negotiating the international music world, and identifying his interest in recording and technology as a specifically Canadian contribution to music. Through his own performance of self, Gould both corroborates and contradicts the idea of Canada as provincial. Like *Off the Record*, *On the Record* begins with shots of New York cityscapes and streets. The camera follows the cab that weaves Gould through the city toward the studio. Gould is already performing his Canadian identity as a kid from nowhere. It's a warm day, but Gould, dressed in typical cold weather gear, asks the driver to roll up the windows, saying "I'm from Canada, and up there we're used to having the windows up, see?" The conversation this comment generates casts Gould in the role of Canadian ambassador, explaining aspects of his culture (though exaggerated) to a cab driver who has never heard of Gould and seems unfamiliar with "long hair" music, suggesting that when it comes to high culture at least some U.S. citizens are not that sophisticated.²⁰

Off the Record shows Gould resting and preparing for work; *On the Record* shows work in progress, and Gould the young Canadian is clearly an important recording artist with much to accomplish during his studio time. The film foregrounds technology, cutting from Gould's performance to the overhead microphones absorbing it, to the tape that records it, then to the cityscape. The voiceover explains the sequence: a new music history is underway. People used to travel to New York to hear the great musicians in concert; now a major recording center, the city sends music out to the "four corners of the world."²¹ Gould's status as an historic Canadian therefore partially results from his moment in musical history. The film reveals how much technology and people power goes into one recording, but presents Gould as the center of the production. The camera

shifts from the crowded control booth, where engineers do play-backs, serve each other coffee, and negotiate Gould's payment, to the studio itself, where technicians prepare the lights, microphone, and piano for Gould's next take.²² The relaxed atmosphere confirms Gould's ideas about recording versus the concert stage. He is alone in the studio when he plays (except, of course for the invisible camera crew). As for the crew of technicians, unlike audiences who look for errors in the performance, they are reading the paper, filling their coffees, joking about gardening, and carrying on a variety of mundane conversations unrelated to the task at hand. I've already noted the recreation of this scene in *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, which presents the technicians' disinterest as reflecting their normalcy in contrast to Gould's genius. Here, however, there is no enraptured flailing and conducting, and the contrast speaks to the kind of audience Gould wishes to play for: either for no audience at all (the control booth technicians) or one genuinely engaged in the music and collaborating with the performer (the technicians who prepare instrument, mics, etc). Gould himself is relaxed, looking over a score in the sound booth with his stocking feet on the table. And unlike some of his reviewers, the technicians appreciate Gould and his work: Rather than making fun of Gould's infamous left hand conducting while the right plays, Howard Scott points it out during the second movement: "I love the conducting he's going through. Look. It's marvelous."²³ The result is a wholly favorable portrait of the artist. None of the charges reviewers regularly levelled at him appear. Gould is neither a hopeless eccentric, nor a transcendent genius. Like many subjects in the *Candid Eye* series, Gould appears here as a hard-working young Canadian going about his daily tasks, which in this case includes achieving his vision in the recording studio.

As Erin Manning notes in “I AM CANADIAN: Identity, Territory and the Canadian National Landscape,” Canadians strongly identify themselves with an imagined geography:

Generations of Canadians have grown up seeing Canada through the paintings of the Group of Seven, taught the link between territory and identity as a window into ‘their’ landscape. . . . The foregrounding of landscape as the “true” image of Canada as emphasized in the [I AM CANADIAN] commercial continues to be an essential proponent in the nationalizing attempts to relegate the discourse of “Canadian identity” to notions of vastness and emptiness, where the nation represents the ideal image of an ordered universe, its limits fixed and identities secured.

As he later explained in his introduction to *The Idea of North*, Gould grew up in a Canada literally drawn by the Group of Seven. His Canada was landscape, and taken together *Glenn Gould: Off the Record* and *Glenn Gould: On the Record* link Canadian identity to long-held ideals about the landscape as well. But by presenting Gould’s interview statements about the landscape and Canadian cultural institutions, and by emphasizing recording and technology, these two documentaries add a new element to what it means to be Canadian. These National Film Board portraits are early attempts to unite in Gould disparate components that fit nicely with Canadian institutions’ attempts to construct a national identity.

“I chose north as a handy metaphor”: Frontiers of Technology, Self and Nation

After Beethoven, Gould’s judgments on composers changed from unusual to bizarre. He denounced Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt, and more mildly

dismissed Schubert. . . . On the other hand, he praised and recorded Oscar Morawetz, Jacques Hetu, and Istvan Anhalt, Canadians all.

Otto Friedrich, *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*

Many Canadian institutions have agreed that Gould's groundbreaking approach to classical musicianship is an element of his identity that marks him as distinctly Canadian. Of course this claim is in part a response to the claim that in general, Canadian-ness doesn't matter. As Robert Fulford notes, in "Mary Pickford, Glenn Gould, Anne of Green Gables and Captain Kirk: Canadians in the World's Imagination," many Canadian celebrities are "easily absorbed into the stream of international culture, so that their origin quickly becomes obscured or forgotten." For example, Michael Ondaatje is often identified in the American media as a "Sri Lankan novelist," though he has been "eminent in Canadian literary culture since the 1960s." Lorraine York remarks that Margaret Atwood is regularly taught in American schools and universities with no mention that she is from Canada (99). That Ondaatje was born in Ceylon, and has written extensively about it, could arguably create some confusion about his citizenship. But Atwood was born and raised in Canada, where she continues to make her home, and has set many of her novels in Toronto and the surrounding area. According to Fulford, given the dominance of a "gigantic cultural engine" south of the border, Canadian artists can either be "willingly absorbed" by that culture or "create centres or clusters of talent and production within Canada and try to appeal first to fellow Canadians with distinctive forms of expression, *then* perhaps move out to the larger world." As the two NFB films I've discussed reveal, Gould's Canadian heritage was not only part of his early public image, but also an important part of his performance of self. Gould could never be

mistaken for an American artist, because his publicity engine's modus operandi presented him as an unprecedented phenomenon in music, in part because of his emergence from nowhere—or in other words, from Canada. Gould's own performance of his Canadian-ness was incessant, and while he occasionally alluded to Canada as "nowhere," even at an early stage his notions about his home country were more nuanced, and often linked the solitude of the Canadian winter with musical thought and experimentation.

Other reasons have been offered for Gould's lack of assimilation into American culture. Fulford argues that it was his embrace of the recording studio over the concert stage, and his technological innovations that kept him apart: "His great project was to reinvent musical performance for the electronic age." Fulford insists that as a musician who abandoned public performance, who spoke emphatically about the importance of recording, and who created new musical forms through his radio documentaries, all from within Canada, Gould was a highly productive, original artist whose work, even though it begins in the classical repertoire, could not be assimilated by other cultural traditions. And certainly, retiring from the concert stage, and incessantly justifying his withdrawal through philosophical arguments about music and technology, prevented Gould from becoming just another classical pianist. Mark Kingwell writes that Gould didn't just stop playing; he "enacted not-playing for the remainder of his days" (74). And since Gould soon refused to fly, and became less and less willing to travel, not-playing also became a performance of his Canadian identity. His location within Canadian borders, his groundbreaking ideas about performance and artistic production, and the thematic preoccupations of his work created the constellation of traits necessary to transform Gould into a Canadian icon.

After leaving the stage, in his radio documentaries and in his endorsements of technology, Gould invoked the notion of the everyday Canadian citizen that informed documentary series like the *Candid Eye*. By including the voices of Canadians who live outside of the major cities and work in occupations other than the arts, Gould's radio documentaries cross the boundaries between the elitist realm of classical music and the cultures of ordinary Canadians. Despite his extraordinary intelligence and musical gifts, Gould was fascinated by, and even preferred, the company of people outside of the art world. As a result, his self-presentation as someone from the "uncultivated" world of the North re-enforced his disdain for the elitist world of the concert. According to S. Timothy Maloney, "The public concert is a spectacle mounted for the benefit of a paying audience. It is a purchased commodity differing little in its origins from gladiator duels or professional sporting events, though proceeding from a loftier aesthetic" ("Marshall McLuhan," 60). Gould championed recorded music because it could create a relationship with listeners that went beyond etiquette, competition, and commodification—the elements of concert life he found reprehensible and endured because of a shared love of music. Gould was not interested in the hierarchies and distances created by the concert hall. Even his technical choices when recording—for example, placing the microphones much closer to the piano than many of his contemporaries—created a more intimate sound. Rather than reproducing the group mentality of the concert hall, such music seeks an intense interaction between individuals ("Marshall McLuhan," 63).

Gould's ideal audience/performer relationship has much in common with Northrop Frye's pastoral myth: "a nostalgia for a world of peace and protection, with a spontaneous response to the nature around it, with a leisure and composure not to be

found today” (“Conclusion,” 840). And for Gould, this myth was Canadian, because the relationship he desired closely resembled the one-to-one interactions he enjoyed as a child and young adult through the CBC’s broadcasts. Gould increasingly came to depend on the Canadian cultural institutions that enabled him to create and distribute his work. For a time he served as co-director of the Stratford Festival. He also collaborated with Canadian filmmaker Norman McLaren, and created the soundtrack for Timothy Findley’s *The Wars*. With John McGreevy, he even produced *Glenn Gould’s Toronto*, a film in which he serves as a guide to his home city. But the CBC was always his primary institutional relationship—and in fact, the Toronto documentary was a CBC production. As Gould himself confirms in *Off the Record*, radio, and specifically the CBC, was a hugely formative influence upon him as a child and young performer. And as Simon Frith notes, this was true for Gould’s entire generation:

radio was the most significant twentieth-century mass medium. It was radio that transformed the use of domestic space, blurring the boundary between the public and the private, idealizing the family hearth as the site of ease and entertainment, establishing the rhythm of everydayness. . . . It was radio that shaped the new voice of public intimacy, that created Britain as a mediated collectivity, that gave ordinary people a public platform (creating the concept of “ordinary people” in the first place). It was radio that made sport a national symbol, that created the very idea of “light entertainment.” Where radio led, television simply followed. And it was radio (rather than film) that established the possibility of music as an ever-playing soundtrack to our lives. (96)

Frith is talking about Britain, but the same holds true for Canada’s national broadcaster.

Reporting for *Musical America* in 1965, Gould's caustic alter-ego, Dr. Herbert Von Hochmeister, describes how the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as an institutional symbol of Canadian identity, virtually defined Canada for Canadians:

Not much happens in music in our country behind the corporate back of the CBC. The very words "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation," wafted into the night air with the soporific white-noise comfort of a staff announcer confirming a station break, bring a catch to all loyal, and liberal, throats, a tremor to all tractionless spines, a welcome certainty that what we've just heard has been stamped culturally fit. From beneath the High Victorian turrets of a folksy house in downtown Toronto . . . a shrewd covey of white-collar conciliators devote themselves with dedicated anonymity to governing our cultural life. And rare is the artist, implausible the musical organization, able to remain in this country hermited against the trends they interpret for us. Fortunate it is, then, that—taken in the larger view—the Corporation's efforts mightily deserve our commendation. (399)

Alliteration and tongue-in-cheek humor aside, this passage certainly testifies to the importance of the CBC in defining Canadian culture, and because it was established in 1936, when Gould was a very young boy, the CBC had always been a part of his life. As Jennifer Higgs and Sarah Church report in their entry in the *Encyclopedia of Canada*, the CBC was a nation-building institution that, according to the Broadcasting Act, would "safeguard, enrich, and strengthen the cultural, political, social and economic fabric of Canada" (qtd. In "Policy 1.1.1. CBC/Radio Canada Mandate"). The CBC was especially important for Gould because it scheduled regular classical music broadcasts of

international orchestras and performers, and also because it supported Canadian musicians. In *Glenn Gould: Off the Record*, he himself claims he had considerable exposure as a classical music performer without leaving his hometown thanks to his broadcasts on CBC radio. Many other musicians could make the same claim. Higgs and Church report that in the biographical entries compiled in the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada* “no other organization is acknowledged as often as the CBC, whether as a performance medium, an employer, a sponsor, or a discoverer of talent. No other single organization has played so large a role in making Canadians and the outside world aware of Canadian cultural pursuits and in helping these to flourish.”

From the beginning of his career, Gould was an artist the CBC presented as Canadian. Or as Kevin Bazzana puts it, “Like many Canadians, Gould believed in and supported public radio, and public radio returned the favour” (WS, 285). Over time, he became one of the artists who interpreted Canadian culture for Canadians on the CBC. After he stopped giving concerts, Gould became very active at CBC radio, which gave him “*carte blanche* to make whatever programs interested him, within the limits of the network’s resources” (WS, 286). For a “retired” performer, he was quite prolific. He gave radio recitals, made documentaries, interviewed other artists, and used the CBC to advance his ideas about recording. He and his various personae were also regularly featured on CBC television. All these activities publicly defined him as Canadian. But it was his groundbreaking radio documentary *The Idea of North*, which featured five interview subjects speaking about life in Canada’s Arctic, that forever tied Gould, the North, and Canada together for his national audiences. The CBC commissioned Gould to do something for the radio program *Ideas* to celebrate Canada’s centennial, and *The Idea*

of North was first broadcast on December 28, 1967. Gould had long been interested in that region of the country. A few years earlier he had travelled on the Muskeg Express from Winnipeg to Churchill, Manitoba. He wanted to venture further north, and had planned more projects based on his interest, but none had come to fruition. The *Ideas* project gave Gould the opportunity he had been looking for. The documentary he produced has become famous for its groundbreaking form. The voices of the interview subjects explaining their sometimes-contradictory views on living in the North are superimposed, one leading momentarily, and then fading back into the fray. The theme of isolation, a critical one for Gould at this moment and for the remainder of his life, also through this documentary became emblematic of Canadian culture and identity, with many subsequent books, art exhibits, and performances taking their inspiration from Gould's title or ideas.²⁴ And Gould's *Idea of North* also established him as a Canadian icon, because of how it represents Canada, and how it represents Gould himself. Gould becomes a Canadian artist associated with the North because he has produced a text about it. By presenting themes of interest to Gould as central to Canadian identity, *The Idea of North* ultimately stands as a portrait of Gould as Canada—elusive and fragmentary.

Of course, many writers had articulated the importance of the North to the Canadian sensibility. By Gould's youth, a sense of Canada as North was a prominent feature of the imagined community tenuously holding together the relatively new Canadian nation. As Eric Kaufmann and Oliver Zimmer wrote, the North became a nation-building symbol both through the process of "nationalizing of nature," whereby "an image of national authenticity is developed in which a nation's distinctiveness is seen to be reflected in a particular landscape" (5). (Think Group of Seven.) But the idea of the

North also made possible “naturalizing the nation,” a process by which “nature in general, and specific landscapes in particular, are depicted as forces of moral and spiritual regeneration capable of determining the nation and giving it a compact, homogeneous, unified form” (6). Gould’s *Idea of North* therefore drew on tropes familiar in Canadian culture at the time: for example, two years earlier, Northrop Frye had written that the persistent sense of a frontier was an element of Canadian identity. One of Gould’s characters remarks in *North* that “a nation is great only as long as it has a frontier. We’ve got it in much more than a physical sense” (24). But in his documentary, Gould simultaneously presents the North as a physical frontier, a political and social frontier for the future of the nation, and a metaphorical frontier in the landscape of the self. As I will show in the next chapter, the entire *Solitude Trilogy* is an extension of Gould’s various experiments in self-representation and performance of his own identity. *The Idea of North* was his first contrapuntal radio documentary, and its use of multiple voices to explore ideas about the Arctic became a template for Gould’s efforts to portray his own often conflicting ideas and identities.

On more than one occasion, Gould interviewed himself. Sometimes he created two personages: G. G. and g. g. Sometimes he fragmented himself into several identities: the New York City cab-driver Theodore Slutz; the British conductor, Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite; the Canadian radio producer, Duncan Haig-Guinness; and the already-mentioned Hochmeister amongst others. And late in his career, Gould would enlist others to perform the interviews with him, after scripting both questions and answers. In *The Idea of North*, he first captured the voices of his subjects through interview questions, then edited their answers into what is virtually a musical composition blending voice,

language and background noises. The result is in part a representation of Gould himself. In fact, when compiling the *Idea of Gould*, Rhona Bergman actually emulated the form of *The Idea of North*. But except for a few widely-spaced autobiographical segments, her project was ostensibly devoted to her subject. Gould, however, actually claimed that *The Idea of North* was “as close to an autobiographical statement as I am likely to make at this stage of my life” (cited in Friedrich, 205).

The Idea of North's multiple voices and Gould's many fractured self-representations reflect his own sense of a non-unified self, and an intense self-reflexivity which presented him with multiple sides of one idea at any given time. Whether or not he saw validity in all, or just used them as foils, depends on the circumstances. But Gould was also an extremely controlling, closely-guarded individual. He was intensely aware that numerous parties had a vested interest in various representations of the celebrity “Glenn Gould.” To represent himself straightforwardly could therefore have undermined certain versions of himself that were needed to sell records and maintain audience interest after his retirement. Any explicitly autobiographical text would also have violated the privacy he worked so hard to sustain, but as I suggested in chapter one, Gould's incessant play with his own image and identity speaks to his fascination with self-representation. And during the later 1960s, as Kevin Bazzana writes, after retiring from the concert stage and setting out in new directions, when making his documentaries about Canada's northern frontier, Gould was particularly concerned about who he was. He was “in the midst of a frontier experience of his own, having dropped out of public life in order to cultivate the physical and intellectual isolation he considered necessary for creativity” (WS, 299). Asking interview subjects about isolation and solitude therefore gave Gould

the opportunity to investigate creatively his own preoccupations, through a new type of composition, without exposing himself unnecessarily. Bazzana argues that Gould saw his interview subjects as archetypal characters or metaphorical representations of the North, rather than real figures whom he was representing in the documentary. In fact, Gould himself writes in his introduction that, because he was looking for specific points of view on the North, he chose his interview subjects “just as one would want to plan a dramatic personae with care when setting out to compose a play” (192). He therefore took offense to early responses that treated the documentary as aleatory, noting “*Nothing* could have been further from the truth” (Page, *Glenn Gould Reader*, 457).

His eventual cast foregrounds familiar aspects of Canada, the North, and himself: “We wanted an enthusiast, a cynic, a government budget-watcher, as well as someone who could represent that limitless expectation and limitless capacity for disillusionment which inevitably affects the questing spirit of those who go north seeking their future” (392), Gould recalls, and he eventually selected Marianne Schroeder, a nurse who had served in Coral Harbour; Frank Vallee, the author of *Kabloona and Eskimo in the Keewatin*; R. A. J. Phillips, the writer of *Canada’s North*; James Lotz, an anthropologist and geographer; and Wally Mclean, a surveyor “who was at once a pragmatic idealist” and “a disillusioned enthusiast” (392). Gould interviewed each subject separately. He then erased his questions and began shaping and orchestrating the interview subjects’ responses. The documentary’s overall dramatic concept reinforces the idea of a frontier experience. Gould suggests that the characters are in the dining car of a train traveling north, and the sound of moving along the tracks becomes the ground bass which unifies the piece. The result is profoundly multi-vocal, with voices surging momentarily into

discernability, then fading back and overlapping with others until they become virtually inaudible. As Paul Hjartarson explains, “Although Gould’s documentary technique enables him to perform a disappearing act, his ideas inform the programme,” and in this case, the main idea= is the importance of the North as geographical and physical frontier.²⁵

All of the characters talk about their experiences venturing into Canada’s northern territories, and reflect on how the North has affected their lives. The documentary begins with Schroeder describing her view from the plane when she first flew into Coral Harbour. The landscape is “endless,” and Schroeder remembers that “we seemed to be going into nowhere” (2). Confessing that this “flat..flat country frightened me a little,” Schroeder places herself into that myth of a journey of exploration into a harsh and unfamiliar landscape which Northrop Frye identifies as common to the Canadian imagination (“Conclusion,” 2). Many of the earliest Canadian literary texts were exploration narratives, and Frye notes that in the early stages of the nation,

To feel ‘Canadian’ was to feel part of a no-man’s land with huge rivers, lakes, and islands that very few Canadians had ever seen. . . In the United States one could choose to move out to the frontier or to retreat from it back to the seaboard. . . In the Canadas, even in the Maritimes, the frontier was all around one, a part and a condition of one’s whole imaginative being. The frontier was primarily what separated the Canadian, physically or mentally, from Great Britain, from the United States, and, even more important, from other Canadian communities. Such a frontier was the immediate datum of his imagination, the thing that had to be dealt with first. (“Conclusion,” 827)

Gould's documentary therefore revisits a theme already familiar to many Canadians. But on a meta-level, *The Idea of North* also articulates, then challenges the romantic notion of the North as a sublime landscape. As Schroeder describes her wonder and fear when first encountering the partially frozen northern lakes, Frank Vallee's voice enters in ironizing counterpoint: "I don't go.. for this Northmanship bit .. at all ..," revealing *The Idea of North* will not just be a narrative about Canada's northern territories, but a narrative about narratives of north. In fact, after Vallee criticizes the bravado that arises when people tell stories of their northern experiences, R. A. J. Phillips follows with another counterpoint: "sure the North has changed my life .. I can't conceive of anyone .. being in close touch with the North .. or simply travel it month after month .. and year after year .. I can't conceive of a person .. as really being untouched by the North for the rest of his life" (3).²⁶ Gould therefore arranges his characters' reactions to the Northern frontier experience so that they will deconstruct, modify, and affirm portions of each other's representations.

As the train rolls on and the characters seem to discuss their journeys, the documentary suggests the significance of the geographical frontier is not just the notion of survival in a harsh landscape, but also a sense of literal and metaphorical isolation. Wally Mclean, a kind of central narrator who receives the most airtime, describes a hypothetical journey in which his protagonist ventures into an unknown landscape knowing he will be "isolated for a long period of time in the lonely north" (10). Throughout the documentary, isolation is presented as physical confinement caused by the land. Schroeder, who remarks that "it is most difficult to describe" the North, sees the land as a physical trap. She "could not go anywhere .. except for a mile or two, walking"

(4).²⁷ Unable to escape, and removed from their communities, Gould's characters are forced to think outside of their usual experience. Northern Canada is therefore not just about traveling into an unknown and endless physical landscape, but about the mental challenges that landscape poses. In this way, Canada is represented as a physical space conducive to a particular kind of thinking that necessitates a confrontation with oneself.

Gould's documentary is also a theoretical consideration of selfhood and an allegorical representation of his own identity. Ultimately his interest in the North was neither in the geography nor the people, but in the North as a metaphor for the isolation he felt was a necessary condition for creativity. In his introduction to *The Idea of North*, he calls his documentary "an excuse—an opportunity to examine that condition of solitude which is neither exclusive to the North nor the prerogative of those who go north but which does perhaps appear, with all its ramifications, more clearly to those who have made, if only in their imagination, the journey north" (394). Gould's characters reportedly consider the connection between the North and the self, noting that isolation in the northern landscape provokes an intense evaluation of selfhood. Lotz observes that "in the north, we are at our greatest and most grotesque" (9).²⁸ Mclean suggests that "The person that makes the trip .. more often of course .. is going to realise that before long he's gonna be .. LAUGHS against himself" (14).²⁹ Self-conflict surfaces throughout the documentary in fascinating autobiographical commentary about metaphorical and fragmented identity. Schroeder and Phillips note that the isolation of the North produces a forced yet genuine sense of community.³⁰ In ironic counterpoint to Lotz's claim that the northern frontier has created a nation of non-conformists—and Gould, who withdrew from concertizing, is certainly one of them—Vallee, the cynic, says that the isolation and

the community can lead to “a deliberate building up of .. a kind of cult of personality .. you get lots of people .. attempting to .. create a style of their own” (25). In a passage that could be talking about Gould’s own self-publicizing, Vallee says that “like most stereotypes, people get to believe .. that this is the way they are” (24).³¹

Many of Mclean’s comments also echo Gould’s then-current circumstances. Unlike the other characters, who offer ideas which are then contradicted by others, Mclean enacts a self-questioning. He validates the experience of solitude, arguing that “there is such a thing as being a hermit by choice rather than by necessity,” but then asks, “Are you escaping in any real way by escaping north or retreating in any direction?” (26)³² In fact, all of the questions the characters pose about solitude, isolation, and community are relevant to Gould, making his first radio documentary a self-representation in both form and themes. Having recently withdrawn from public performance, and now increasingly isolating himself within his own country (and indeed his home city), Gould may have been asking, like many Canadians were at the time of the centennial celebrations, the question that Northrop Frye claimed was crucial to Canadian identity: “Where is here?” (“Conclusion,” 826). But Frye specifically distinguishes between “Where is here,” and “Who am I”; Gould conflates them in his consideration of the North. As the numerous voices act as foils for each other, the listener seems to be overhearing Gould considering and reconsidering his own notion of selfhood. Just as the North is not a stable location, landscape, or idea, each character approaches his or her northern experience in a markedly different way. As autobiographical statement, therefore, *The Idea of North* enacts the impossibility of a unified, coherent self. The overlapping, and sometimes disconnected voices suggest that for Gould, the self, like the

north “is process . . . not so much finding so much as seeking” (28).³³

The Idea of North represents this elusive, multiple and fragmented self as a metonymy of an elusive, multiple, and fragmented nation. A project commissioned to honor Canada’s centennial, *The Idea of North* also explores national identity, and here themes of the frontier emerge again. For Phillips, the fact that Canada still has a geographical frontier, while the people of other nations have to “dip back a hundred years to find their frontier and vicariously become a part of it,” results in “a civilization that does not conform” (24-25). But the documentary’s multiple voices deny any simple, romanticized notion of Canadian identity. Some see North as a vast, empty landscape ripe with philosophical possibility; others critique this idealism. And through repeated comments on impractical and fruitless northern research expeditions, *The Idea of North* lays bare the contradiction between Canadians’ love of North and the Canadian government’s and research institutions’ approach to investigating and serving northern land and people. Phillips, who worked for the Department of External Affairs, observes that “Canadians were . . . well .. if not throwing away their North for a mess of potage, at least being extremely oblivious to the responsibilities we had to the people there, and I suppose oblivious too, to the .. resources, the wealth that we could get from it. We just didn’t care about the North” (15). Lotz follows up with his own frustration about Canada’s official policies on its Northern territories: “you come from Ottawa you go into the North you write a report, you make a list of recommendations you bring it back to Ottawa and nobody pays any attention .. to it ..” (17).³⁴ The documentary thus points out the hypocrisy found in Canada’s thoughts about its northern expanse that Kingwell, in his biography of Gould, claims still applies today, when “if anything, Canadians are more

indifferent than ever to the realities of life in the largest area of the country” (134).

Gould has been criticized for focusing on southerners’ views of the North, and not including the voices of native people. Though not oblivious to them, Gould does present “Eskimos” primarily from the perspective of outsiders. Lotz, for example, criticizes Canadian policy by noting “the wretched health conditions, the wretched living conditions, the unspeakable sanitation” in which native people often live (29).³⁵ Phillips recalls that one of his tasks as a northern administrator was to “add up how many Canadian citizens had starved to death .. in that season” (32).³⁶ In a long, particularly dense contrapuntal passage, Lotz expresses a southerner’s admiration for Eskimo survival skills—“Eskimos lived, hunted and raised children in a place where 140 of Britain’s best .. the Franklin Expedition members died”—and suggests that “we adapt some of his ways of doing things .. his culture, his values .. for instance in child rearing” (39). At the same time, Schroeder tells a story of an “Eskimo” family who had a baby girl “to the disappointment of the whole group and the family,” and “named the girl Kurmallo which means a parasite, a woman .. because of the simple fact that she WAS a girl” (39-40).³⁷ In this way, Gould not only presents contradictions in white southerners’ views of northern native societies and cultures, but also exposes conflicting values in southern society itself, which become especially apparent when the characters consider the future of the North. Though Phillips grants that “it’s some years since we’ve had .. outright starvation in the North” (33), he and Lotz are concerned about the North’s future, seeing it as an unpredictable frontier for Canadian policy and national progress. Near the documentary’s end, Phillips and Lotz comment on the North’s potential as a place for both “recreation” and “re-creation.” Phillips cynically suggests that it is “going to look like suburbia,”

while Lotz thinks about the North as a recreational playground for people of Canada, Russia, and Japan.³⁸ Though their voices overlap so that neither is clearly discernable, working together they suggest that the North remains an important and uncertain element in the nation's future. Mclean's voice ends the documentary, and he makes it clear that it is not the individual voices that matter, but that these characters, cast to represent Canadians in general, must come together as a community to consider the significance of the North. Invoking William James' notion that "there's no moral equivalent of war... for providing something for you to be against" (51), Mclean observes that "the moral equivalent for us .. is going North" (53). While Mclean speaks, Sibelius's *Symphony no. 5*, the only traditional music in the documentary, gradually increases in volume.³⁹ But does this affirm or mock McLean's ideas? Perhaps both, since the documentary confounds any attempt to extract a clear message. Gould raises many crucial ideas about the North, but also buries them in a fray of overlapping voices, or deconstructs them through constant contrapuntal opposition.

But then again, the documentary's refusal to articulate a clear message might be an appropriate representation of both self and nation. After all, Gould was obviously interested in the North as a metaphor, but he never actually managed to get there. Churchill, the farthest north he ever ventured, was still relatively south. Gould realized the contradiction here, and in fact it may have made his interest in the North even more Canadian. When Gould writes in his audio introduction that the North for him was a place "to dream about, spin tall tales about . . . and in the end, avoid," he could have been speaking for much of the nation (5). As Sherrill Grace notes in *Canada and the Idea of North*, Canadians' attitudes have long been marked by such ambivalence: "On the one

hand, *we love our North* (however carelessly or romantically we define it) and see nordicity as our uniquely defining quality; on the other, we fear and loathe it and reject everything that might remind us (in the land and in our minds) of our inescapable northern latitude, climate, and topography” (47). As Gould’s documentary also suggests, according to Grace, ambivalence and contention about the North are specifically Canadian traits:

In the exciting ongoing debate not only over *where* North is but also over what its history is and *who* can tell it lies the creation of Canada itself, and North is neither synonymous with Canada nor different from it (from southern Canada); it is not either/or but both/and: it is part of the imagined community called Canada and a defining characteristic, a crucial metonymy, for the whole. It is North and north(s) co-existing in interdiscursive dependency. (50)

An artistic preoccupation with the North was by no means unique to Gould. But it was unusual for a concert pianist or composer—Gould viewed his radio documentaries as his primary creations—to deal so explicitly with this subject matter. That Gould was working in a new medium, and that he claimed in an interview that *The Idea of North* was autobiographical, set the stage for his future engagements with the North, and by extension, with the idea of Canada itself. Obsessed with representing himself and his ideas, one of his primary topics became his relationship with northern Canada.

References to the North would appear as regularly in Gould’s writing as would autobiographical fragments. In “The Search for Petula Clark” (1967) Gould analyses the pop singer’s repertoire while on a journey north along Highway 17 to Marathon, making much of the rural landscape along the way (300). And in “Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn

Gould About Glenn Gould” (1974) G. G. notes that, while music is off-limits as an interview topic, he will happily discuss “the political situation in Labrador” or “aboriginal rights in western Alaska” (316).

The Idea of North itself enjoyed considerable popularity with audiences. Gould’s reputation as an outstanding musician, the interest that any Gould work would arouse four years after his leaving the concert stage, and Canada’s general fascination with the North all contributed to the documentary’s success. The CBC rebroadcast the program for a northern audience, and Gould adapted it for CBC television in 1970. A vinyl version appeared in 1971, and a CD version in 1992. In fact, Grace argues that by the 1990s, the documentary’s several incarnations had “recuperated Gould himself, making him over as (or into) North” (13). Gould’s other writings also made him North, as well as an exemplary Canadian. By consistently locating himself either physically or imaginatively in northern Canada in his writings, Gould insisted on his public identity as Canadian even as he became more famous internationally, and more reclusive as a material subject. As Gould removed his body from public display, he became an increasingly textual self, existing primarily in musical and written work. And both made much of his connection with the North.

Glenn Gould as North/Glenn Gould as Canada

“Glenn Gould is a valuable Canadian national resource.”

Dennis Braithewaite, *The Toronto Star*

Gould portrayed himself as Canadian, and since his death, various Canadian cultural institutions have commemorated him as a quintessentially Canadian artist. Toronto is home to the Glenn Gould Professional School, operated by the Royal

Conservatory of Music, Glenn Gould Studio at the CBC, a combined recording studio and concert hall, Glenn Gould Park, and Gould Street. Toronto's Glenn Gould Public School has recently opened; its motto is "Learning Together in Harmony." In Ottawa, the nation's capital, The National Library of Canada houses the Glenn Gould Archive, whose website was the NLC's first, and "set the standard for future 'archival' sites at the library." Exhibits devoted to Gould appear regularly. The most recent, "Glenn Gould: The Sounds of Genius," ended an extended run at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa in May of 2009. Gould was frequently recognized during the historical myth-making provoked by the turn of the millennium. In 1998, *Maclean's*, Canada's national weekly, ranked Gould fifth of its 100 most important Canadians in history, and first among artists. In 1999 Canada Post issued a stamp honoring Gould as part of the Millennium Collection; in 2007, a commemorative envelope was issued. Though an international artist who continues to inspire a cult-like following world-wide, Gould received more recognition in the late 1990s in Canada than he did internationally. For instance, much to the chagrin of members of the Glenn Gould list serve, Gould did not appear in the June 8, 1998 *Time* magazine list of "100 Artists and Entertainers of the Century," though Maria Callas, Vladimir Horowitz, and Leonard Bernstein are included as "Prodigious Performers: three virtuosos who inspired cult followings and made unforgettable music"—a category Gould would have fit within quite well.

The ironies attached to these institutional representations of Gould suggest something about how celebrity selves are co-opted to construct national identities. The Glenn Gould Professional School has for its namesake a man who habitually presented himself as largely self-taught. Glenn Gould Studio is also a concert hall, whose many

performances prolong the life of a cultural practice Gould felt was obsolete. The biography of Gould that the York Region District School Board provided when introducing its new school did not mention that Gould himself found elementary school torturous, and left high school before earning his diploma. And the public display of personal effects—clothing, keys, pens, and even dishes—in major exhibitions almost mocks Gould's lifelong desire for privacy.

More traditional life writing projects frequently portray Gould as definitively Canadian, and often highlight his interest in the North. Most major biographies have addressed to some extent Gould's links to the North and to Canada, and the Glenn Gould Estate ensured that Canada would feature prominently in the biography it commissioned. In his "Preface" to *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, Otto Friedrich explains that he was contractually obligated to "be sensitive to, to look carefully into and to give close attention in the Biography to the impact of the country of Canada and way of life of Canada on Glenn Gould's development, life and work" (xi). Though Friedrich proved one of the least successful biographers in highlighting Gould's Canadian identity, earlier and later biographers who were themselves Canadian have emphasized Gould's Canadian upbringing and artistic influences. The earliest of these, Geoffrey Payzant's *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, pays careful attention to Gould's performing career even before he made his NYC Town Hall debut. In Rhona Bergman's *The Idea of Gould*, her interview subjects insisted on educating her about Gould's Canadian history rather than succumbing to her own ideas about Gould's divine gifts or intentions. And most recently, Gould's inevitable inclusion in the Extraordinary Canadians biography series, edited by eminent Canadian writer and thinker John Ralston Saul, testifies to Gould's continuing

importance as a Canadian cultural figure.

The lifewriting texts that connect Gould most fully to the North and his Canadian roots are Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, François Girard and Don McKellar's biopic, *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, and predictably, Mark Kingwell's *Glenn Gould* from the Extraordinary Canadians series. Bazzana's biography makes Gould's Canadian-ness the primary theme, using it to create a communal though unified self for Gould, and to represent Canada as a culturally rich environment, and the North as empty space. For Girard and McKellar, Gould's Canadian-ness is the one undeniable fact in an otherwise suspect life narrative. And Kingwell takes Gould's Canadian-ness and his biographical detail for granted when considering a complex configuration of ideas Gould represents—including the impossibility of a unified biographical self, Gouldian or otherwise.

Kevin Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange* foregrounds Gould's Canadian identity to create a communal Gouldian self. Though Paul John Eakin has written that, while the “myth of autonomy dies hard,” in fact, “*all* identity is relational” (43), in musical biography, a genre emerging from a tradition of viewing “genius as transmitter of divine inspiration independent from outside influences,” the myth still lives (Pekacz, 49). But by focusing on Gould's Canadian identity, Bazzana constructs a self that could not have existed were it not for the community from which it emerged and which nurtured Gould throughout his life. Published in 2003, this biography posits Gould's Canadian upbringing as the element that comes closest to accounting for a man who seems to defy definition. Bazzana presents a relatively unified Gouldian self, and in the “Postlude” of his text, he explicitly states that in both his life and work, Glenn Gould was a product of

his Canadian origins. Chapters entitled “Beach Boy,” and “National Treasure,” provide rich historical detail about Gould’s hometown and the cultural climate in Canada during his youth and early years as a performer. Unlike many of the earlier Gould biographical texts, which privilege his American debut, Bazzana focuses on his 1947 Toronto debut recital, given while still a student at the Conservatory, and on his Canadian concert career between then and 1955. Though Gould often portrayed himself as self-taught, Bazzana pays more attention than any other biographer to the role of Alberto Guerrero in Gould’s early training. Bazzana also emphasizes the importance of such Canadian institutions as the Toronto Conservatory, the Kiwanis Festival, and the CBC in Gould’s development, and deals at length with Gould’s Canadian manager, Walter Homburger. A figure largely ignored by other biographies, Homburger guided Gould for the first twenty years of his career, and Bazzana concludes that it was Gould’s “great good fortune to attract the attention” of Homburger (105). Bazzana places Gould’s reputation as an inexplicable prodigy in context by noting the existence of other Canadian prodigies of arguably greater technical skill (104). All of this has a normalizing effect. When placed in a national context, Gould is no longer the conundrum portrayed by Otto Friedrich, who despite his contract showed little interest in and virtually no understanding of Gould’s Canadian-ness. Nor are the eccentricities Peter Ostwald dwells upon as puzzling or sensational. Nor is Canada the cultural void portrayed in other biographies.

Bazzana spends much of his first chapter, “Beach Boy,” considering how Gould’s surroundings as a young child shaped his development as a musician. As a result, Bazzana takes on the role of “myth-buster,” showing again and again how other biographers’ neglect of Gould’s Canadian-ness leads to a misguided or incomplete

portrait of the artist. Most biographers cite Gould's parents as his most important early influence. Bazzana begins with Gould's early cultural surroundings. Quoting "experts" on Toronto culture between the wars, like Margaret Atwood, who described the city as "anglophone culture at its most yawn-inducing," Bazzana acknowledges its provinciality (16). But unlike other biographers, who take up Gould's career only after he debuted in the U.S., or dismiss the early influence of Toronto's culture and media, Bazzana argues that it was precisely this environment that allowed Gould to become the musician he did. Toronto,

for all its provincialism, and despite a reputation for being inhospitable to artists and intellectuals, was the ideal city to nourish an artist as iconoclastic as Gould.

Raised quietly as a typical middle-class Toronto WASP, he was not smothered creatively, but rather left alone to cultivate his highly individual ideas and practices, unmolested and free of oppressive traditions. He was sheltered, but *productively sheltered*—and, by choice, continued to shelter himself as an adult.

For an artist of Gould's sensitive and unconventional temperament, a more vibrant and cosmopolitan culture might have bruised the creative ego, but in the comfortable insularity of Toronto he developed a sense of self-confidence that steeled him against outside influences and allowed him to carve out his own niche. (21)

For Bazzana, Uptergrove, the location of Gould's parents' cottage, is notably not "North," but an extension of the city itself, offering "the same conservative Anglo-Protestant values" (22). The natural surroundings and community made possible Gould's development. And this environment was distinctly Canadian. What "sounds like the

typically Canadian pastoral myth evoking nostalgia for the peaceful, protected, leisurely life of a small-town childhood . . . was a reality of Gould's early life, and it nourished him" (23).

Bazzana therefore stresses the value of provincialism, and especially when assessing Gould's parents. Bazzana downplays other biographical representations of Gould's mother as an accomplished musician, noting that "One of Gould's friends compares Florence's ideas on music to those of a Sunday-school teacher and recalls her own playing as 'embarrassing'" (45). But Bazzana argues that this domestic relationship between music and religion/morality had far-reaching effects on Gould, who "would become, in his own way, a passionate advocate for a moralistic—and yes, puritanical—approach to music, and some of the music his family played, particularly hymns, made a profound impact on him long before he discovered composers like Bach and Schoenberg and continued to move and inspire him to the end of his life." (46). Gould's relationship with his parents—ordinary Canadians—is therefore presented as what enabled him to become a ground-breaking artist so distinct from other musicians of his time. Or put another way, Gould is so ordinary, he is extraordinary.

Like Ostwald, Bazzana focuses upon Gould's early piano lessons while seated on his mother's lap. But unlike Ostwald, who stresses the womb-like triangle of child, mother, and instrument, Bazzana sees an image of psychological wholeness that accounts for the "physical spectacle of Gould at the piano and his intimate attitude toward" the instrument, but also for Gould's later philosophy: "Paradoxically, this intense physical relationship with the piano was probably one important source of his later idealistic, otherworldly view of music. The piano was always a refuge for Gould – a 'Shangri-La,'

he said—a direct link with the idyll of his infancy, and he came to view music as (in his words) ‘a thing apart,’ unconnected to the real world” (47). Gould’s parents are important in other ways. His mother’s “nurturing but strict” teaching probably contributed to the precision in his playing (47), Bazzana also credits Gould’s mother and father with allowing their child to develop at his own rate, protected in large part from the public eye. They carefully avoided displaying their son as a prodigy, and unlike most other Gould biographies, Bazzana’s text does not use the word often. Because a prodigy almost by definition can’t be explained by his surroundings, and because Bazzana sees Gould’s groundbreaking musical thought and lasting influence as central to his importance as an artist, he downplays Gould’s childhood uniqueness, and foregrounds those Canadian cultural institutions which would be of particular importance to Gould.

Following Gould’s lead in his own self-representations, Bazzana restores the Canada of Friedrich’s and Ostwald’s biographies to its status as a nation with important artistic traditions and artists of its own. Though Gould’s parents kept him out of the public eye, his interactions with Canadian musical institutions, and especially the Kiwanis and the Conservatory, were crucial to his development. Furthermore, while many biographies perpetuate Gould’s own identity myth as a self-made musician, Bazzana spends time examining the influence of Gould’s long-time piano teacher, Alberto Guerrero. Hardly a provincial, small-town piano teacher whom Gould soon grew out of, Guerrero is a musical force to be reckoned with, and many of Gould’s later traits are credited as coming from him. Bazzana acknowledges that Gould himself claimed that his and Guerrero’s views were “diametrically opposed,” because “He was a ‘heart’ man and I wanted to be a ‘head’ kid,” but Bazzana also insists that regardless of differences of

opinion, “it was Guerrero who helped nourish the young Gould’s increasingly idealistic, intellectual, and structural approach to music. When the adult Gould insisted that structure was the most important criterion for a performer, he was paraphrasing Guerrero” (67). In cases like these, Bazzana demonstrates that looking back at the context of Gould’s career grants us a clearer view than Gould had while he was living it, and also shows us how Gould manipulated his image to his own liking. In the same way, *Wondrous Strange* takes some of the mystery out of Gould’s iconoclastic interpretations and playing style, explaining that his physicality at the piano—especially his preference to be seated very low—and his “almost infallible technique” came not just from practicing “for hours on end, with endless patience and concentration” but also from following Guerrero’s carefully designed methods (73).

Bazzana is generous in his explanation of why Gould, so clearly influenced by his teacher, often described himself as self-taught. First, Gould’s differences of opinion with Guerrero eventually let him “forget” he had learned anything. Second, Bazzana notes that “Guerrero always told people *he* was self-taught” (74). Third, the psychoanalytical explanation does carry some weight: “There is nothing surprising or nefarious here: it is standard issue ‘killing the father,’ and it does not require Freud’s Oedipus complex or Harold Bloom’s ‘anxiety of influence’ to make sense of it” (74). And perhaps most important, Gould needed to abandon Guerrero to create his public image as he saw fit:

Guerrero certainly was a father figure to Gould through his most formative years, perhaps not only musically (recall Gould’s distant relationships with Bert); indeed Margaret Privitello called Gould ‘the son that Guerrero never had.’ But Gould’s adult image as a pianist and thinker was founded on his uniqueness and

independence and iconoclasm, and this image would have been compromised had he acknowledged influences too willingly. (75)

In this way, Bazzana explains Guerrero's absence in many accounts, and restores him to a place with Gould's influential parents and manager as another "parental" figure of crucial musical importance.

Though Gould was not a typical child prodigy, his parents did enroll him in various music competitions, and these influenced the young pianist—though not necessarily in a positive way. The Kiwanis Music Festival, a British-style musical competition in the colonial Canada of the 1950s that continues today, "sufficed to instill in [Gould] a lifelong antipathy toward competition in every facet of life" (78). His experience with the Kiwanis helps to explain an important aspect of his identity recognized by all biographers, but also counters the myth that the young Gould simply appeared out of nowhere for his 1955 Town Hall recital, and explains in part how such a musical force emerged from provincial 1940s and '50s Toronto. Bazzana also describes the profound influence the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had on Gould's early development. Several Canadian cultural institutions "came into being in the forties and fifties, from the Canadian Arts Council (1945) to the Canada Council (1957), the latter the centrepiece of the Massey commission's recommendations, or, in music, from the Canadian Music Council (1944) to the Canadian Music Centre (1959)" (119). Together these institutions suggest how much attention and support Canada began paying to the arts during Gould's time. And none was more influential than the CBC. As Bazzana explains,

it is difficult to overstate how vital a resource the early CBC was for Canadian

musicians. It greatly increased public appreciation of serious music and awareness of Canadian music, musicians, and musical life. Gould gleaned much of his understanding of the larger world of music from the CBC, which supported experimental ventures of little appeal. The CBC was a vital source of revenue and promotion and artistic inspiration for Canadian musicians. It commissioned and premiered many new works by Canadian composers, offered countless opportunities for Canadian performers, even maintained its own orchestras. (121)

The CBC not only introduced Gould to experimental music, and invited him to play his own music and build his public name, but also sparked his early interest in electronic media. According to Bazzana, “through his early CBC experiences he became an eager convert to the electronic media before he had even given a concert outside Canada, and came to view his broadcasting (and later recording) as his *real* career. He viewed his concert schedule as an adjunct to his media work, not the reverse, and in this light his ultimate rejection of concert life seems less an aberration than an inevitability” (122). Echoing Gould’s own statements from the early NFB documentaries that I’ve already discussed, Bazzana therefore dispels most of the mystery surrounding Gould’s abandonment of the concert stage at the height of his popularity.

By examining how various Canadian people and institutions influenced Gould, Bazzana presents a musician whose career makes perfect sense, given the specific circumstances of his time. Paralleling Simonton’s account of genius, Bazzana shows that it takes more than genetics, and more than musical parents who devote much of their lives to their artistic child, to produce a musician like Gould. Gould owes his genius, both its development and its recognition, to Canada:

But talent and ambition are useless where opportunity is wanting, and he was lucky to have been in the right place at the right time. The beginning of his professional career coincided with a period of great artistic ferment in Canada and the burgeoning of cultural institutions in which he found venues and support for his increasingly multifarious work. Economic prosperity and newly invigorated nationalistic sentiments combined to create widespread optimism about Canada's future as an independent nation of enormous potential rather than a colony – look no further than the spate of books published after the war with titles like *Canada on the March*, *Canada Looks Ahead*, *Canada in the Making*, *Canada's Tomorrow*, *Prospect of Canada*, *Colony to Nation*. . . . These were fertile conditions for Canadian culture. (117)

And yet, while making an argument for a Canadian communal self, Bazzana also paradoxically emphasizes the importance to Gould of the Canadian North and its metaphors of solitude: “For him the North was more than a place: it was a way of life, a way of thinking, and he associated his personal and aesthetic values with a Nordic temperament. There is a photograph of Gould sitting on a beach in the Bahamas, in cap, sunglasses, coat, long pants, and shoes, studying a Bach score—that says it all” (293). Bazzana even goes beyond the usual discussions, between Gould and the North based primarily on *The Idea of North* and other writings, to suggest that Gould's playing itself has a northern feel:

In Gould's playing—clearly articulated, contrapuntally transparent, closely miked—there is an unusual sense of space and dimension and chiaroscuro. One is always aware of the pregnant silence between and behind the notes, which are set

in high definition as though imposed onto a vast backdrop of empty space, like scattered strands of trees dotting a Northern landscape. What Northrop Frye called "the melancholy of a thinly-settled country under a bleak northern sky"—one *hears* that in Gould's playing, most obviously in his spare later recordings of Bach. (294)

Such an account of Gould's links with the North shows that, like many Canadians, Bazzana himself has absorbed this notion of Canadian identity. This conception of the nation has its drawbacks. His characterization of Gould as "Nordic," for example, relies on a cartoon-like image of the pianist, who, even in the Bahamas in the 1950s, was already self-consciously living up to his own publicity. And the claim that Gould's playing is "northerly" rests on an understanding of the North as an empty space—an idea contested by many cultural critics and by other Gould life writing texts discussed later in this chapter. Nevertheless, Bazzana's representation of Gould as North is frequently convincing, and especially when informed by Frye's conception of Canada. Finally, Bazzana reinforces Gould's own suggestion that *The Idea of North* was autobiographical, by explaining that in its consideration of solitude, the documentary was very timely in 1967, since "the train trip in *The Idea of North* stands in for the *inward* journey Gould had been taking since 1964" (299). This analysis of the radio documentary stands in stark contrast to the three earlier major biographies, which respond to *North* with a cursory note, with confusion, or with disdain. It is undeniable, then, that Kevin Bazzana does much to foreground Gould's Canadian-ness.

Like *Wondrous Strange*, the biopic *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* occupies an important position in the Gould biographical material. Released in 1993 to

immediate critical acclaim, and originally made for TV by Rhombus Media, the film was reviewed widely in both Canadian and American popular and scholarly periodicals, collected four Genie awards, and received a special citation at the 1993 Toronto Film Festival. As the first feature film devoted to Gould's life, it also had a unique opportunity to define Gould visually in the nation's memory and to establish him as a crucial force in Canadian history. *Thirty Two Short Films* is also the first of many representations of Gould by other Canadian artists. Drawing on Gould's own writing and interviews, archival resources, other biographies, and original materials such as interviews, the film dramatizes important moments in Gould's life. A testament to Canadians' fascination with Gould, *Thirty Two Short Films* outdrew *Schindler's List* at the box office upon its initial release in Montreal, and was ultimately viewed by a large enough audience to significantly influence Canadians' understanding of Gould, through his portrayal as a definitive Canadian, and of themselves. Indeed, as Marita Starcken has argued, converting an historical figure's life into visual text for mass public consumption is a key way of constructing a national identity (32), and the docudrama is especially effective, because it "makes history containable, and subsumes memory into compelling narratives of closure" (40). Because of its self-conscious use of the already constructed "life" of Glenn Gould, and its foregrounding of interviews conducted specifically for the film, *Thirty Two Short Films* is therefore as much about Gould's place in the Canadian collective memory, and representations of Gould, as it is about the man himself.

Buoyed by intense continuing interest in its subject, *Thirty Two Short Films* enjoyed a local and an international popularity uncommon for a Canadian film not explicitly conforming to American market demands. Based on the form of the *Goldberg*

Variations, Thirty Two Short Films self-consciously diverges from biopic conventions, and from Hollywood films in general. Furthermore, *Thirty Two Short Films* represents Gould's Canadian identity by employing a distinctly Canadian art form. In *Canadian Dreams and American Control*, Manjunath Pendaker outlines the ideology of the "world class" Hollywood film and how it differs from a "rough-edged independent Canadian film" like *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. The world class film requires "a simplistic linear narrative" that leads to a narrative climax (189). It also suggests that "complex socio-political events are shaped by great men (as in Richard Attenborough's *Ghandi*)" and "presupposes that any issue that is intrinsically national in other countries will be of no interest to American audiences" (191). In contrast, the "rough-edged Canadian independents' films explore not only film style but also political and social themes and characters often ignored in the mainstream commercial media. Canadians have developed a film hybrid that inserts documentary techniques into dramatic film and vice versa" (189). *Thirty Two Short Films* is an example of how this "rough-edged independent film style" affects the presentation of a self. Not only does *Thirty Two Short Films* avoid the linear narrative found in most Hollywood biopics in favor of a fragmented form that juxtaposes documentary and dramatic vignettes, but by doing so it also refuses to present a unified or definitive version of Gould, opting instead for a contrapuntal exploration of the multiple and often conflicting sides of his character. And finally, while the "world class feature film" and the Hollywood biopic especially are steeped in the ideology of individualism, *Thirty Two Short Films* goes beyond Gould the individual to engage with Gould the Canadian, someone created by and inseparable from a particular culture.

While the film's depiction of Gould is self-consciously partial, his Canadian identity emerges as the one constant element of his life. In "Aria," the opening segment, Gould literally emerges from the Canadian landscape, and throughout the film, he is framed by rural and urban Canadian scenery. He is linked to Canadian institutions and artists such as the CBC and Norman McLaren. And he is carefully, and even humorously, represented as part of Canadian history. The call of the loon at the beginning of "Lake Simcoe," for example invokes the *Hinterland Who's Who*, a series of brief informational ads created by the Canadian Wildlife Service in the 1960s to raise awareness about native birds and animals, along with the loon itself, another aural symbol of Canada. The familiar call therefore identifies Gould as a "native animal," whom Canadians should be reminded to appreciate.⁴⁰

This emphasis on Gould's Canadian-ness is a "normalizing" strategy for a mostly Canadian audience.⁴¹ Throughout the film, Gould succeeds in spite and because of his Canadian-ness. In "Lake Simcoe," for example, rural Canadian surroundings emphasize Gould's distance from the world of European art music, but in the same fragment, the CBC then appears as a crucial influence, bringing the music to the countryside. Gould sits beside the radio, tears welling in his eyes, listening to a broadcast of *Tristan and Isolde*. Similarly, the film's dramatization of the making of *The Idea of North* emphasizes the fact that Gould's formally groundbreaking radio documentaries were created largely out of specifically Canadian subject matter, and under the auspices of the CBC. Like so many Canadian heroes and celebrities, then, Gould stands as a figure whose ideas and achievements were international in scope, but who was created by Canada, and who remained distinctly Canadian.

Thirty Two Short Films also augments the representations of Gould as North. Gould himself and his biographers speak of the North as “nowhere,” a vast emptiness which offers the solitude necessary to develop creatively and to confront one’s self. *Thirty Two Short Films* suggests the north can also be impenetrable, a landscape that conceals more than it reveals, and therefore a place to hide. As the screenplay describes it, the film begins with “the endless white of the Far North,” out of which a “small black dot” becomes gradually visible (13). As the shape advances toward the camera it eventually becomes identifiable—thanks to the iconic cold weather costume—as Glenn Gould. The northern landscape next appears as the backdrop to the dramatization of an interview Gould gave to Jonathan Cott of *Rolling Stone* in 1974, which became *Conversations with Glenn Gould*. The camera shows us “impenetrable whiteness,” reminiscent of the opening scene (101). As if from a great distance, an interviewer’s voice calls out his question—about Gould’s radio documentaries, and how solitude affects the inhabitants of the North. After a relatively unsatisfactory exchange, in which Gould claims he wants to spend “at least one winter north of the Arctic Circle,” and Cott somewhat feebly responds, “I hope you do,” rather than challenging Gould about his conception of the North, the music ends and Gould walks off into the landscape (102).⁴² For viewers who know that Gould was interested in North but never went there, the scene captures Gould’s exaggerations when constructing himself, but also the media’s collaboration in this process by broadcasting his myths of self, and by refusing to challenge or even to think critically about their truthfulness. The interviewer here is stymied by an impenetrable landscape, which is also Gould’s own self-mythology.⁴³ Finally, in the last segment, the northern landscape reappears as Gould walks past the

camera and back into the vast expanse “until he has again become a tiny black dot in the centre of the frame” (177). The North therefore functions a metaphor for the Gould self, which remains unreachable for the biographer.

One of the most fascinating aspects of *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* is how it operates throughout on a meta-level that challenges the viability of the traditional film biography. The film lays bare the process by which a “life,” filmic or otherwise, is constructed. Biographical evidence becomes the film’s subject through a collage of personal interviews with Gould’s family and friends, archival documents like letters and other personal papers, a passage from Gould’s medical diary, a dramatization of one of Gould’s self-interviews, and a segment from Norman McLaren’s *Spheres*, an animated film set to Gould’s performance of Bach’s Fugue #14 from the *Well-Tempered Clavier*. The interviews with Menuhin, Monsaingeon, Pacsu, Greig, and others underscore that *Thirty Two Short Films* never pretends to give us an impression of the real man, but only of a biographical subject represented and interpreted by himself and others. Through his recordings, letters, and self-interviews, Gould represents and interprets himself. The interview subjects represent and interpret him, based on their relationships with him. The film director then interprets the interview subjects. Girard orders the interviews in “Crossed Paths,” and establishes the order of the fragments in the overall film. Finally, the minimal amount of explicit mediation and interpretation by the writers and director leaves space for audience interpretation, foregrounding this role in the production of meaning for all biographical representation. As Girard and McKellar demonstrate, then, all biography emerges from a series of interpretations and readings; the life comes to its audience through layers of mediation. And despite or maybe because

of, these levels of interpretation, subjects like Gould may provoke more questions than answers. In fact, the segment “Unanswered Questions,” which creates a miniature contrapuntal portrait of the composer, is one of the longest segments in *Thirty Two Short Films*.

This emphasis on a partial and unstable Gould participates in a specifically Canadian cinematic view of the self dating back to the early NFB *Candid Eye* era. The collapsing of private and public self typical of Canadian models of selfhood recurs throughout the film, and especially toward the end, when Gould is portrayed as withdrawing from the world of the living and the world of the film and entering the Canadian collective memory. In “Leaving,” dramatization and documentary occur in the same vignette, when Gould’s discussion of the *French Suites* with his cousin Jessie turns into an announcement of his death on the CBC. And finally, though Gould appears in the vignette “Voyager,” a short film using archival footage of the 1977 Voyager launch, and in the final voice-over describing how, as a globally significant artist, his music has been sent to extraterrestrials, our last image of him is walking away from the camera back across the lake, back into the Canadian landscape. The screenplay at the beginning of this vignette notes that “Here it would seem we are experiencing a memory,” which affirms Gould’s place within the collective memory of the Canadian people. And in fact, this film contains numerous elements that make it seem distinctly Canadian itself—from the presentation of the self as unstable and partial, to the *Hinterland Who’s Who* loon call, which inspires nostalgia in many Canadians of a certain generation. As *Generation X* writer Douglas Coupland—himself known for exploring and defining Canadian identity—states in his own fragmented response to the film, it “strangely, does capture

the feeling of being Canadian.”

While *Thirty Two Short Films* effectively articulates an already-established “feeling of being Canadian,” Mark Kingwell’s *Glenn Gould* makes an explicit attempt to define Canada for its readers. Taking Gould’s importance to Canada a step further, Kingwell argues not only that Gould’s Canadian identity shaped him, but that he has helped to shape Canadian identity. Kingwell also goes further than other Gould biographical texts in destabilizing notions of self. Gould’s Canadian-ness therefore is asserted through his inclusion in a national biography series, through yet another formulation of his link with the North, and through the suggestion that his multiple, fractured self may be particularly in synch with a country that has labored to define its own national identity. In this biography of Gould, the topic is as much Canadian identity as it is Gould himself. So absorbed by Canadian consciousness that he is no longer an individual material subject, Gould appears as a series of ideas that have become woven into the fabric of the national psyche.

Like other collections of national biography, *The Extraordinary Canadians Series* explicitly offers a particular construction of its nation’s history. Edited by John Ralston Saul, a novelist and essayist whose official web site biography notes he “has had a growing impact on political and economic thought in many countries,” been declared “a ‘prophet’ by TIME magazine” and “included in the prestigious Utne Reader’s list of the world’s 100 leading thinkers and visionaries,” the series features eighteen Canadians of note for their role in national history either as politicians, activists, writers, or artists. In his introduction, Saul addresses Canadians directly: “Each one of these people has changed you. In some cases you know this already. In others you will discover how

through these portraits. . . . At first it is that personal emotive link to such figures which draws us in. Then we find they are a key that opens the whole society of their time to us. . . . Finally, when all these stories are put together, you will see that a whole new debate has been created around Canadian civilization and the shape of our continuous experiment” (xi). Of course, the series not only analyzes and explains its subjects’ contribution to national identity, but reinforces their importance. As Patrick Watson suggests in his *Globe and Mail* review of the EC’s *Lester B. Pearson*, though Saul declares these subjects have changed us as Canadians, “a not-insignificant part of the change will come with the reading” (D12). Indeed, Philip Marchand, writing for *The Walrus*, labels Saul’s choice of subjects as “part of his ongoing campaign to shape our notions of Canadian history and identity.” Also like most national biography series, the selection of subjects leaves the Extraordinary Canadians project vulnerable to criticism. Three of the eighteen are women, the three aboriginal subjects are the only people of color, and, as Marchand notes, the subjects all lived after 1848 and espoused liberal Protestant values.

Gould fits the primary demographic—white, Protestant male—though whatever values emerged from his Protestantism are unstable, because Gould’s moral and religious views, like the rest of his life, were shifting and illusory. Kingwell takes Gould’s Canadian-ness largely for granted. After all, if he wasn’t already a Canadian icon, he wouldn’t have been selected for the series. The biographical details of Gould’s life are summarized in a brief chapter entitled “Silence,” and references to significant moments in his career are scattered throughout the text, though never dwelt upon in detail. Apparently, then, Gould’s life is considered a given, and since Kingwell’s book is the

sixth major English-language biography of Gould, this assumption makes sense. As Canadians, we are already familiar with Gould, or at least the public biographical Gould lodged in our collective memories. But while Kingwell grants that the famous eccentricities “*are* the real person insofar as that person is thought about, wondered at, revered” (188), he argues that Gould is more than the “odd traits and strange behaviours” with which he has become synonymous. What this additional meaning is may differ depending on the reader. For Kingwell, though, whose book consists of twenty-one “takes” on Gould, based on the twenty-one takes needed to find the ideal version of the “Aria” for the 1955 *Goldberg Variations*, Gould is fragmented, shifting, and disappearing in ways that make him distinctly Canadian. Gould is a series of ideas in our consciousness, and it is these that Kingwell explores rather than Gould himself.

Though Canada often lies in the background of this biography, it identifies Gould as distinctly Canadian on page one. Kingwell focuses on Gould’s easily distinguishable Canadian accent, an almost-extinct part of our history, which consists of “the mixture of flat and orotund phonemes peculiar to the official culture of emerging nationhood, the language of the CBC, of diplomacy, of the academy” (1). Gould in short *sounds* like Canada’s past. Like other works on Gould that highlight his Canadian identity, Kingwell also addresses Gould’s relationship with the North, and specifically *The Idea of North*. Though he critiques *The Idea of North* for its formal control over and potential frustration of the listener, Kingwell declares that various themes in Gould’s documentary remain relevant in Canada today, and especially the ambivalence and confusion about the North articulated by Gould through his interview subjects. According to Kingwell, “policy with respect to the North is a mixture of embarrassing misunderstanding and condescension.

This simply mirrors the attitude of most Canadians, which, when it even rises above indifference, tends to see only an abstraction wrapped in clichés tucked into a boring enigma” (135). At the very least, then, Kingwell presents Gould as embodying a tradition of Canadian history: one in which the voices of white Anglo-European southerners are central.

But Gould’s documentary is not simply still relevant; through it, Gould emerges as representative of Canada itself. Kevin Bazzana portrayed *The Idea of North* as one of Gould’s most important and most autobiographical works, affirming Gould’s Canadian identity through his interest in Canadian subject matter. Kingwell takes things a step further. For him, *North* and the rest of Gould’s *Solitude Trilogy* are synonymous with the nation. Gould himself stated that his documentaries were not really about the North, Newfoundland, or life in a Mennonite community, but about solitude. Kingwell argues this theme makes the documentaries particularly Canadian, since “[i]n a country as large as Canada, with so small a population, solitude, not company, would seem to be the natural condition.” But Kingwell also claims that the reverse is true: “the bulk of the population not only does not live this way, it never even considers the places where people do” (136). This contradiction is what unites Gould’s text and the Canadian nation:

Thus the real subject of contrapuntal radio, a form that demonstrates incomplete or illusory dialectic resolution in ideas, is Canada itself. The country is unpacked by the documentary and revealed as a postmodern nation of widespread contrapuntal consciousness—postmodern because here there is no dominant *Zeitgeist* to escape, no hegemonic culture, only the proliferation and expansion of consciousness itself. This view of Canada, not unique to Gould, would remain

influential during the last decades of the twentieth century and it is still a central piece in the never-ending puzzle called Canadian identity. (136-137)

Here, Kingwell takes Gould's relation to Canada further than previous biographical texts. In Bazzana's *Wondrous Strange*, Gould is *The Idea of North*, his most autobiographical text, and North is Canada. For Kingwell's text, the documentary itself is Canada, because isolation and solitude are not just Gouldian obsessions, but Canadian ones. The "preoccupation with isolation" is "an excavation of . . . the national consciousness, which keeps its own deep fear of loneliness at bay by constructing not just cities but the logic of survival that supports the frontier conception of the North" (137). If Gould's engagement with solitude is an exploration of his uniquely Canadian psyche, we are all, in turn, a nation of Glenn Goulds.

As Kingwell establishes his version of Gould, he destabilizes it. He repeatedly notes how Gould defies definition—even, and perhaps especially, self-definition. Kingwell explains early on that "Gould's life, lived in and through music, reveals that the unified self is not just a fiction from the outside in; it is also a fiction from the inside out" (7). For this and other reasons, *Glenn Gould* is not just a biography of a musician, but a treatise on biography itself. Kingwell ends with a post-structuralist version of the self articulated in musical terms: "A person is not one thing. A person is a composition improvised by the maker. We each can try to play it" (197). This notion of biography is particularly suited to Gould. Just as Gould interpreted composers' music by often essentially rewriting their texts, Kingwell interprets Gould, making *Glenn Gould* as much about the biographer and *his* conception of Canada as it is about the subject. Gould is Canada because in each of his biographical representations his biographers necessarily

interpret and reinterpret the nation. And the Extraordinary Canadians series pairs important Canadian subjects of the past with important Canadian writers and thinkers of the present, creating a biographical contact zone where Canada is realized through the interaction of the historical and the contemporary.⁴⁴ The more powerful force in this particular culture clash is Kingwell, the living author who can play with and manipulate his biographical subject. He interprets Gould like a musician interpreting a score—or more accurately like Gould *rewriting* a score through interpretation—and establishes his own idea of Canada by turning Gould’s interpretation of *The Idea of North* on its head. Yet another side to the solitude coin seldom raised about Gould’s documentaries is the notion of hospitality, which Kingwell calls an essential element of Canadian identity and “the implicit meaning of north” (137). Canadians understand that “a harsh environment. . . throws us onto the thresholds of strangers, asking for food and shelter” (137). The North therefore “bespeaks solitude only against the backdrop of shared risk. To be alone requires that we share, that we achieve together, the conditions of solitude’s possibility. Did Gould appreciate that, making all those late-night telephone calls to distant friends, his shadowy interlocutors. Was this his form of welcome?” (138). Though the idea of community informs *The Idea of North* in various ways, it is not a component which Gould often mentioned. In his public remarks about his documentary, he tended to emphasize the theme of solitude. But then, just as *The Idea of North* travels far away from Gould’s own claims about his piece, Kingwell’s biography removes itself from any material, historical Gould.

“A constant struggle is waged between a biographer and his subject,” as Leon Edel says in *Writing Lives*, “a struggle between the concealed self and the revealed self,

the public self and the private.” (30). A notorious manipulator of his own “life,” Gould from the start posed problems for his biographers. Bazzana tried to tame his unruly subject by imposing the thesis of Gould’s Canadian-ness; Kingwell recognizes and foregrounds the idea that there can be no unified biographical self. Kingwell’s book argues that Gould exists only as text—shifting and multiple, constantly disappearing, a musical composition to be reinterpreted by each new biographer. Though no real innovation in life writing, it is relatively uncommon in a national biography series, where the volumes tend toward linear narratives of subject, thus privileging the fiction of a unified self. After all, if the self is shifting and illusory, multiple and fractured, and this self represents the nation, how can the nation be anything but shifting and illusory, multiple and fractured as well? But perhaps this is why Gould’s partial, unstable self actually makes him an appropriate Canadian icon. Since the idea that Canadian identity has long defied definition is one of the defining aspects of national consciousness, with his constant manipulation of his own media representations, his constant defining and redefining himself through self-interviews and multiple personae, and his constant revision by biographers, Gould may be a more fitting Canadian icon than most texts consider.

“Gould, deaf to the North”: Challenges to Gould as Canadian Icon

While numerous texts position Gould as distinctly Canadian and celebrate his importance, others challenge his appropriateness as a Canadian icon. In “National Anthems: The Case of Chopin as a National Composer,” Zdzislaw Mach notes that while “[n]ational flags, emblems and anthems symbolically represent both the nation and the state, and especially the link between the two” (61), other “symbols of strong patriotic

value which are not legally defined or protected,” such as national arts and heroes, “function in the same way as the classic three-element official set venerated by some and opposed by others” (62). Similarly, while Gould is venerated by some Canadians, he is also “dismissed and contested by those who do not identify with the state ideology” (62). Though perhaps an appropriate symbol for a Canada of the past, Gould may not be as representative for future generations. Rejections of Gould as a Canadian icon include challenges to his link to the North, to the North itself as central to the Canadian identity, to his suitability as a role model for youth, and to his durability as a cultural icon in a swiftly changing national landscape. The most notably dissenting texts are perhaps Tim Wynne Jones’s young adult novel, *The Maestro*, and Joe Fiorito’s novel *The Song Beneath the Ice*. Both question Gould’s status as exemplary Canadian by raising issues of fatherhood to present him as a poor artistic role model, by questioning his link with the Canadian North, and by examining skeptically the biographical method that made him an icon in the first place.

As novels which select historical figures, then blend biography and fiction together when representing their subjects’ lives, these texts are examples of a specifically Canadian form that challenges the limits of traditional life writing. As Shirley Neuman explains in her entry on “Life Writing” in the *Literary History of Canada*, rather than straightforwardly representing a textual self Canadian life writing often mingles genres:

The Canadian life-writing which is most sophisticated and thoughtful about the problems of inscribing the self in literature, and most innovative in its presentation of auto/biographical content, is not auto/biographical in any strict formal or generic sense at all. Instead it crosses and recrosses the borders between

auto/biography and fiction in order to question static and holistic conceptions of the writing subject. (333)

Similarly, Linda Hutcheon describes how the Canadian postmodern tradition of literature reconsiders historical narratives in order to construct and deconstruct national identity.

Such a process is of course characteristic of American postmodernism, but Hutcheon argues that this “is possible within Canada only when those myths and identity have first been defined. Like women writers in general, Canadian novelists must return to their history. . . in order to discover (before they can contest) their historical myths” (6).

Hutcheon sees Canadian novelists carrying out this work in what she calls

“historiographic metafiction,” texts which are

not quite historical novels in the traditional sense, for they are also very metafictional in their attention to the process of writing, reading, and interpreting.

They are both self consciously fictional but also overtly concerned with the acts (and consequences) of the reading and writing of history as well as fiction. In

other words, the aesthetic and the social, the present and the past, are not

separable discourses in these novels. They represent a postmodern self-reflexivity

that moves outward to the world beyond their borders—to history, biography,

philosophy, religion, politics. (14)

Both *The Maestro* and *The Song Beneath the Ice* engage with history through a fictional representation of Glenn Gould as an artistic icon of national identity. Rather than

metafictional, they are more accurately meta-biographical, because they reconsider the

constructions of the auto/biographical self that have positioned Gould as a representative

Canadian. In both *The Maestro* and *Song Beneath the Ice*, the authors represent Gould as

a problematic father-figure, metaphorically critiquing his suitability as an artistic forefather and role model for future musicians.

Tim Wynne Jones's *The Maestro* is one of several texts about Gould written for Canadian children. Though generally less well known as versions of Gould's "life," they are key to understanding how Gould functions as a Canadian icon. As Robin Elliot notes in "Constructions of Identity in the Life Stories of Emma Albani and Glenn Gould," Gould's status is not only indicated by his presence on postage stamps, or the preservation of his papers and personal effects in the National Library and Archives, but also because he is "regarded as [an] appropriate role model for children, as shown, for instance, by [his] inclusion in Lidec's series Célébrités/Collection biographique, aimed at French-speaking Canadian high school students (Bienvenue 1997; Vachon 2000b)" (109). Gould has also been featured at least four times in children's books. First in *The Maestro* (1995), then in Lynette Roy's *Glenn Gould: The Genius and His Music 1932-1982: A Biography for Young People* (1999), in Anne Chislett's play, *Not Quite the Same* (2001), and most recently in Vladimir Konieczny's *Struggling for Perfection: The Story of Glenn Gould* (2004). Because such texts suggest historical role models for their young audiences, Gould's eccentricities make him a challenging figure to offer for emulation. Konieczny and Roy acknowledge the eccentricities but sanitize them by saying they are necessary elements of his genius. Tim Wynne Jones, however, makes Gould's inappropriateness as a role model one of his primary themes. He places Nathaniel Orlando Gow, a character obviously based on Gould, in the midst of the Canadian north, and brings him face to face with Burl Crow, a troubled local youth on the run from his abusive father. Though Gould provides Burl with temporary shelter and acts as a catalyst,

giving the boy the ideas he needs to escape his disastrous homelife, the older artist's use to the boy is limited, because Gow's powers don't thrive in Burl's northern environment, and his eccentricities and untimely death keep him from offering a lasting fatherly relationship.

In *The Maestro*, Gould's eccentricities are immediately obvious and harmful. When Burl stumbles upon Gow's cabin after escaping his abusive father, the pianist's oddness makes him seem unusual, changeable, and even dangerous to the young man—a far cry from the surrogate father he needs. Though charmed by Gow's musical genius, the boy has little room in his difficult life for art, and because of Gow's own problems—the torments of a public life, addiction, and eventually death—he cannot be the savior Burl needs. Drug use is one cause, and psychological oddities are another. He cannot gain the peace he needs to compose, and rather than being subsumed under his genius, as in other Gould biographical texts, here the eccentricities are in conflict with his brilliance.

Gow's worth as a father-figure to Burl is also tied to Gould's status as a representative of the Canadian north. By placing the novel's Gould character firmly within the realities of a northern setting, Tim Wynne Jones suggests that the North poses challenges for which, despite his genius, he would have been unprepared. The North of *The Maestro* is no empty or imagined place that offers the solitude necessary to explore one's self and one's creativity. Gow discovers the climate is unforgiving, and the wildlife dangerous. In this North poverty reigns, and needing to carve an existence out of a harsh landscape where few opportunities for work exist stifles whatever creative impulses the people may have. The privileged, artistic, southern Gould stands in contrast to poor, practical Burl of Pharoah, who possesses an interest in the imaginative world, and even

learns some chords from Gow's "Revelation," but whose life circumstances force him to be much more pragmatic than Gow has ever need be.

Once in the realities of the Northern landscape, the Gould figure's status shifts from rescuer, an identity often cultivated in Gould representations—think back to Bruno Monsaingeon's *Hereafter* or Rhona Bergman's *Idea of Gould*—to someone in distress. Soon after meeting Burl, the paternal Gow confronts both nature and wildlife, and Burl finds he must look after his new companion. Gow quickly recognizes the limits of his own readiness for northern life, telling Burl that although he has been further north than Pharoah, he has no interest in facing the full effects of the northern geography. He has not "experienced the *dark* of a winter in the North" and he knows he is not "ready for it." His new home is therefore a "compromise. A glimpse of the Big Dark, as it were, if not the whole thing" (59). If *The Idea of North* is autobiographical, and the North is a place where one can come face-to-face with oneself, Gow's avoidance of the "*dark* of a winter north" also suggests he will not face aspects of his own identity, such as his desire to become a father-figure to Burl. An encounter with a hungry bear soon convinces Gow that he is not even ready for the compromise, and the boy must save the drugged, trembling musician. In *The Maestro*, the North is more than somewhere to dream about—it is a real place, inhabited by actual people with genuine problems. *The Maestro* therefore undercuts Gould's appropriateness as icon for a vast and diverse nation, because the musician's privileged, urban upbringing disqualifies him from standing for the North.

Like most of the texts I've already discussed, *The Maestro* also questions whether Gould is ultimately knowable. Once he leaves the North, Gow becomes a dream, a memory, and a possibility for Burl. Soon after leaving Burl at the cabin, Gow dies. Burl

then attempts to rewrite Gow's life by claiming to be his illegitimate child, but later realizes he possesses a much more valuable addition to Gow's story: a copy of "The Revelation," one of Gow's only compositions. But when the cabin burns down with the manuscript inside, this part of Gow's life disappears with it. He becomes a phantom character. His friends, lawyers, and Burl all know fragments of his life, but no one has the full picture. In fact, Gow, who struggled with his own identity as a celebrity, a friend, a musician, and with the new identity he toys with of becoming a father to Burl, does not really know himself. The North remains static, and Burl must confront his existence within it, but Gow is a one-sided sheet. Traces of him surface in various places and with various people, but shift and disappear.

Written for an adult audience, Joe Fiorito's 2002 novel *The Song Beneath the Ice* also involves fatherhood, the North, and biographical representation to challenge Gould's exalted status in the Canadian art world, and Canadian identity in general. Dominic Amoruso, a Canadian concert pianist with many similarities to Gould, walks off stage at the Art Gallery of Ontario and disappears. Some time later his friend, Serefino, a Toronto journalist, receives a package of notebooks and tapes. As he reads and transcribes them, Serefino reconstructs the story of what happened to Amoruso after that night at the gallery. Amoruso's difficult relationship with the specter of Glenn Gould throughout his concert career criticizes Gould's place within the Canadian art scene. Amoruso's escape to the Northern town of Wolf Cove, and the records he compiles challenge Gould's association with the Canadian North, and Serefino's perusal of Amoruso's notebooks and tapes question the biographical process that fueled Gould's popularity in the first place.

Gould has often been a ghost who haunts future concert pianists, and Fiorito's

book reads as an enactment of the anxiety of influence, with Gould as an intimidating and inappropriate artistic father figure. Rather than someone who paved the way for other artists, Gould figures as an immense shadow that prevents them from coming into the light of fame and national appreciation. For any artist to achieve iconic status is problematic for others, and as a Toronto concert pianist living after the death of Glenn Gould, Amoruso actively works against this legend while perhaps unwillingly absorbing many of its characteristics. According to Serefino, Amoruso “had a thing about Gould. A mania, really”:

[He] was jealous of GG’s gift, despised the liberties Gould took with scores, was scornful of his retreat to the recording studio, and above all could not bear the legendary quirks—the famous little boy’s chair, the overcoat and gloves at the height of summer’s heat, the naïve belief in chiropractic and homeopathic remedies—*Imaginary cures for imagined ailments!*

Most of all, he refused to accept the view that Gould’s recordings were a high water mark in the history of the piano. *A high water mark in the history of neurosis, more like it.* (9)

But Serefino believes Amoruso had more in common with his artistic precursor than Amoruso cared to admit, and Serefino’s descriptions of his friend, and Amoruso’s own tapes and notes, confirm this view. Like Gould, Amoruso’s casual concert attire extends the liberties Gould took in his own early days, but whereas Gould wore a business suit instead of a coat and tails, Amoruso appears in a leather jacket and boots. Both artists thus perform their respective backgrounds: Gould his middle class upbringing, and Amoruso his working-class origins.

Though differing significantly in their musical philosophies, the two share many traits. Amoruso writes “articles, criticism, pastiches on various musical subjects similar to those cobbled together by Glenn Gould in the old days” (9). Amoruso also has an interest in electronic media, and although he has little regard for Gould’s contrapuntal radio documentaries, he builds on the idea of autobiographical sound recording, using tiny headphone-like microphones to record surreptitiously almost all aspects of his daily life. Gould’s *Idea of North* also seems to inspire Amoruso, who is working on “The Idea of Here,” a piece based on the sounds of everyday life in Toronto. (North is significantly not-here in Amoruso’s piece.) Though directly influenced by Gould, Amoruso defiantly co-opts this influence. Knowing that he is building on Gould’s legacy in his sound recordings makes him no more respectful. Instead, Amoruso admits that he is “*not above picking that nut’s pocket*” (21). In his personal life, Amoruso, like Gould, visits Fran’s restaurant, and maintains a secret long-term relationship with the wife of a local arts patron, much like Gould’s relationship with Cornelia Foss. Amoruso works and socializes primarily after dark, making “frequent calls to friends at all hours of the night when rehearsing or preparing to record” (5). Amoruso shares “the habit of wordplay. Anagrams appear with a whimsical frequency” (15), and he also experiences some of Gould’s failures. Amoruso does not compose music, though a piece is hinted at in the notebooks (18). He takes a cocktail of pills for his recurring migraines. As a result, Amoruso’s love-hate relationship with Gould positions the historical pianist as a national cultural force, whom Canadian media and institutions have unnecessarily and unwisely canonized, preventing the formation of artistic icons more appropriate for a changing Canadian cultural climate.

For Fiorito, Gould is also a tool for measuring Toronto's changing demographic and cultural identity. As Bazzana reminds us, "Toronto in Gould's childhood was among the most homogenous cities of its size. . . . Three-quarters of the population was Protestant. . . . It was a highly repressed city; behaviour was strictly regulated according to Protestant codes" (WS, 17). By the 1990s, though, when Amoruso is living in Toronto, the city had seen a vast influx of immigrants, becoming the most multicultural metropolis in the world. Gould's parents were musical, religious, and wealthy enough to support their son's interest in the piano. He grew up sheltered in many ways, and especially from the seedier aspects of his home city. As an adult, he called himself "The Last Puritan," preserving his ties to the historic "Toronto the Good." Amoruso comes from a working-class, Catholic, immigrant family. He learns to play piano because his father recognizes the child's gifts, and strikes a deal with the local nuns to teach the boy in exchange for his work in the church. Amoruso's Toronto has homeless shelters, prostitutes, and crime, and he does not shelter himself from this reality of the city. Finally, if Gould was the pianist for an earlier version of the city, Amoruso grew up and belonged to Little Italy: "*He was ours. And there was unspoken longing when he went away. You could see it in the face of the postman—a smile as he walked past Dominic's house. The memory of that sound*" (99). Little Italy's embrace of Amoruso instead of Gould in itself questions the notion of a single, unified national identity.

And yet, though celebrated by his Italian community and successful artistically in his own right, Amoruso is haunted by the lingering legacy of Gould. After all, as Amoruso himself notes, "*what good pianist in Toronto isn't?*" (21). Fiorito's novel therefore implies that while the cultural scene has responded to the changing

demographic, the artistic establishment still focuses on artists of the past. Through his own skill as a musician, but also through media influence and the city's cultural elite, Gould remains a formidable artistic precursor. Although Amoruso wants to be unlike him, he cannot escape his legacy. When Amoruso's mistress chooses to terminate a pregnancy, and Dom confronts his own potential for fatherhood, his contempt for Gould becomes overwhelming. Claire's abortion coincides with the AGO performance of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, and Dom's feelings about fatherhood and about Gould overlap and escalate. Confronted by an overwhelming artistic father figure and the abortion of his own offspring, Dom faces an "erasure of self" both from the past and in the future (194). Dom therefore stops playing mid-concert, leaves the stage, and actually ventures north, becoming at once like Gould, and distinct from him, to move beyond Gould's suffocating influence.

Like other texts that foreground Gould's Canadian identity, *The Song Beneath the Ice* draws on Gould's Canadian North, but in this case to problematize his ongoing association with an image of North as empty space. After Dom walks off the stage at the AGO, he drifts first to Montreal and then to Wolf Cove, a place he learned about from a Group of Seven painting that embodies his ideas about Canadian music, which he claims "ought to hit the ear the way that little sketch hits the eye" (173). This understanding of the sketch suggests that he too has an image of Canada as empty, northern landscape, but for Amoruso, the North proves to be very different from the sparse landscapes produced by the Group of Seven, or the idea of solitude offered by Gould. Granted, Amoruso does encounter emptiness, and even southerners seeking creative inwardness. But he spends his time in the town of Wolf Cove, moving from building to building in avoidance of the

landscape. The uncharacteristic tuxedo he wore to the AGO concert not only marks him as an outsider, but leaves him miserably unprepared for the climate. Lost and out of place in this town, he's a confused figure for the townspeople to witness and sometimes mock. Dom's continuous recording of everything he experiences, both through his headset microphone and in his notebooks, captures him through the people's gaze, and also creates an alternate portrait of North, which avoids the philosophical musings of Gould's: "*Apart from a singularly vivid bout of cabin fever, he has chosen not to acknowledge the effects of the long black northern darkness or the long white northern silence*" (273).

In Dom's account, southerners who have ventured north are government representatives, merchants, or teachers, not artists, and they are not a benign presence. In fact, the figure most responsible for bringing classical music to the North, a music teacher, molests his young students, and the climax of Amoruso's own journey North is his discovery of the abuse. When tuning the school piano, Dom finds an incriminating photograph of the teacher with a young Inuit boy who recently died kayaking. But instead of playing the role of southern rescuer of the vulnerable people of the North, Amoruso replaces the picture and chooses to do nothing, except prepare to leave Wolf Cove. Gould's conception of North to the contrary, suddenly for Dom, there is not enough solitude or anonymity. His life becomes entangled with those of Wolf Cove's citizens, though he remains suspect as someone from a background similar to the offending music teacher.⁴⁵ And yet it is Amoruso's involvement, his ability to move beyond Gould's notion of solitude, that returns him to playing the piano. When a young Inuit music teacher cannot play the piano for Wolf Cove Days, the town's celebration, after learning about the other music teacher's abuse, Dom steps in and improvises his own composition.

Serefino interprets the music as Dom's autobiographical telling of his Northern experience: "*he is making music of all he has seen*" (330). For Serefino, the taped music seems a triumph, but the audience's response is telling: "The principal applauds; one or two people in the gym join in, but the applause is not unanimous. As if what Dom has played has fallen flat and has not, in this audience, left a trace" (331). North and South remain alien. Despite the North's profound effect on Amoruso and the artistic outpouring it inspires, he remains an outsider. The people of the North are unchanged by his presence and unsympathetic to his art.

In his tapes and notes, Amoruso ultimately rejects Gould's interpretation of North explicitly:

"Natural rhythms, disparate chords, and the multiple layers of almost-music. The sounds within the sound. This is the real idea of North. Gould never imagined any of this. He never got his hands dirty, never ate raw seal . . . never sat next to a nickel miner who handed him an envelope stuffed with pornographic photos. . . . Gould, deaf to the North" (288-289).

Based on his own experience in Wolf Cove, Amoruso finally moves out from under Gould's shadow. Dom writes that he has "a better idea of North now than Gould ever did" and that he will "play again, and seriously, and soon" (347). But Dom is still like Gould in exerting control over his own media. The notebooks reveal that he plans to use the tapes, and presumably the story Serefino will construct from them, "to make a step, so to speak" (347). In this way, Amoruso will go beyond his own private conception of North, and wade into the Canadian cultural debate of what it embodies.

Like other texts about Gould, *The Song Beneath the Ice* foregrounds and

questions the biographical process. As Fiorito challenges Gould's influence on Canadian culture, the multi-layered text destabilizes itself in the writing. The text follows Serefino's efforts to reconstruct Amoruso's life out of the materials he receives from Dom, revealing the fact that biographical knowledge is not a given. Serefino seeks out details about Amoruso and Gould on his own, draws on others' expertise, and arrives at conclusions, always insecure. He can't even begin to unravel the mystery of Amoruso's disappearance and subsequent experience until the package arrives, and Amoruso has obviously edited his materials, offering a post-structuralist self existing only in language and only to the extent that he allows his life to be exposed. Dom's own biographical self is a work-in-progress for much of the text, and after Serefino reaches some resolution in his story, he reveals in the text's "*afterword*:" that he was only one of the people Dom contacted. Through others, Dom has been constructing his life in other ways—through a musical composition, and an act of kindness that allows its potential performer to play. In this way, Serefino's text cautions the reader to take all notions of national art, itself often constructed out of biographical information, as partial and conditional. Amoruso has a very different idea of Canadian art and culture than Gould's. The working-class pianist of second-generation Italian immigrant background sends his composition to the homeless, Black, partially-paralyzed Maisela Singer to play. And it's called "An Idea of North." Clearly, there are multiple subject positions possible in contemporary Canadian culture.

* * *

All of the nationally-focused texts I've considered here are about much more than a Canadian concert pianist. Gould has become a symbol for the tension between a Canadian artistic and cultural identity based on landscape and the notions of survival,

famously put forth by Northrop Frye in 1965 and Margaret Atwood in 1972, and a new, more multifaceted understanding. In his Foreword to *Floating the Borders: New Concepts in Canadian Criticism*, M. G. Vassanji argues that it is more and more difficult and problematic to articulate one specific Canadian identity in an increasingly multicultural nation with an enormous influx of immigrants each year. And if such a core identity could be developed, it would be “more subtle than being comprised of a mere response to nature, making a fetish out of low temperatures, or turning away and looking at the North out of a mule-headed defiance of the south” (vii). Yet as Manning suggests about the Group of Seven, it is important “not to impose a dichotomy” between contemporary artists and earlier Canadian icons like Gould. In fact, later texts and artists “respond to the politics of nation in thought-provoking ways” partially because of artists like Gould before them who explored their homeland through their work. And we should never underestimate Gould’s own agency. Though he “chose north as a handy metaphor” for exploring ideas about himself, Gould claimed he wasn’t a nationalist even as his biographical image was increasingly co-opted for national purposes. As an artist and a savvy media manipulator who was intensely aware of how his image could be used, Gould must have known the deployment of his public self for national purposes would become more intense after his death. All of these texts show how auto/biographical articulations of arts figures, however unstable they may be, are crucial to constructing national identities. Gould’s significance for the never-ceasing discussions about Canadian identity has been a major factor in sustaining audience interest in him long after his death. And his representation in traditional biographies, meta-biographical novels, streets, and institutions shows how enlisting biographical subjects for national purposes can push the

limits of auto/biographical forms.

CHAPTER 3: The Arpeggiated Self: Glenn Gould Performs “Glenn Gould”

Almost anything you could say about Glenn Gould you could say the opposite and have it be somewhat true.

Tim Page

The cover of the *Silver Jubilee Album* features a middle-aged Gould sitting in the foreground at a control panel, chin resting on his hands, glasses pushed up so they straddle the divide between his forehead and receding hairline, eyes peering directly into the camera. In the background, fourteen television monitors display an image of a much younger Gould, taken from the cover of the 1955 *Goldberg Variations*. This juxtaposition of the mature Gould staring at us with a chorus of younger Goulds glancing sideways in the midst of musical rapture catches the outlines of the process of self-representation that Gould enacted during his life. The younger Goulds refer intertextually back to his recording debut, when the photographs presented a youthful musician too caught up in the music to be aware of the camera’s intrusion on his ecstatic dancing. The more mature Gould appears as a musician/broadcaster/philosopher in control of his younger image, and his current one. His head-on thoughtful expression suggests an increased awareness of and authority over his multiple selves.¹

This album cover is one of Gould’s most accurate, knowing, and effective self-representations of his shifting public persona. Like the 1955 and 1981 *Goldberg* recordings, this 1980 release frames Gould’s international public life. The exuberant, young Gould caught up in the music has by 1980 become the broadcasting and media artist literally operating the controls as a manipulator of his own self-image. Though still subject to the camera’s gaze, the layered representation exposes Gould as a performer of

his own identity. The portrait both displays and multiplies his image. It is also significant that two images of the younger Gould are partially covered by the middle-aged Gould. By the end of his life, and to some extent throughout it, Gould both revealed and obscured aspects of his self.

Any study of Gould must consider him as a performer, since this role is understandably one of the most prominent subjects of Gould biographical material, and also the part of his life that continues to arouse intense international interest. Entire books focus on Gould's performance practice, most notably Kevin Bazzana's *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work*. In David Young's acclaimed play, *Glenn*, PERFORMER is one of the four characters comprising Glenn Gould,² and many poems in *Northern Music* testify to the lasting impact of Gould's performance. His selective, sometimes highly unusual repertoire, his creative interpretations, his piano style, and his physical mannerisms have been seen by reviewers and biographers as original and eccentric. Abandoning the concert stage at the height of his career was one of the most outrageous and controversial musical decisions of the twentieth century, and has become a defining moment in Gould's life. I will not, however, follow the organization of the previous two chapters, and evaluate Gould's performance practice as represented by him, his media, and his biographers. Instead I will consider Gould's musical performance practice as just one element of a much larger, more sustained performance of self. I will therefore treat Gould's music as autobiographical, part of the self-representation that Gould performed throughout his life. A concern with this relationship has spawned some of the most unusual auto/biographical forms to be considered here, and I would argue that with the possible exception of Ken Russell's musical biopics, life writing by and about Gould

presents some of the most groundbreaking, and sometimes downright odd, musical auto/biography ever produced.

This chapter examines Gould as a performer in various senses. I will look closely at his musical performance practice and recordings, his writings, and his compositions for radio, all of which bear what Leigh Gilmore has termed “the problematical deployment of the ‘I’” as autobiographical representation (6). It is easy to argue that much of Gould’s writing is at least partially autobiographical. He writes almost entirely in the first person, and is therefore ever-present in his texts. Even when not explicitly addressing his own work, as he does in the liner notes for his musical interpretations or his own compositions, he regularly combines personal experience with his philosophical arguments about recording, or his thoughts about other musicians and compositions. It is impossible to read him on Schoenberg, Petula Clark, Beethoven, recording versus concerts, or virtually anything without recognizing that his essays are also the author’s performance of “Glenn Gould.” It is more difficult, however, to argue that Gould’s musical interpretations and compositions are also autobiographical, representing a broadening of traditional generic boundaries. While life writing theorists have long focused on the performative nature of self-representation, and have examined self-representation in various artistic media, music largely represents a last frontier. In fact, although a quick Amazon or Google search locates numerous examples of print autobiographies with music as a central focus—musicians’ autobiographies, fan narratives—in the second edition of *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, the most all-encompassing survey of autobiography, musical autobiography does not appear amongst the “Sixty Genres of Life Narrative.”³ Though

Smith and Watson's list is not meant to be exhaustive, it does include the genres most commonly reviewed in mainstream publications, or most commonly addressed by scholars.⁴

While most of the texts I've considered so far have been print-based, this chapter also examines Gould's musical interpretations, compositions, and dramatic texts and performances as autobiographical. Here, Smith and Watson's distinction between autobiography and life narrative becomes useful. If life writing refers to "written forms of the autobiographical," life narrative can serve as "a general term for acts of self-presentation of all kinds and in diverse media that take the producer's life as their subject, whether written, performative, visual, filmic, or digital" (4) Though here again, Smith and Watson don't explicitly mention music, Gould's production, and especially the recordings of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* that book-end his career, can therefore be thought of as life narratives. In fact, Gould's musical output, when combined with his other performances in print, on television, and on the radio, constituted a general attempt to construct an ongoing, though not always coherent, narrative of self. As a musician, self-articulation became intimately and famously bound up with his musical performance, and narrating the self in diverse media other than music became one of Gould's primary activities. His writings, self-interviews, music, radio documentaries, and creation of dramatic personae are all experiments in self-representation. Gould's presence in media from a very young age, his intensely curious mind, and his love of games all led him to explore ideas of self-representation in his work. In one of his most explicitly self-representational works, he attempted to synthesize the image of the eccentric needed to sell records with the musical philosopher he wished to be. And just as his artistic output

challenged musical boundaries, Gould's self-representations tested the suppleness of auto/biographical forms and theoretically addressed the life narrative process. He is therefore a life writing "limit-case" in several ways: through his deployment of classical music as life writing, his transformation of radio documentary into not only a musical "limit-case," but an oral and allegorical autobiography, and his radical fracturing of self through his self-interviews, his performed personae, and his final autobiographical radio drama. In keeping with his preference for multi-vocal music, Gould's autobiographical representations present an increasingly fractured and multiple self expressed through many narrative voices. Over time, his autobiographical texts also moved further and further from any narrative truth claim. Gould's "life," as performed by Gould himself, therefore testifies to the inevitability and the impossibility of representing a self in text.

Gould's Musical Selves: Public Performance of Self and the *Goldberg Variations* as *Life Narrative*

. . . I've always been strongly tempted to try writing fiction. I'm completely unprepared for it. It would be a real gamble. But one of these times I'll write my autobiography, which will certainly be fiction.

Glenn Gould (AGG, 87)

A life-myth is hidden within every poet's work, and in the gestures of a politician, the canvases and statues of art and the life styles of charismatic characters.

Leon Edel. *Writing Lives*

Classical music has been largely overlooked as a medium for representing lives. As Martin Stokes has explained, "In accordance with the highly pervasive fiction of an

earlier musicology,” music has been “considered a domain of special, almost extra-social, autonomous experience.” Music was not thought to represent anything (1); it simply did not have intelligible meaning. In a 1964 monograph, “Arnold Schoenberg: A Perspective,” Gould himself made the same point when cautioning against drawing parallels between abstract art and atonal music, noting that “music is always abstract . . . it has no allegorical connotations except in the highest metaphysical sense, and . . . it does not pretend and has not, with very few exceptions, pretended to be other than a means of expressing the mysteries of communication in a form which is equally mysterious” (113). More recently, however, the burgeoning field of word and music studies and scholarship on the cultural dimensions of music suggest that it always sits within a complex web of social and historical meanings. As John Neubauer recognizes in “Bartók and the Politics of Folk Music,” critics and historians who try to articulate the intentions of composers tend to be highly subjective, suggesting that musical interpretation “has become a hermeneutic process that deeply involves the interpreters and their cultures” (66). According to Neubauer, a cultural approach to music “implies that the musical idiom is never ‘pure’ but inevitably bound up with images and articulate language” (66). Lawrence Kramer, whose work has furthered the notion that “works of music have discursive meanings” (qtd in Neubauer, 66), describes this interpretive conflict this way. Music “has generally operated on the basis of a series of contradictory tendencies: on the one hand toward the projection of autonomy, universality, self-presence, and the sublime transcendence of specific meaning, and on the other hand toward intimations of contingency, historical concreteness, constructed and divided selfhood, and the intelligible production of specific meanings” (*Musical Meaning*, 2). Kramer argues that

the debate over whether music contains meaning “is not so much about the nature of music ‘itself’ (as if there were such a thing) as about the ways we authorize ourselves to listen to music and to talk about it” (*Musical Meaning*, 1). An approach to classical music which takes into consideration social, cultural, and historical meanings may even breathe new life into an art form whose “audience is shrinking, greying and overly pale-faced” (*Classical Music and Postmodernism*, 4). By foregrounding contingency, Kramer and others authorize scholars and critics to discuss music in ways that it is often discussed outside of academic contexts. Gould himself, though he proclaimed classical music’s autonomy, would analyze Petula Clark by examining the lyrics, performance practice, vocal inflection, and the music itself, and constantly infused his own music with autobiographical meaning that his critics, biographers, and fans have drawn upon to talk about his work.

While autobiography theory has not undergone the sea-change that Kramer and others have advocated for in classical music criticism, it has altered and expanded in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Many autobiography theorists have been establishing and rethinking generic definitions in response not only to new forms of life narratives, but also to a re-examination of past texts. Though critics may once have thought autobiography conformed to Philippe Lejeune’s tightly focused definition—“retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality”—Lejeune himself later argued that autobiography reflects “as much as a new kind of writing, the emergence of a new *way of reading*” (123). As early as 1994, in “The Mark of Autobiography: Postmodernism, Autobiography, and Genre,” Leigh Gilmore suggested

approaching “autobiography as a discourse of self-representation rather than as *a genre*” (10). Any text may be productively approached provided it contains the “mark of autobiography,” “the problematical deployment of the I” (6). As Smith and Watson’s evolving guide reveals, poetic, fictional, filmic, photographic, and digital representations of lives have led autobiography critics to performance theory for a language to describe how “identities are enacted and reiterated through cultural norms and discourses, and thus prove provisional and unstable”(214). Gould’s own self-representations anticipate and enact theories of performative subjectivity, which assume that the self is not a stable, core identity, but, as Judith Butler claimed about gender, is constructed through a series of “acts, gestures, enactments” (*Gender Trouble*, 136). Gould’s frequent articulations of self also support Eakin’s notion that identity is to some extent the product of self-narration. Though acknowledging that print is not the only form that lends itself to self-construction, Eakin claims that “the success with which various media manage the task of self-representation will be directly proportional to the presence of a sustaining *narrative structure*” (99-100). This proposition might suggest that music will be an ineffective form for self-representation, but Gould’s musical output shows that this is not always the case. Not only did Gould present a narratively constituted identity to a greater and more public extent than most musicians, but he also showed a critical awareness about identity construction that makes all of his textual production relevant from a life writing perspective. Gould may have claimed that music was abstract, and repeated the common modernist perception that details about the composer were unnecessary for understanding the music. His own musical interpretations and compositions, however, are unmistakably representations of his self.

Of course Gould is hardly the first musician to endow his music with autobiographical meaning. Though instrumental music has been treated as an abstract art form, in the twentieth century, music has often exhibited the mark of autobiography. For example, Beethoven's Sonata Opus 81a, *Das Lebewohl*, is a programmatic piece that depicts the separation and reunion of Beethoven and his close friend Archduke Rudolph, and Bach's inclusion of the Bach motif in his *Art of the Fugue* literally deploys the "I". In a diary entry, Robert Schumann wrote that his songs "were intended as an actual reproduction of my inner self" (qtd. in Daverio, 30). And then there's Charles Mingus's "Self Portrait in Three Colors," or Lightnin' Hopkins's "Autobiography in Blues," which actually announce a musical autobiographical pact. The main difference between these examples and Gould is that while these musicians composed music, sometimes even with lyrics that follow that narrative structure Eakin considers crucial for effective self-representation, Gould was not, in the traditional sense, a composer. His performing and recording career were largely devoted to often-idiosyncratic interpretations of other composers' material, and therefore implicated in the life narratives of others. A complex web of identity constructions gets woven when one artist performs the work of another. Robert Schumann's diary entry goes on to note that "no human being can present something exactly as the genius creates it; even she [Agnus Carus] sang the most beautiful passages badly and didn't understand me" (Daverio, 30). But while Schumann may declare Carus's performance as a failure to comprehend the *composer*, it may also be considered as a self-enactment of the *performer*. Gould's music can therefore be approached as a crucial component of his larger attempt at self-narration throughout his life. By taking performance practice and the epitext into account, even Gould's most

seemingly abstract music can be read as self-representation.

As the two previous chapters have noted, to distinguish him from other pianists, Gould, his manager, and his publicists at Columbia Records adopted methods not previously used to market classical music. His genius and eccentricities (genuine or constructed) were highlighted, and so was his emergence from Canada, a nation both underrepresented in international music circles, and misunderstood and overshadowed by its much larger neighbor to the south. These elements of Gould's identity were circulated through visual images as well as in the more traditional media, like music reviews. And an element of Gould's genius was his media savvy. If "Glenn Gould," as Graham Carr has argued, was a landmark in the promoting of musicians using visual media, Gould himself had an uncanny ability to manipulate these new marketing strategies to his own advantage. When coupled with a high level of intelligence and curiosity, the result was a lifetime of theoretical play at self-representation. His media success and his own interest in identity performance ensured that from a very early moment in his career, virtually everything he made public bore the unmistakable mark of Gould. Much of this chapter will address the more obvious forms of Gouldian self-representation, lying within the boundaries, though often at the limits, of auto/biographical genres. I will begin, however, with Gould's musical interpretations, and specifically his *Goldberg* recordings, as forms of autobiographical representation. While perhaps not immediately identifiable as such, they are often some of the least complex autobiographical acts in the performance of Gould's overall life narrative. His interpretations, his constant, unmistakable, and unusual physical presence, and his own comments on his music all mark his work as performances of self.

In David Young's acclaimed play, *Glenn*, PERFORMER, one of four embodiments of Gould's identity, remembers Herbert Von Karajan offering him the following advice:

VON KARAJAN: I'm not talking about accommodation, Mr. Gould, I'm talking about self-control. You must learn to control your image the same way you control your music.

PERFORMER: But—

VON KARAJAN: [interrupting] There is no other road for you to travel.

(Variation 8)

Brash, confident, and playful, PERFORMER is beginning to be troubled by his relationship with live audiences, whom he feels sometimes “resent” him. Troubled that “They stop listening and start watching,” when PERFORMER expresses his unease to VON KARAJAN, he gets the response quoted above, which is more complex than it appears. While it could be taken as an echo of the admonishments Gould often received from critics to control himself physically onstage, it also reflects the larger need of celebrities like Gould to take charge of their own public identities. Gould's performance as a public musical celebrity is shaped by his conscious attempts to control his image, both onstage and in his larger deployment as a public self. His attempts to exercise agency over his own identity construction mark virtually every musical and written work he produced. His unusual musical interpretations were the earliest productions bearing a clear mark of Gould's self, for he seldom tried to remain true to what the composer intended, offering instead interpretations that bordered on new compositions.

Much has been made of Gould's unusual tempi, his habit of arpeggiating chords

that weren't written that way, his extraneous ornamentation, his playing fast and loose with dynamic markings, and his unusual phrasing. Gould defended all these practices as part of his attempt to help listeners hear familiar pieces in new ways, and to emphasize the architectural structure and independent voices of the pieces. As Bazzana notes in *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work*, Gould's standard method for was to "subject the standard canonic repertoire and conventional classical performance practices to radical personal critique":

Some of his more extreme interpretations, especially given the self-consciousness with which he misbehaves, suggest efforts at realigning accepted standards and categories, at persuading listeners to extend accepted boundaries. . . . What Gould called the 'deliberate distortion of the text' in his playing generally had the polemical intent of offering fresh hearing precisely where it was most difficult.

(72)

Some critics complained that Gould's interpretations bordered on rewriting the traditional piece. Though this is seldom true, Bazzana admits "there is a certain validity in the criticism, which he accepted, that some of his performances merit hyphenated attributions (Mozart-Gould)" (75). Gould's most infamous transgression of the customary practices in live performance arose from a conflict not just between composer and performer, but conductor as well. When he performed Brahms' First Piano Concerto with the New York Philharmonic in 1962, Leonard Bernstein directly addressed the audience to make clear that this was Gould's performance: "discrepancies between our views are so great that I feel that I must make this small disclaimer."⁵ These comments highlight the interplay of selves in a musical performance. In this case, Gould's self-assertion overpowered

Bernstein's, but as another famously original artist, as a personality as well as a musician, Bernstein felt the need to reassert himself through his highly unusual comments to the audience. Undermined in the musical peritext, he reaffirms himself by creating an unprecedented epitext.

The Bernstein affair was not the only time that Gould's musical interpretations forced critics to recognize the clash of artist's selves in musical performance. Gould was also well-known for playing transcriptions of symphonic works. Though this practice was not popular, he liked to transcribe pieces by favorite composers such as Richard Strauss and Wagner, who did not write prolifically for the piano. One of Gould's most famous recordings was his 1967 album featuring Liszt's transcriptions of Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies.⁶ The result is an intensely layered web of musical identity construction: Gould performs Liszt performing Beethoven. Transcriptions have also led to some interesting interpretations of his identity. Though he publicly avoided the romantic repertoire, his friends recall fantastic private performances of his own transcriptions of the romantics, creating an alternate version to Gould's public self. Bazzana finds "a hint of the parody" in the Beethoven/Liszt transcriptions, seeing the performance of these and other transcriptions as moments when Gould "seems knowingly, with a wink, to step outside the repertoire characteristic of him, as though to confront his critics head on" (*WS*, 398). In "Transcription, Transgression, and the (Pro)Creative Urge," Ivan Raykoff sees another way that the transcriptions reflect Gould's identity, claiming that although Gould remained circumspect about his sexuality, his performance of transcriptions and paraphrases of other composer's works "indicates some degree of a queer sensibility" (168). Because transcriptions and paraphrases during

Gould's time were not typically appreciated in musical circles, they "serve a contemporary political purpose in signifying the *rearrangement* of social and political texts through queer (re)production" (168). Though Michael Clarkson's revelation of Gould's relationship with Foss seems to have ended speculation about his sexuality, Gould remains inspirational for many marginalized groups because of how he publicly flaunted his own otherness. His performances of transcriptions are only one example of many such instances, and they also show music taking on contingent meaning. They expose the constructedness of identity through parody, since Gould not only contradicts his own image, but also the notion that a composer's or performer's fundamental musical self can be confidently identified by critics. Or as Judith Butler puts it, parody "does not assume there is an original which such parodies imitate. Indeed the parody is *of* the very notion of an original" (*Gender Trouble*, 138).

The physical spectacle that became an expected part of Gould's public performance also marked his concerts as self-representational. The release of the 1955 *Goldberg Variations*, with its thirty photographs of Gould dancing and enraptured by the music, actually encouraged audiences to think of viewing his body as an essential part of the concert experience. His physical appearance and movements made him unique— young, attractive, ethereal, and intimately and physically connected to the music. Reviews commonly mentioned Gould's unusual behavior. A review of his performing debut on the organ described a "loose-jointed, gracious, smiling boy not 13 yet," whose "feet were as agile as his hands" (qtd. in Payzant, 8). Reviewing his first recital, Augustus Bridle reports that through his "intense finger-technique," Gould "stupefied his audience, especially men. Spiderlike fingers, flexible rubberish wrists, pedals infallible, nose a foot

above the keys, he was like an old man on a music spree” (qtd. in Payzant, 11). Initially Gould may have been turned off by the attention to his extra-musical behavior: the hunched position at the piano, the conducting while playing, the seemingly uncontrollable humming, and even his clothing—the business suit instead of a tuxedo, but especially the hat, coat, and muffler in which he frequently took his bows. But soon they became necessary parts of the visual symbol of Glenn Gould. Observing Gould’s performance of Beethoven’s Concerto in C minor with the London Symphony Orchestra in 1959, Harold Rutland describes the unusual physical spectacle as already part of Gould’s legendary onstage persona:

Yes, his platform manner was unorthodox; not to say eccentric. He sat on an exceptionally low chair with the piano raised on wooden blocks; he almost lay back and crossed his left leg over his right; now and again he sipped a glass of water; and he beat time with his foot. But he came out to the platform quickly, without any fuss, and as soon as the music started his absorption was complete.

(qtd in Payzant, 18)

This public image came to embody not only his ecstatic relationship with the music, but his disdain for elitism—the business suit instead of the tuxedo, the card table chair, the relaxed posture—and also his eccentricity. Sometimes seen as a put-on, sometimes as a genuine reflection of his relationship with the music, both were probably somewhat true. In any case, no classical musician had ever made his body so much a part of his performance only to then make so much of not being seen. First there, Gould was suddenly emphatically not. Immersing himself in recording, he soon refused to perform without some kind of technological intermediary. Live music is ephemeral—there, then

gone, to be read only in memory. As a performer, Gould made sure there was more to remember than just the music itself, and as a recording artist, he ensured that his musical self-representations would remain to be read long after he was physically gone. For no other musician does the epitext so affect the text itself; in fact, as he got older and became more elusive, distinctions between peritext and epitext became increasingly blurred.

The most famous aspect of his performance of self was paradoxically his refusal to perform. Mark Kingwell astutely describes how this refusal participated in Gould's cultivation of the legend of "Glenn Gould." His observation that Gould "enacted not-playing for the remainder of his days," I have already cited. But Kingwell goes on to claim that Gould,

was a quodlibet man, pure potentiality. Playing music hid the silence that made music possible, the nothingness before, after, and between. Gould played the silence instead. In this view, his not-playing, his playing of silence, may be understood as the greatest work of art he ever created, a life's work. (74)

Of course Gould continued to play. He simply stopped playing in public, thus denying his audience the physical spectacle of his body—what Benjamin might have called the "aura of the work of art"—and becoming instead the first pianist whose relationship with his audience was entirely scripted. Other musicians left the concert stage, but returned. Vladimir Horowitz retired numerous times. Van Cliburn left the stage in 1978, but performed at the White House for Ronald Reagan in 1987, and gave occasional concerts after that. Gould never returned, so the chance to see him play became the stuff of legends and then imagination. In *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, Friedrich quotes Judith Pearlman's account of Gould playing Chopin's Sonata in B Minor as a gift to her

designed to combat the loneliness she felt living in Toronto while working on the film production of *The Idea of North* (203). Pearlman compares this private performance to his notorious clash with Leonard Bernstein. She had attended the last night of the Brahms Concerto performance, “and it was obvious that the person playing it was in great pain” (203). When performing for Pearlman, however, Gould turned the tables: “But his playing now meant that he knew I was feeling awful. It was his gift to me, meaning, ‘Hang in there’” (203). In Michael Clarkson’s *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould: A Genius in Love*, such private performances are presented as one of the ways he displayed his affection for women. Otherwise emotionally stilted, Gould’s playing made statements that he could not verbally or physically. For all but a few of Gould’s personal friends and acquaintances, however, such performances are purely anecdotal, part of the larger image of an absent and mythical “Glenn Gould.” By withdrawing into the world of text, and constantly theorizing his withdrawal, Gould became the poststructuralist absence of a material self.

The “Gouldberg” Variations: Recorded Music as Self-Representation

For Gould, the possibilities for self-representation were greater in recorded music than in live performance. In interviews he explained that while in performance it was easy to fall back on previously tested interpretations of a composer’s work, in the recording studio, he could become more experimental. Two of his most unusual recorded interpretations were his idiosyncratic recordings of Mozart’s Sonata in C Major, K. 330. In *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, a radio drama released as CD two of the *Glenn Gould Silver Jubilee Album*, Gould humorously but pointedly describes these recordings as self-representation through his fictional musical personae. Wondering why Gould is

“absolutely determined always to avoid any contact with the interpretive mainstream,”

Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite attacks Gould’s two recordings of the Mozart Sonata.

Karlheinz Klopweisser, the critic with whom Gould most often agrees, then defends the performances as explorations of self:

Well, if I may say so Sir Nigel, I think then that we would miss the unique view, the unique point of view, different from whatever has occurred in relation to that music before and which it is surely the duty of the artist to create, to *create* and not to recreate. In the examples you propose Sir Nigel, one could say that in the first instance Mr. Gould was creating such a point of view and in the second instance perhaps not. In the second instance, he recreated only *himself*, so to say, *even as he sought to avoid himself*, you understand, and that of course is to proceed from a negative impulse. [my italics] ⁷

In other words, the first recording was successful because Gould presented his listeners with his unique interpretation of the music, while in the second, Gould could not move effectively beyond his own performance in the first. ⁸

Though this analysis might not be enough in itself to prove that Gould viewed his pieces as self-representation, when combined with other comments and aspects of his career, this conclusion is almost undeniable. And other references to the self in performance point to a strong affinity Gould felt for the *Goldbergs*. His identity is of course most associated with Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, partly because he so consciously linked his identity to this piece in various ways, and partly because of his success in constructing this music as “*The Gouldbergs*,” but largely because Gould’s friends, fans, biographers and critics have continued to see the *Goldbergs* as virtually

synonymous with their most renowned interpreter. As Lawrence Kramer has argued in “Subjectivity Rampant! Music, Hermeneutics, and History,”

music is saturated with meanings attributed to it by the subject it addresses, which are always already a part of any music we actually hear or play. Musical meaning is produced less by the signs of musical semiotics than by the signs about music, signs whose grounding in historically specific forms of subjectivity is the source of their legitimation, not of their—literal—insignificance. The historical presence of these signifiers cannot be excluded from the constitution of whatever we understand as music itself. (130)

By beginning his career with the *Goldbergs*, then recording a vastly different interpretation more than twenty five years later, Gould marked them as self-representation, in the process saturating the piece in epitextual and peritextual signifiers that represented his own selfhood. His own comments, his two distinct interpretations at very different moments in his life, and the recordings’ posthumous fortunes all mark the *Goldbergs* as his most significantly autobiographical recordings.

As early as his practice sessions for his first recording, Gould created links between the *Goldbergs* and his own identity. In *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, Peter Oswald writes that “Occasionally, in jest, he spoke of playing the ‘Gouldberg’ Variations”, and suggests that Gould’s interest in the piece was personal: “it would have been obvious and amusing for Glenn, whose family name had been Gold, to identify with Goldberg” (116). Michael Clarkson also quotes Frances Barrault as saying Gould called the piece the “Gould-bergs” (42), and Barrault also makes this comment herself in *Genius Within*. Echoing Schumann’s comments about his songs, Oswald, a

friend of Gould's for many years, argues that Gould's personal link with the *Goldbergs* went beyond his jokes about the title. Gould "used his intuition and imagination to mold the music into a replica of his inner self, to make it express his innermost feelings and attitudes" (116).⁹ The psychobiographer therefore locates the key to Gould's art deep within his psyche, but Gould himself also saw these interpretations of Bach as representations of self. In a 1959 interview, American music critic, Alan Rich, asks if he is still "of the same mind about the *Goldberg Variations*" as when he first recorded them. Gould replies, "I'm getting a little bit older, in that I think almost all my tempi are getting a bit slower. . . . I've changed some. . . (135-36). In a telephone interview with Dale Harris in 1981, Gould refers to the differences between his 1955 and 1981 recordings in terms of self: "The difference between my first *Goldberg* recording and this one shows up in such things as Variation Fifteen, the long, slow one, which is the canon and inversion of the Fifth. Twenty-six years ago I made it sound like a Chopin nocturne. *I can no longer recognize the person who did that*" ([my italics], 332).¹⁰ From very early on, then, Gould saw performance as self-representation, and in 1981, when he re-recorded the piece, he viewed the earlier recording, as an earlier version of himself.

The first *Goldbergs* presents a young Canadian pianist, embarking on a new career as a recording artist, ready to prove himself to critics and established musicians alike. The seeds of the idiosyncrasies of performance that were to become Gould's trademark are planted in the music, and in Columbia Records' strategy to market Gould's personality as much as his music, which no doubt contributed to the extreme self-reflexivity that Gould increasingly exhibited throughout his life. When he proposed making his recording debut with the *Goldberg Variations*, CBS was hesitant, and Gould

later acknowledged that, “the objections they had, which were mild and expressed in a most friendly fashion, were quite logical” (Colgrass, 342). He was twenty-two years old, and according to CBS, “the Goldberg Variations . . . was supposed to be the private preserve of, perhaps, Wanda Landowska or someone of that generation and stature” (Colgrass, 342). The *Goldbergs* were also notably difficult and cerebral. Rather than begin with “a more modest undertaking,” though, Gould persisted in recording his chosen piece (Colgrass, 342), and the result was a recording that Ostwald describes as filled with “youthful abandon, spontaneity, and miraculous technique,” but that goes against traditional Bach performance practice (317-318). The most obvious difference between Gould’s recording and that of Wanda Landowska, perhaps the reigning *Goldbergs* performer of the time, is that he used a piano while she used a harpsichord. Though he later experimented with the harpsipiano or tack piano, a piano that according to Gould, “thinks it’s a harpsichord,” he consistently performed compositions originally written for harpsichord on piano, which often made him the object of criticism (Payzant, 104). Gould’s decision to begin his career with something as cerebral as the *Goldbergs*, then to fly in the face of traditional performance practice in his choice of instrument, therefore presented listeners with a young musician confronting serious intellectual challenges at the same time he is willing to experiment. Similarly, Gould’s thoughtful liner notes suggest a wisdom beyond the musician’s years, yet the performance itself is celebrated for youthful virtuosity, agility, and lyrical beauty.

The impression of youthful abandon arises in part from the tempo. Many critics have commented on the quickness of the first recording. Richard Freed remarked that Gould’s 1955 *Goldbergs* may “well be the briskest on record at just under thirty-nine

minutes playing time,” a product of “sheer drive,” as opposed to the more “engaging warmheartedness” of the 1981 recording. (63). Commenting on the controversial tempo in Variation I, Jeremy Siepmann noted that like Horowitz, Gould “sometimes played with the combination of speed and clarity which bordered at once on the ludicrous and the incredible” (26).¹¹ And in an interview with Alan Rich, Gould himself describes the tempo as a stage in his own musical growth: “I was very much in a ‘let’s get the show on the road and get on with it’ sort of mood. I felt to linger unduly over anything would be to take away from a sort of overall unity of things, and this was one phase of trying to accomplish a kind of emotional unity in the work which is always something I’ve attempted to do in playing the piano” (135). Many years later, Gould echoed a common comment on the first recording when explaining why he wanted to re-record the *Goldbergs*: “It was very nice, but it was perhaps a little bit like thirty very interesting but somewhat independent-minded pieces going their own way and all making a comment on the ground bass on which they are formed” (Oswald, 316). And yet, despite the critical controversy over the performance, and Gould’s own later reservations, the 1955 recording made him immediately and deservedly famous, and not only initiated his brilliant career as a musician, but also his life as a media personality.¹²

Unlike many musicians, Gould seemed to enjoy writing and talking about his work. The peritext surrounding his recordings is vast and often autobiographical. As I mentioned earlier, Geoffrey Payzant goes so far as to claim that Gould’s notes accompanying his radio documentaries “are like T.S. Eliot’s famous notes to his poems: they are not external to the works of art, but are integral parts of them” (137). The same can often be said about Gould’s frequent media appearances and writings, which allowed

him to explain the purposes of all of his work, often in terms of self. The attention he received after his first recording fuelled his interest in his self-image. Gould's public self was a regular topic of conversation in his interviews, long before he began scripting all of his media exchanges himself. In 1959, Alan Rich remarks that Gould has a "public image that is probably as diverse and varied and interesting in more ways than [that of] probably any important musician in the present time." Gould replies that this image was "an immense advantage," though he claims that he "really didn't have much to do with the cultivation of this." His remarks show just how thoughtful he was about his own marketing: "the idea that one has to be a specialist in order to survive in a very competitive business, can really only be promoted by this kind of image which easily allows you to be typed as somewhat original" (133). Furthermore, Gould embraces this image because of a goal larger and more important than simply generating sales:

It seems to me that if, on the strength of a certain amount of notoriety, I had attempted to seduce an audience by compromisable musical taste or programs, this would have been rather reprehensible, but I didn't do this and I think the strongest argument is that if it helped build up a certain amount of box office in some cities, and if these people were then exposed to music which they might otherwise not have been, then it was a very good thing. (134)

Very early in this career, then, Gould saw constructing a public self as a means for ensuring that a more genuine and important private self—his thoughts and ideas about music—would reach a larger audience.

But he also admitted that success did focus his attention on the self. Noting that this public attention to a young performer could not "be blocked," Gould recalled that "in

the first few months in which this publicity was being directed pretty wildly at a mass audience, when the *Goldberg Variations* was first released as a recording, I tended to be a little bit self-conscious” (133). In 1962, he confirmed that he became “extremely self-conscious about everything I did,” but claimed this was temporary. His biography, however, tells a different story. While it may have ceased to be uncomfortable or inhibiting, his self-consciousness seems only to have increased during his life. His writings and documentaries are elaborate forms of play with the idea of self-representation, and venues for exerting control over his own image. And musically, this self-reflexivity culminated in his 1981 rerecording of the *Goldberg Variations*.

By returning to the piece with which he had in some ways defined his career, Gould clearly marked both *Goldberg* recordings as self-representation. Like all of his many recordings, the 1981 *Goldbergs* reinterpret the composer’s material—only this time, the young Gould joins Bach. The second recording is even more explicitly autobiographical, because it comments on representations of Gould by himself. Like the 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, this recording provides musical and visual—in this case filmic—representations of Gould. But here the visual is no longer part of the peritext, because although available as separate texts, the film and recording of the 1981 *Goldbergs* occurred simultaneously, suggesting how important visual representations had become in his construction of self—perhaps in part because of the absence of a concert career.

The 1981 *Goldbergs* present an older, more mature musician but also an international celebrity, a musical philosopher, and the iconic symbol “Glenn Gould.” More fully in command of his career, Gould now comments on the younger pianist of

1955, even drawing attention to the performance mannerisms that have become so famous in between. The speed and technical display of the early recording come to represent the eagerness and drive of youth. The 1981 recording has a more expansive approach to the music, a slowing down and opening up more representative of the patience and wisdom of middle age. In Bruno Monsaingeon's film of the recording sessions, Gould repeats his assessment that the early recording "was a little bit like 30 very interesting but somewhat independent-minded pieces." After having twenty five years to think about it, in this new performance he finally hopes to achieve "some sort of almost arithmetical correspondence between the theme and the subsequent variations," although he also cites the invention of stereo and Dolby as other reasons for rerecording. Most critics agree that Gould achieved this correspondence. James R. Oestreich credits the slower tempo, along with the repeats and the way Gould "sweeps from one variation to the next after little or no pause," with giving the piece a "rhapsodic cast" and "making it seem less a row of binary puddles than an impetuous, flowing stream" (57-58). Edward Said writes that "Gould's performance of these thirty extraordinary pieces has acquired layers of sophistication and cleverness, in added ornaments, in oddly varied and usually slower tempi, in surprising repetitions, in more sharply inflected lines" (2).

Like many other critics, Said not only responds to Gould's 1981 audio recording but to the film version as well, which insists that the 1981 recording is not to be taken on its own, but as a comment on the 1955 version and the younger Gould who created it. The *Goldbergs* film was one of several Gould undertook with Bruno Monsaingeon. When Monsaingeon came across one of Gould's albums in a Moscow record shop in 1965, his life was transformed. Several years later, after gaining experience as a film-maker, he

contacted Gould, proposing a film for the Office de radiodiffusion-télévision française. Soon one of Gould's closest colleagues, Monsaingeon was suitably awed and willing to give Gould the control he now required over his projects, though Monsaingeon had impressive film-making and musical knowledge of his own. Completed in six sessions in April and May of 1981, the *Goldbergs* film is one of the most spectacular representations of Gould's awe-inspiring pianistic skills, but it also links the two recordings and the young and middle-aged musicians, emphasizing the continuity and differences in personal and performance behaviors. Opening with a still of a piano and Gould's iconic but now almost destroyed chair, lit softly in an autumnal golden hue, the film then offers slow fades of the thirty snapshots from the 1955 album cover while that recording plays in the background. Monsaingeon provides a voice-over introduction. Emphasizing the relationship between music and life, he quotes Gould's description of the *Goldbergs* as "30 remarkable views of an entirely unremarkable ground bass theme, views which like snapshots randomly filed range back and forth across the decades revealing at one moment the sturdy contrapuntal craft of Bach's maturity, at another, the indulgent exhibitionism of his youth, and at all the best moments, the passionate aestheticism of his old age." Though Gould may have stated that music was always abstract, here he reads the *Goldbergs* autobiographically, and his metaphorical snapshots of Bach's career coincide with the onscreen snapshots of himself, deftly joining the self-representation of the composer to that of the performer. Monsaingeon also briefly describes Gould's musical process and thought, which considers recording to be a distinct art form and the interpreter to be a composer, then instructs the listener on how to experience Gould's work properly. Monsaingeon justifies the unusual interpretations by explaining that

Gould “identifies creatively with the work performed and can, therefore, allow himself a critical, non-servile attitude towards the score.” Further, “he would wish the listener also to become part of the creative process. For if one put less emphasis on the notion of individual and separate identity, composer, interpreter, and listener should be in a state to reclaim the unity shattered by the artistic concepts of the romantic age.” The irony, of course, is that while Gould may claim to want the listener to become a creator, even his own recording team was subject to his tight control over the recording’s every last detail. As Bazzana notes, in the two previous films in the *Glenn Gould Plays Bach* series, Gould “scripted the conversation segments down to the last comma, and instead of memorizing his lines he relied, very obviously, on cue cards, as did Monsaingeon” (WS, 450). Small wonder, then, that in the *Goldberg Variations* film, Monsaingeon’s lines sound decidedly Gouldian in their language and articulation.

The film constantly refers self-consciously to Gould’s earlier career, suggesting how hard Gould was willing to work even at this point in his life to perform the recognizable features of “Glenn Gould.” The camera comes upon Gould in his studio, listening to a clip and studying the score with a technician. In an excellent description of the passage of time implied here, Edward Said observes that Gould is “no longer the lean and youthfully eager intellectual, the caustic wit who could say of Beethoven that he was always going to meet his destiny at the next modulation. He has now become a pot-bellied, bald and somewhat mournful middle-aged aesthete whose jowly face and slightly decadent lips suggest too many rich meals. Even his fingers, which have retained their fabulously efficient elegance and economy, are now evidently older, more worldly” (2). But while the film shows us a musician mellowed or afflicted by middle-age, it also

represents a man comfortably in his element and firmly in control of his own self-image. Relaxed and happy in the recording studio, he tells the producer which passages are worth keeping, jokes that a particular section is “a little bit Dixieland,” and stretches back in his chair, feet on the table and hands over his head. Such behavior sharply contrasts with his notorious discomfort with live performances. During the interview, his famously sloppy appearance is foregrounded by a slow, partial zoom which picks up the linty bottoms of his stocking feet and some bare leg between socks and pant cuffs. During the sessions, we see his flopping, unbuttoned sleeves. In his valuable analysis of the unedited footage for the *Goldberg* film, Ken Forfia writes that Gould intentionally established this casual look. He purposely played the first part of the “Aria” with his legs crossed, and those loose sleeves actively created problems during the variations employing crossed hands. Furthermore, no attempt was made to mask Gould’s vocalizations when recording; indeed, for some critics the voice sounds like it was dubbed in over the piano tracks. All these touches confirm that Gould wanted to emphasize his self-image, and that the final *Goldbergs* recording is not only a revision of the work, but also a retrospective representation of Gould’s life as performer/recording artist.

The film also self-consciously acknowledges its own form by highlighting Gould’s status as a recording, as opposed to performing, musician. Monsaingeon begins by declaring that Gould retired “willingly and definitively” from the concert stage to pursue “a higher calling.” As the first notes of the new recording are heard, the camera observes Gould at the piano through the window of the control booth, the controls visible in the corner of the screen. Moving closer, the camera stays tightly focused on Gould for the rest of the film. The various camera angles and frequent close-ups on Gould’s still

remarkably agile hands offer a perspective denied to even the closest audience members during a concert performance. The sense of intimacy derived from viewing Gould so closely in his apparently “ecstatic” state of performance enforces his belief in the value of technology. It is sometimes difficult to remember that, even in this ecstatic state, Gould is self-consciously performing himself. Invoking “Glenn Gould” through his clothes and mannerisms, the film also abets some of Gould’s “creative cheating.” Bazzana reports that the outtakes capture Gould having “fun faking in sequences where he had to pantomime at the keyboard in order to synchronize visuals with an existing soundtrack” (WS, 451). In Variation 23, he used “Bach’s tricky disposition of the hand for the visual track, but used easier fingering—cheated, in other words—to get a cleaner take for the soundtrack” (WS, 451). The film is a highly effective self-representation of Gould, but the visual dimensions made it more complicated for him, since he had to live up to his audience’s expectations of precisely the physical spectacle of performance that he had renounced by abandoning the concert stage. But technologically, film allowed Gould to give audiences the physical representation of himself as performing musician they craved, while still exerting the control over his “self” that the recording studio allowed. In fact, although the film was shown on French television in January of 1982, Gould continued to work on the album throughout the summer, not releasing it until September of 1982. Though representing the same interpretation, the film soundtrack and the recording are therefore not identical, as slight differences appear in both musical and technical detail (WS, 452).¹⁴

As a French release, the film did not attract much attention. But the album, released to coincide with Gould’s fiftieth birthday, received significant media interest,

which increased substantially when Gould died a week later. As a result, the 1981 *Goldberg Variations* show how a musical piece can become identified with the performer's life due to extra-musical circumstances. The convergence of this recording and his death became explicit in his October 15, 1982 memorial service, when the new version of the "Aria" from the *Goldbergs* was broadcast throughout the church. Ostwald observes that "This not only gave Glenn a chance to have the last word, as he was heard humming the Aria, but also fulfilled his fantasy of attending his own funeral" (331). A few notes from the "Aria" also appear on his tombstone, marking his connection to the piece even in death. The success with which Gould identified Bach's composition with himself is testified to by the many representations of Gould that make detailed references to the *Goldberg Variations*, or even adopt its form. Otto Friedrich's significantly titled *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations* uses the variation form to represent the many disparate elements of Gould's character, as does *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*. David Young divides the two acts of *Glenn* into an "Aria" and fifteen variations each, and uses the ground bass from the *Goldberg Variations* to signal changes between scenes. Each note coincides with a new episode in the staging of Gould's biography. And, when Nouvel Ensemble Moderne commissioned Toronto composer Christos Hatzis to write a piece for the 1992 Glenn Gould Conference, he provided *The Gouldberg Variations*, for MIDI piano and orchestra based on Gould's recordings of Bach's piece.¹⁵ Hatzis extends Gould's link to the *Goldberg Variations* by adopting his unique interpretive method. Hatzis's *Gouldbergs* feature a MIDI piano programmed to emulate Gould's style, and he encouraged the orchestra to study Gould's 1981 recording, then "apply his attitude to time and phrasing on the instrumental parts."¹⁶

Gould's two *Goldberg* recordings and the series of texts surrounding them show how music can indeed be autobiographical; in fact, I would argue that it is next to impossible for an audience familiar with the history of the *Goldberg Variations* not to consider them representations of Glenn Gould. Primarily because of Gould's extensive work to construct an identity through the *Goldberg Variations*, they have become a text embedded with the social and cultural meaning surrounding the life of their interpreter/composer. But Gould's markedly different interpretations portray him autobiographically not only through the documents and history surrounding them, but through the music itself. Gould claimed that music is an abstract art form, but his own recordings, and especially the *Goldbergs*, refute this belief. From the time he was recording the first *Goldbergs* album, Gould was constructing performances fundamentally linked to his musical identity. By the time of the 1981 *Goldbergs*, he had become not only a piano and recording virtuoso, but a master of self-representation. He hired Tim Page to play himself in a Gould-scripted documentary interview publicizing his new recording, but Gould himself, in all of his public appearances, was an actor playing "Glenn Gould." In the final years of his too-short life, Gould's self-conscious performance of himself became more difficult, as his aging, heavily medicated body could no longer perform the earlier elements of his self-representation. But, his ability to produce virtuosic, transcendent musical interpretations remained; despite his obvious struggles with his speech and physical appearance, nothing about the music seems forced or unnatural. As Mark Kingwell has stated, the 1981 *Goldberg* film is truly, "one of the most impressive displays of genius in one medium caught by the deftness of another medium" (92). But then the same thing could be said about Gould's entire oeuvre of

musical performances of his life.

Disguised, Multiple, and Fractured Goulds: Allegorical Selves, G.G. and g.g., and Theodore Slutz et. al.

Glenn Gould is having a party in his own head. Everyone is invited, but he is the only person who gets to play.

Mark Kingwell (183)

From very early in his career, Gould was preoccupied with self-representation. Many critics and biographers have speculated on why someone who understood music as deeply and intuitively as Gould chose not to compose music, except for his String Quartet and a few smaller pieces, but instead devoted himself to recording others' works, to unusual radio documentaries, and to writing. Some consider that Gould simply had no talent for composition; I would suggest that Gould gravitated toward forms that allowed him both to represent himself more overtly, and to comment theoretically on results. Viewed in this way, his self-reflexive writing and his radio documentaries are complex efforts to perform a personal identity that were successful to varying degrees. Gould's vehicles for realizing this autobiographical impulse range from liner notes to fully-scripted interviews to self-interviews, and from his touchingly personal allegorical representations of self in his *Solitude Trilogy* to the bizarre, humorous multiple Gould personae in *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, his final radio drama. All are driven by a fascination with the self as fractured and multiple, and stand as an artist's comments on selfhood that are absolutely ground-breaking in musical auto/biography. Furthermore, these works frequently assert Gould's personal agency by mocking the biographical representations others had produced about him. The puppetry in his entirely scripted interviews, the self-

division in his self-interviews, the allegory in his radio documentaries, and the self-multiplication through his constructed personae all speak to his intense interest in autobiographical representation.

In a 1980 interview with Jim Aikin, Gould explained one of his performance eccentricities this way: “With regard to my habit of arpeggiating chords that are not written to be arpeggiated, I should point out that I don’t do this specifically in order to irritate music critics. I do it in order to try to deliver a certain load of information in such a way that each separate component of the vertical block of the chord carries its own weight” (262). Gould’s verbal autobiographical representations also became arpeggiated: fractured in his self-interviews, multiplied in his radio documentaries, and eventually shattered and dispersed in his *Fantasy*. Critical responses to these self-representations often reveal just how tolerant Gould’s biographers are for this kind of play.

Co-opted Media: Fake Reviews, Advice to Reviewers, and Scripted Interviews

Especially after retiring from the concert stage, Gould explored the potential for representing himself through the constructed voices of imagined critics and real interviewers, as a way to take control of his media image. For a young man from Toronto whose family had no previous experience with celebrity other than an occasional mention in church notices and local newspapers, the intense media attention focused on him after the release of his 1955 *Goldbergs* would have been understandably disorienting. And though the many rave reviews skyrocketed him to almost instant international celebrity, some reviewers were notoriously harsh. Responding to Gould’s controversial Brahms concert with Bernstein, Harold Schonberg, whom Friedrich describes as “probably the most powerful critic in New York,” used a somewhat clumsy attempt at Yiddish humor to

suggest that “maybe the reason he plays it so slow is maybe his technique is not so good” (106). Though reviews raising questions about Gould’s technique are highly unusual, critics often tempered their praise for Gould’s pianism with criticisms of his eccentricities. In his own writing, Gould himself could be ambivalent. Edward Rothstein notes that Gould “treated himself with a mixture of irony and seriousness, seeming at times both a musical showman and a priest devoted to his art” (qtd. in Page, xv), and this combination of humor and sincerity often arose when he wrote back to critics’ interpretations of him. By 1968, his almost parodic piano transcriptions are echoed by his parodic liner notes, displaying a kind of humor that was to become his trademark when responding to those who publicly evaluated his work.

The liner notes to his recording of Liszt’s transcription of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony includes four imaginary reviews attributed to some of his early personae: Sir Humphrey Price-Davies, a British reviewer; Prof. Dr. Karlheinz Heinkel, a German reviewer; Dr. S. F. Lemming, M.D., an American psychiatrist; and Zoltán Mostányi, a Hungarian. These vastly different “authors” touch only superficially on Gould or his recording, suggesting that many reviews are really profiles of the reviewer’s own subject position. The snobbish Price-Davies, for example, describes the transcriptions as one of a series of recent American recordings that betray a “preoccupation with rather obscure keyboard repertoire from the nineteenth century” that would be best left alone. Referring to Gould as “that extravagantly eccentric Canadian pianist” (57), Price-Davis concludes that “The entire undertaking smacks of that incorrigible American pre-occupation with exuberant gesture and is quite lacking in those qualities of autumnal repose which a carefully judged interpretation of this work should offer” (58). Four years into his

retirement from the stage, Gould lets the British reviewer bring up the topic, and declare that “if this new CBS release is indicative of his current musical predilections, perhaps it is just as well” (58). The pedantic Prof. Dr. Heinkel, on the other hand, devotes himself to exploring minute details of the transcription, pondering the missing middle C’s in bars 197 and 201. Lemming examines the piece as if Gould were a patient, giving him another chance to represent his own eccentricities. Through “the kind cooperation of Columbia Records’ medical staff,” Lemming witnessed the recording sessions, and concludes that Gould’s foray into transcriptions is a midlife crisis exhibiting itself as “career disorientation” (60). Gould’s “gesticulating in a conductorlike manner” and “increasingly laconic speech patterns” for instance, reveal his “desire to assume the authoritarian role of conductor” (60). As a socialist critic, Mostányi does not discuss the recording at all, except to bemoan that the shift from orchestra to piano results in “eighty men denied the right to work. . . . Eighty men whose cold and sickly children will be colder still tonight” (61).

While primarily humorous, these four reviews are examples of Gould’s representations of the self through alter-egos. Though none of the supposed critics correspond exactly to the personae Gould used in his *Fantasy*, his alter-ego tour de force, the major character types—British, German, and Hungarian critics—are already in place. These liner notes are an implicit attack on supposedly “objective” critics, whose opinions Gould felt were often contingent upon extra-musical factors. Certainly his various parodic critics are at least as interested in their own notions of selfhood as they are in the artist’s work.

At the end of the liner notes for his recording of Grieg’s *Piano Sonata* and Bizet’s

Nocturne and Variations chromatiques, Gould himself offers “A Confidential Caution to Critics.” Since, for many professional listeners, “this disc may well constitute a first exposure to the piano works of Bizet,” they “may be at a loss for a yardstick with which to evaluate the performances contained herein” (79). More than willing to assist, Gould offers some ready-made critical observations:

For those of you who greet the release with enthusiasm, therefore, I should like to propose a phrase such as “. . . vividly and forcefully, as only a first reading can, it partakes of that freshness, innocence, and freedom from tradition that, as the late Artur Schnabel so deftly remarked, is but a ‘collection of bad habits.’” On the other hand, for those in doubt as to the validity of the interpretations involved, I venture to recommend a conceit such as “. . . regrettably, a performance that has not yet jelled; an interpretation that is still in search of an architectural overview.”

(79)

For those who “prefer to remain, so to speak, on the fence,” Gould suggests combining the two sentences. He then notes that because Edvard Grieg was a distant cousin of his mother, to review his interpretation of his relative’s piano piece unfavorably “would be tantamount to suggesting that Clara Schumann was misinformed about the inner workings of the worthy Robert’s A-minor Concerto” (80). By humorously providing suitable phrases for reviewers in need, or forestalling criticism by claiming kin, Gould masks his more serious efforts to set his own construction of self against those constructed for him by others. For Gould, the inevitable fact that some critics will praise his recording, while others will find fault with it, suggests that they are predictable in their inconsistency. Furthermore, Gould shows that he can engage them through his own

artistic medium or in writing.

These early exchanges with critics are both humorous and forthright. In his late career, though, Gould insisted on controlling his media representations entirely. According to Otto Friedrich, in 1977, Gould revealed that “I have, in fact, not spoken a spontaneous word via the airwaves for at least a decade” (231), and it soon became common Gould knowledge that he would not agree to interviews unless he could script both questions and answers. Bazzana claims this practice began as soon as Gould retired from the concert stage: “Usually, he either wrote out both questions and answers, sometimes on the basis of a preliminary impromptu conversation, or granted an unscripted interview on the condition that he could edit it for publication” (WS, 269). The Glenn Gould Archive contains several drafts of interview scripts from as early as 1961. For his numerous interviews with Bruno Monsaingeon, and his famous *Goldbergs* interview with Tim Page, Gould composed both sides of the conversation, and Robin Elliot suggests that Gould also co-opted Jonathan Cott’s voice. Gould used this control over media to express some of his most important ideas. In an interview published in 1976 under the title “Of Mozart and Related Matters: Glenn Gould in Conversation with Bruno Monsaingeon,” Gould discusses the contradictions in his work with Mozart. Monsaingeon identifies the “paradox” in his opening question: “You’ve recorded all of the Mozart sonatas in the past few years, so we now have on hand, so to speak, your views on a major portion of Mozart’s piano writing. Yet you continue to give interviews in which you make very unsympathetic comments about Mozart as a composer” (32). After this, Monsaingeon offers brief questions and cues that provoke Gould’s much longer responses. As Gould explains his antipathy to much of Mozart’s work,

Monsaingeon takes the role of interested and sometimes incredulous listener, offering objections where appropriate, but always helping Gould to advance his argument. Though they ultimately fail to agree, Monsaingeon is the ideal interviewer: focusing on Gould's thoughts rather than his biography; possessing a strong enough musical background himself to bring ideas to the discussion, or at least understand Gould's; and objecting to Gould's notions respectfully, understanding that they are the extreme, but carefully-thought-out ideas of someone whose deep understanding of music commands respect. The interview therefore affirms Gould's image as unique in the music world without unnecessarily highlighting his eccentricities.

In one of Gould's last interviews, a conversation with Tim Page, he addresses a crucial element of his identity: his final recording of the *Goldberg Variations*. Gould met Page in 1981, when Columbia was publicizing the *Silver Jubilee Album*. Page was the music critic for the now-defunct New York paper, *The Soho Weekly*, and Gould granted him an interview after Page wrote him a letter at Columbia publicist Susan Koscis's suggestion.¹⁷ Gould allotted Page an hour on the phone, but because Gould found Page interesting, they talked for four hours. Conceived by Page but later edited by Gould, the resulting interview explores the defining moments of Gould's career: his retirement from concert performing, his radio documentaries, his rejection of most of the romantic repertoire, and so on. Page and Gould became good friends, so when Gould and Columbia wanted to produce a media piece to explain his new recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, Page was the natural choice. After explaining his reasons for re-recording the piece and defending, once again, playing Bach on the piano, Gould gave Page a detailed account of the *Goldbergs*, often variation by variation. Like Monsaingeon in his Gould-

scripted interview, Page provides cues for Gould's long responses and serves as an interested listener. In this case, though, Gould also has Page (over) simplify the answers. For example, after a long explanation of his tempo in Variation 17, Page remarks, "In other words, you're basically saying that you didn't like it enough to play it slowly," and Gould responds, "You got it."¹⁸ Finally, Page defends Gould's earlier recording when Gould himself criticizes it, making Gould appear attractively self-denigrating, while at the same time affirming the value of his earlier work.

Page's account of this interview shows how extensively Gould was controlling his public image by 1981. In an interview for the Michael Lawrence Films Bach Project, Page recalls that Gould asked him to be "an actor in a radio documentary" in which he would play Tim Page. Gould not only controlled the contents, but the overall effect, leading him to switch studios part way through the recording process. Page insists that "Tim Page" does not say anything that he himself disagrees with, but some of the interview's conceits—the suggestion that Page uses a stopwatch to time each movement, or the appearance of one of Gould's critical personae—were "pure Glenn." Page also remarks, though, that even when he did disagree with aspects of the interview, he remained silent, because he "was in Glenn's show" and was "basically an actor playing Tim Page."¹⁹ The seriousness with which Gould approached the interview—calling it a radio documentary, changing studios to get the desired effect, insisting on multiple takes, and displaying a working persona very different from how he behaved with Page outside of the studio—suggests that Gould was not only controlling his public representations, but enacting his larger musical/technological life project, offering to perform only when he had total control over form and content, and could maintain careful technological

mediation. He also, incidentally, shows he could laugh at himself. His draft of this interview is entitled: “a spontaneous, off-the-cuff, top-of-our-heads conversation between Tim (Wing-It) Page and Glenn (Ad-Lib) Gould” (Friedrich, 305).

The Self Interview in Music: Gould’s Divided Self

Gould’s liner notes and scripted interviews are tools for shaping his public self, and so too were his more straightforward self-interviews, though they stretch the boundaries of musical autobiography. When he was working on *The Quiet in the Land*, his third installment in *The Solitude Trilogy*, Gould twice chose to represent himself in dialogue. In 1972, he interviewed himself about Beethoven for *Piano Quarterly*, and in 1974, *High Fidelity* published “Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould about Glenn Gould.” Musicians and other celebrities have adopted the self-interview form, but most use a simple question and answer structure, with one persona clearly the interviewer, and the other the celebrity who answers—the structure, in short that Gould used in his scripted interviews. In “Tom Waits’ True Confessions,” for example, Waits playfully addresses his own public image, noting that based on “rumors and gossip,” he was afraid to meet his subject, but actually found him to be “gentle, intelligent, open, bright, helpful, humorous, brave, audacious, loquacious, clean, and reverent,” The interview itself, however, features questions clearly designed to solicit the quirky, humorous, and thoughtful responses Waits provides. The answers are clearly the focus, and the Waits providing them is the leading narrative voice.²⁰ Gould’s self interviews, are more contrapuntal, similar to the multi-voiced music Gould preferred.

Not only does this method allow him to articulate more than one side of an idea, but also provides him with a way of enacting a contrapuntal self. While Peter Ostwald

has suggested that Gould's alter-egos "allowed him to step outside of himself and give voice to inner doubts and conflicts," this claim seems more appropriate to Gould's self interviews, where different Glenn Goulds express often opposing ideas (262). In "Glenn Gould Interviews Himself About Beethoven," for instance, the two voices often clash over the composer's major works. The interviewer, glenn gould, and interviewee, GLENN GOULD (henceforth, as in the interview, g.g. and G.G.) are immediately at odds. g.g.'s first question, "Mr. Gould, when did you first become aware of your growing doubts about Beethoven?" gets this G. G. response: "I don't believe I have any doubts about Beethoven—a few minor reservations, perhaps. Beethoven has played a very important part in my life, and I feel that while the warm glow of his bicentennial celebration remains, 'doubts' is a singularly inappropriate word" (43). Not satisfied with this reply, g.g. teases from G.G. his thoughts about Beethoven's works, then offers various explanations for G.G.'s ambivalence about Beethoven by drawing upon the answers G.G. provides. By the end of the seven-page interview, g.g. and G.G. together conclude that Gould's undeniable "doubts" arise from Beethoven's famous motives in some of his major symphonies. Because these intentions are easily accessible to "laymen," they therefore "threaten to undermine [Gould's] interpretive prerogative" (48). Or in other words, g.g. concludes G.G. is bothered by "those works in which an elaborate exposé with which only a professional can cope is related to material with which anyone can identify" (49). Ultimately the key question for Gould—"whether in making that mystery explicit, in exploiting the dichotomy between layman and professional, we do our fellow man a service or a disservice"—is articulated by the interviewer rather than the interviewee, suggesting that for Gould, both voices in his self-interviews have different but crucial

roles to play.

Such an interview allows Gould to negotiate his own philosophical ideals of music, and reveals two important elements of his thought. The first is ethical. Gould believed art had moral implications. He favored work that inspired an “ecstatic” relationship to the music, and that was “introspective” rather than “exhibitionist.” He disliked work “oriented toward theatricality” or encouraging hedonism (*GG:PW*, 118). He saw Beethoven’s work as the latter kind of music, and it troubled him because it impeded the introspective search for ecstasy encouraged by composers like Bach. In short, Beethoven’s music did not help audience and performer achieve that “loss of self” inherent in the state of ecstasy. That Gould reaches this conclusion through self-interview reflects his indecisiveness about these ideas. When G.G. asks how g.g. knew he had doubts about Beethoven, g.g. replies: “Mr. Gould, it was perfectly obvious—you wouldn’t have requested this interview otherwise. You’d have authored the piece as you were asked to do” (50). That Gould writes his way to an understanding of his thoughts on Beethoven by drawing on a divided self and a self-in-progress suggests just how verbal Gould was as a thinker.

In “Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould,” the fractured self of the earlier interview is even more evident. This self-interview is explicitly biographical, with the primary subject the musician himself. Playfully responding to Gould’s reputation as reclusive and uncooperative, the interview begins with a long segment in which G.G. claims he can think of no “off-limit” topics of conversation, “apart from music, of course.” When g.g. protests that the interview “was never contractually confirmed, but it was sealed with a handshake,” G.G. replies “Figuratively

speaking, of course,” alluding not only to the impossibility of shaking hands with one’s self, but also to Gould’s famous avoidance of human contact, and in particular, his fierce protection of his hands (315). Almost ten years after Gould’s retirement from concertizing, g.g. declares the “concert-versus-media controversy” as the “virtually obligatory question in regard to your career” (316). In this way he presents as a matter of fact that Gould’s musical philosophy and theories about recorded music are the most important things about him, rather than biographical revelations. That artist’s biographies should avoid unnecessary personal detail is a theme running through much of Gould’s writing on the self. In the same issue of *Piano Quarterly* in which he reviewed Geoffrey Payzant’s *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind*, Gould also reviewed H. H. Stuckenschmidt’s biography of Schoenberg. Despite leading with a long biographical story himself, Gould declares that Stuckenschmidt “tells us more about the day-to-day happenings in the Schoenberg household than I, for one, really wanted to know” (145). In his self-interview, though, G.G. repeatedly and self-parodically tries to draw his interviewer, g.g., into a discussion of the tracheitis he contracted in Salzburg in an overly drafty concert hall (317). Here again, the two Goulds together create a portrait of a self that refutes common media misunderstandings—embodied by the lower case g.g.—by replacing them with more nuanced information offered by the upper case self. Gould’s second self-interview therefore models the kind of biographical interest he has about himself or other musicians, yet, humorously parries this interest by supplying more serious or nuanced information.

Contrapuntal Radio Documentary as Self-Representation

While Gould’s self-interviews are obvious performances of self, when he was

writing them, he had already completed the first two installments of his most successful and sustained self-representation, *The Solitude Trilogy*. Gould has suggested and most critics agree that if he produced any major compositions, they would be: *The Idea of North* (1967), *The Latecomers* (1969), and *The Quiet in the Land* (1977). Gould also stated explicitly that *The Idea of North* was at least somewhat autobiographical, but in fact all three documentaries can be considered as self-representations that employ models of allegorical selfhood. In “Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould,” Gould hints that he might view *The Solitude Trilogy* as autobiographical, by having g.g suggest that these documentaries are “autobiographical drafts” (326). G.G. remains cagey—“That, sir, is not for me to say”—but simply raising the question, while far from offering any sort of autobiographical pact, places Gilmore’s mark of the self on the documentary. Other biographers have certainly treated them this way. Kevin Bazzana briefly discusses the autobiographical elements of *The Idea of North*, and states that *The Quiet in the Land* possesses “particularly strong autobiographical resonances” (311). As the creations of a subject who viewed his own identity as contrapuntal, the radio documentaries, with their multiple, sometimes conflicting ideas represented through the voices of the interview subjects, function as allegorical representations of Gould’s multiple notions of self. These documentaries are certainly about the importance of solitude to creativity, but they are also about the construction of identity. Though Gould’s characters may speak in the first person about identity, their ‘I’s often can stand in for Gould’s own. After all, the themes they address are suggested by Gould’s questions, which are then erased from the final transcripts, edited and ordered by Gould. It should therefore be no surprise that his interview subjects ponder themes greatly important to

Gould throughout his life: solitude, spirituality, work, landscape, institutions, and the ways that all of them construct both individual and collective identity. A sense of lost ways of life pervades the documentaries, and especially in *The Latecomers* and *The Quiet in the Land*. This disjunction parallels Gould's notions of the artist he sought to be: one standing outside of the fashions of his time, "in the world but not of the world." Gould's contrapuntal radio pieces are also self-representational formally, since they manifest key elements of Gould's philosophies of technology. And by exploring the potential for speech as music, they force the listener to encounter sound in ways that resemble how Gould reportedly did. Finally, by employing the highly mediated voices of real interview subjects to represent Gould's self, the documentaries not only suggest possibilities for allegorical oral self-representation, but also raise issues about the ethics of auto/biographical interpretation.

Gould's radio documentaries are the logical extension of Gould's ideas on recorded music, and of his notions of self. When he playfully remarked that his autobiography would be fiction, Gould was raising a topic frequently debated in life writing theory. Many critics have suggested that autobiography is less an accurate or verifiable representation of self than a construct closer in nature to a novel. In "Autobiography, Allegory, and the Construction of Self," David Herman splits the difference, suggesting that, rather than reading them purely as fiction, we should consider autobiographical texts as "allegories of selves, as representations of how a self should function in a given set of circumstances" (351). Herman advocates "that, at this point in our thinking about identities, cultures, and stories, we should simply concede that all identities are but particular constructions of a self, serving particular descriptive functions

in particular cultural contexts” (351). Having accepted this notion, we can then consider “more interesting and fruitful questions” about these allegorical selves:

What is it about this or that mode of self-construction that makes for a more effective, a more persuasive—ie. a better way of doing autobiography in this or that context or description? Can we think of some selves as ideal or exemplary constructions in a given cultural context, other selves as constructions that might best be forgotten, or at least reimagined in those same contexts? (351)

I would argue that Gould’s radio documentaries are constructions of such exemplary selves—extreme versions of allegorical self-fashioning that allow him to reveal himself while still maintaining his privacy, by assembling his representations of selfhood out of ideas rather than biographical events, and also enacting within this process the kind of artistic experimentation that was fundamental to his notion of self. In doing all of the above, Gould’s documentaries also test the boundaries of music and self-representation.

As my epigraph for this chapter suggests, and as I have shown throughout this study, in a life rife with contradictions, none was more extreme than Gould’s intense desire for privacy and his corresponding compulsive need to represent himself. Gould was extremely protective of the personal details of his life. That he had several heterosexual relationships, but was never linked publicly with a woman, shows how carefully he concealed his romantic life. To an almost unimaginable degree, he also convinced his close friends to remain extremely tight-lipped about their personal relationships with him, and what they knew about his relationships with others. That Gould withdrew entirely from the concert stage, yet used recording and broadcast media to sustain relationships with his audience, was perhaps the most manifest example of his

conflicting needs for privacy and self-narration. These contradictory impulses led Gould to seek out new ways to represent the self, and most notably through his contrapuntal radio documentaries, which let him, through a form that was unique to him, represent himself by examining some of his major interests and ideas in keeping with his philosophies on music and technology.

For a man who insisted that the most important aspects of a life story are the subject's ideas rather than life events, Gould's radio documentaries are particularly effective representations of self. As an allegorical model of selfhood in which Gould rarely speaks, but manipulates the voices of others, the documentary perfectly fulfills Gould's desire to display philosophical concepts rather than intimate details of the composer's life. Gould's strikingly counter-intuitive claim that "the really important things in any biography are what someone thinks and feel and not what he has done" has been quoted prolifically. By producing radio documentaries that attempt to communicate how Gould thinks and feels about some ideas of personal and national importance, Gould could enact his own ideas about self-representation. As autobiographical representations, then, Gould's radio documentaries are far more complex performances than his writings or his musical interpretations.

All three documentaries represent the musician by examining the relationship of creativity to solitude, and more generally, how through solitude and creativity, identity is constructed. Gould spoke often in interviews and in print about the importance of solitude to creativity, and all three of his *Solitude Trilogy* documentaries present isolation as their over-riding theme. *The Idea of North*, explored the North as a chosen solitude. For Gould's interview characters, southerners who chose to venture to the northern territories,

the North is a geographical frontier and a psychological frontier. Though arriving for various reasons, once there, they all undergo a process of self-examination brought on by their experience of isolation. Gould presents the North in this way at a moment when he himself has taken his own journey into a more private and reflective realm away, from the externally-imposed, often urban demands of concert performing, and toward more idiosyncratic forms of music production and self-representation.

The Latecomers, the second documentary, examines a more forced physical and social/cultural isolation, and its effects on individuals particularly in relation to art. Since the setting is Newfoundland, the solitude here results not only from the geographical barrier of the sea, which divides Newfoundland from the rest of Canada and whose sound provides the basso continuo for this piece, but also from the psychological and social barriers that result from the geographical separation. In 1968, Gould spent a month in Newfoundland interviewing his thirteen characters. Also produced for the CBC, this time to highlight its new FM stereo service (WS, 305), the documentary's title refers to the fact that Newfoundland, which became a province on midnight of March 31, 1949, was the most recent area to join the Canadian Confederation. Gould's subjects discuss life in the "outposts," small, remote fishing villages now facing extinction thanks to the government-initiated centralization that came with Confederation. Though they never met during or after their interviews, the documentary suggests that the subjects are all members of the community of St. Joseph's, an outpost now being abandoned. From different perspectives, the speakers discuss being born into a life of solitude and individuality that is now at risk. Though a strong proponent of modern music, with a modern piano style, and ideas about technology that were often futuristic, Gould was

often nostalgic for a past he perceived as better than contemporary life. The pastoral myth of the innocence and peacefulness of small communities so prevalent in other Gould representations also appears in *The Latecomers*, this time as part of the conflict between younger and older generations of Newfoundlanders. The older characters bemoan the fact that because the culture, fashion, and government of Canada are imposing themselves upon the island, the young people are abandoning the old way of life and embracing a more modern, prosperous, but materialist future.

The Quiet in the Land focuses on members of a Mennonite community in Winnipeg. Here the characters speak of spiritual solitude as a lifestyle at risk. Gould spent the first half of the 1970s working on his final installment of the trilogy. The result takes contrapuntal radio to a new level, thanks to its far more complex montage of spoken word, musical excerpts, and effects. Kevin Bazzana writes that in *The Quiet in the Land*, “Gould’s technique is of a new order of elegance and refinement, and his use of montage is not just impressive but often deeply moving” (WS, 311). And Otto Friedrich doesn’t exaggerate when he writes that “the beginning of ‘The Quiet in the Land,’ is one of the most beautiful things [Gould] ever did.” Friedrich’s description of this opening effectively introduces the piece and Gould’s complex use of sound:

first the slow tolling of a church bell, pianissimo, as though from a great distance; the faint chirpings, which sound vaguely like sea gulls but gradually reveal themselves to be the voices of children at play; then with the church bell still tolling, a sound that resembles surf but is actually the rush of highway traffic, and then the jubilation of a Mennonite congregation singing a hymn.

“Let us bow for prayer,” the minister declares, “Lord God, the Holy

Ghost, in this accepted hour, as on the day of Pentecost, descend in Thy power. . . .” And as the minister speaks those words, another voice is saying, “I think there is a conflict on the idea of Utopianism versus scattering into the world. . . .” And as the earnest voices continue their explorations of these churchy matters, the music in the background keeps veering between a solo cello playing a reflective Bach saraband and Janis Joplin singing, “Oh, Lord, won’t you buy me a Mercedes-Benz?” (197)²¹

Friedrich’s description concisely shows how many of Gould’s primary concerns coalesce in the first few moments and continue throughout the documentary. The initial ambivalence of natural and human sounds creates a notion of identity linked with the natural world. The coming together of spirituality and art—displayed here in the minister’s words, the congregational hymn and the fragments of music—has been of interest to Gould throughout his career.

While all three documentaries deal with solitude, they also examine how various factors influence identity. In *The Idea of North*, the characters are in the process of identity development, thanks to their journeys north. In the following two documentaries, the characters’ identities are in a state of flux, because certain elements of self are receding into the past. The loss of solitude in *The Latecomers* is related to a loss of identity grounded in location and culture. As they become citizens of Canada, Newfoundlanders find themselves forced to leave their homes in the “outposts” for centralized communities, or to consider leaving the island altogether. Some of Gould’s characters mourn this loss of solitude and individuality, but others embrace new identities. Together, as allegorical models of self, they represent conflicting notions of

identity. Over the steady sound of ocean waves in a slow crescendo, one character observes that, “This thing that has happened to you and to me has happened to us over a period of a hundred years, you know. The mad rush of this life has robbed us of this solitude, and really the value of life comes from solitude.”²² The next few voices describe the change as occurring over generations, and link the potential loss of solitude to the decision of whether or not to leave Newfoundland. In various ways these speakers identify themselves as part of an older generation of Newfoundlanders, who regret changes in the younger generation’s identity—some chosen, some forced. As in *The Idea of North*, the voices stand in counterpoint, resisting any clear statement. “I see no future in Newfoundland,” suggests one character, concluding that “time would take care of everything. The older folks will stay, will remain and the younger folks would move off.” Then another states that “there is among the younger generation, then, an awareness that they are not only of this island, but they belong to a larger world. In fact, many of them think of the whole of the North American continent as being almost part and parcel of themselves.” But Gould superimposes over that voice yet another one, which argues that “most of them, they don’t want to leave their homes.”²³ *The Idea of North* featured up to three simultaneous vocal lines. *The Latecomers* offers a dissonant overlapping of even more voices, which often makes them extremely difficult to distinguish. Instead, ideas become predominant through repetition. The characters discuss aspects of life they attribute to living in geographical and social isolation—a spirituality and contemplativeness, an intense sense of belonging related to both landscape and culture, and a theory of art as something other than the trends of the moment. They are qualities of past Newfoundland that may not survive.

Identity in *The Latecomers* is inseparable from spirituality, which brings with it a strong work ethic and rejection of materialism. Early in the documentary, one of the voices describes a past in which his family was virtually self-sufficient—in itself a form of solitude. The family lived in a house built by the father and grandfather, and ate from their own farm. What sustained them in this difficult, yet comfortable life was an identity grounded in their Christian beliefs: “My family was lucky in a way. We had a very rigid Methodist grandfather who came to the south coast from the north and who brought with him the idea that the only good on the face of the earth was work. Well, work and doing one’s duty, whatever that meant, and it meant many things at many times. . . .” In a following call-and-response passage, this voice alternates with others in expanding on the notions of spirituality, work, and duty.²⁴ As we’ve seen, these values resonate with Gould’s own. His Protestant work ethic was bred in the bone, and his mother’s nonsense approach to music lodged in Gould the belief that it was worth hours of serious devotion. Though he claimed he rarely practiced the piano later in life, he was a notoriously hard worker when working on his recordings and radio documentaries. Many of Gould’s friends and colleagues have recalled his late night working habits and the intensity of his schedule. When working on *The Idea of North*, he reportedly entered the studio every day at 6:30 p.m., and worked with incredible focus, rarely leaving before the wee hours of the morning. Tim Page describes Gould preparing his *Goldberg Variations* interview as a “workaholic perfectionist,” completely different from the engaging conversationalist Page knew in other contexts: “He was doing his work, and when he was doing his work, he was going to get it done, and nothing in the world was going to keep him from getting that work done.”²⁵ The Newfoundlanders’ similar ethic, and their belief

that it was a relic of the past, coincided with Gould's own beliefs about art as morally motivated, and about himself as standing outside the traditions of his own time.

While *The Latecomers* foregrounds a spiritually-motivated work falling victim to the intense pressures and pace of modern living, *The Quiet in the Land* explores conflicts between spirituality and materialism in the construction of the characters' identities—again, concerns Gould felt about his own life. Gould spoke often about the profound effect the church had on him as a child. His parents were devout Christians, and much of his early musical experience was with the quiet Presbyterian hymns. Kevin Bazzana points to “strong autobiographical resonances” in *The Quiet in the Land*, locating them in the Mennonite motto “In the world not of the world,” a particularly poignant sentiment for Gould since he identified himself as *The Last Puritan*, the title of a George Santayana novel.²⁶ Gould's spirituality was complex, and he made several contradictory statements about religion at different times in his life. In a 1980 interview with Elyse Mach, he offered some remarks about the hereafter that have been taken up by several biographical representations, including *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*, *Wondrous Strange*, and of course, Monsaingeon's film *The Hereafter*. While he “stopped being a church-goer at the age of eighteen,” Gould told Mach that he had a “tremendously strong sense that, indeed, there is a hereafter, and the transformation of the spirit is a phenomenon with which one must reckon, and in the light of which, indeed, one must attempt to live one's life” (109). Such statements about the hereafter, his frequent mention of the importance to him of childhood church services, his musical performances of Bach, and the familiar notion of musical genius as a divine gift have all caused Gould to be associated with the spiritual. In *The Quiet in the Land*, he represents spiritual concerns with typical

complexity, and while it would be risky to draw conclusions about his religious beliefs from the documentary, it does offer spiritual solitude as a concept important in Gould's life.

Friedrich's vivid description of the documentary's opening omits several lines, including the first. The minister conducting the sermon declares, "The Lord Jesus said, 'People persecuted me. They will persecute you, because you are my disciples.' Everybody who is a true disciple will have to suffer *some* persecution. We believe in the teaching of the Lord and in the teachings of the apostles, and Paul said in his epistle to the Corinthians, 'You have to separate.'" In counterpoint, another character immediately observes that, "I never really felt the strong separation that people might think of when they think of Mennonites. In fact, I never really felt I was separate from the rest of society in any way." *The Latecomers* examines lost solitude by focusing on the characters of St. Joseph's forced abandonment of their town. *The Quiet in the Land* explores a lost sense of spirituality. One character describes a Mennonite way of life in which all aspects of life were based around spirituality, but adds that "we no longer live like that." Another voices the elaboration that "We live in a society which is geared to making money, to preserving an American or Canadian way of life. . . . We've become terribly enamored of our things, of our homes and our cars. . . . And I think with it, we've lost a certain value that we used to have. We are now a part of the city and we're faced with problems and pressures that we haven't had until a generation ago."²⁷ For Gould, this urban-rural dichotomy presented itself as the conflict between a contemplative notion of art as moral undertaking, and the pressures, glamour, and materialism of the concert hall. By retiring from live performance, Gould was attempting to regain that kind of contemplative

spiritual existence that his characters mourn the loss of in both *The Latecomers* and *The Quiet in the Land*. That this theme appears so strongly in documentaries produced several years after his retirement suggests that Gould was still searching.

The self as strongly related to the land is another element in Gould's documentaries. He spoke often about the importance of rural Ontario landscape to his creativity. The "grey, endless vistas of snow, frozen lake, horizon" that he claimed influenced profoundly his sense of music in *Glenn Gould: Off the Record* reappear in *The Idea of North*, when Marianne Schroeder describes the "endless landscape" and frozen lake in Coral Harbour. In *The Latecomers*, the Newfoundlanders feel this sense of belonging to landscape is at risk. The basso continuo profoundly underscores this idea. While the sound of the train in *The Idea of North*, is relatively inobtrusive, and the Mennonite service in *The Quiet in the Land* has a quiet beauty that complements the rest of the piece, the presence of the sea in *The Latecomers* is sometimes beautiful, but also loud and ingratiating, an actual barrier to understanding the rest of the piece. This is purposeful, as a metaphor for the Newfoundland landscape. For Gould's characters, the land is beautiful and harsh. It provides a sense of belonging and of isolation. Early on, one voice notes "I've been around a considerable lot, but the sights and sounds of Newfoundland are not in these places. You feel like a stranger there, because you're not getting the same air, you're not getting the same atmosphere." Typical of Gould's contrapuntal documentary style, belonging to the land is juxtaposed with its harshness. "The soil is thin," states one character, and hard labor is necessary because the landscape is unforgiving, "the growing season is short, and the sea is always present."²⁸ Though supposedly angered that people from the Newfoundland outposts were being encouraged

by the government to move to larger towns, and though his documentary includes no obvious political commentary, the idea of identity as linked to place, obviously a crucial part of Gould's own sense of self, pervades this piece.

In *The Quiet in the Land*, the Mennonite characters are also discussing moving into the cities, and abandoning their previous agriculture-based existence. "We've been basically an agriculturally-oriented people until about, oh thirty, forty years ago when the Mennonites began to move into the city as did everyone else in this country," one character observes, "and one of the things that I see happening in the Mennonite group is a growing materialism."²⁹ Commenting on the relationship between geography and both group and personal identity, another volunteers that the Mennonites are now "scattered around the cities. We don't live next to each other. We don't feel geographically or physically united so that you're bound to become a different kind of person, and then you begin to relate to your faith, to your way of life, you begin to see that faith can be expressed in so many different ways"³⁰ Again, Gould portrays the rural as a refuge from the more materialist elements of the world, and a place where self, community, and land are linked, while the urban represents a scattering of the community and the temptations of a lifestyle that goes against the edicts of the church. And yet, for the Mennonites, as for Gould, maintaining ties to the world is essential, and even ethically mandatory. Though the rural offers the solitude required to stay immersed in one's faith, it is impossible to evangelize if you remain totally separate from others. One character describes this as "the concern to be both evangelical and mission-minded and yet to be as well an isolated people." It's impossible not to draw connections between this quandary and Gould's own simultaneous intense need for solitude and desire to reach people

through his music. Gould struggled throughout his life with the conundrum facing his characters in *The Quiet in the Land*: “to be in the world in order to evangelize is also at the same time the road that will lead them away from that which they have been and in many cases that which they have called part of their own existence.”³¹

Another factor in the solitude-community dichotomy that runs through Gould’s documentaries is the influence of institutions on individual identity. Just as the characters in *The Idea of North*, question the government’s handling of northern affairs, Gould’s characters in *The Latecomers* are ambivalent about Canadian politics and politicians intruding into their lives. Gould knew Newfoundland’s complex history. It had rejected confederation with Canada in the 1860s and again in the 1890s, feeling that it had stronger ties with Britain than with the Canadian provinces. During the Great Depression, Newfoundland faced such economic hardship that it gave up its independence and become a colony so that Great Britain could cover its debts. When Joey Smallwood convinced Newfoundlanders to join Canada in 1949, their average income was one third of Canada’s average and their death rate due to disease was more than twice as high (Dunn and West). Smallwood promised improvements with confederation, but some never materialized. Kevin Bazzana describes Gould as a “news junkie whose television was often tuned to political events,” and though only a teenager at the time, and with his home radio constantly tuned to the CBC, Gould would have followed Newfoundland’s debates over joining the rest of Canada. In his documentary, he talks mostly about their disillusionment, again idealizing a past when government was not a prominent part of people’s lives. One character describes past Newfoundland as “almost a perfect example of anarchy.” He “never saw a policeman” or “a magistrate or any manifestation of the

law” until he left his village.³² In the brief contrapuntal moment that follows, various characters recall the safety of their villages. Here the lack of crime and not locking their doors invoke a lost moment in time and the pastoral myth.

Government wharves provide another symbol for outside intrusion. While each individual fisherman had his own wharf “which he kept in good repair,” the government wharf “was the government wharf and if it fell down, it fell down.”³³ Another talks about his own past in politics. He got involved “because he was going to do great things for the people and so on,” but “disillusionment came very early.” In *The Idea of North*, some speakers are representatives of the government, others are critics, and some are both. In *The Latecomers*, the characters’ overlapping expressions of disillusionment with Canada comprise a brief fugue. Another voice claims that increased “government involvement with the details of people’s lives” is causing people to “become much more of a collective species.” While “it may be that the evolution of the human species is inevitably in this direction,” the earlier fugue on the problems with Canada problematizes this statement.³⁴ While never affiliated with a particular political party, Gould held what Bazzana calls “vaguely socialist views,” and the notion that government was imposing itself on his subjects’ identities would have been fascinating and upsetting to him. And of course the lack of obvious government proves another form of solitude and non-conformity was lost when Newfoundland joined Canada.

The Quiet in the Land addresses the link between identity and another institution: the church, where attempts to regulate its parishioners are something different from contemplative notions of spirituality. Gould’s characters discuss how the church contributes to and limits their existence. One character discusses the church’s decision

that Mennonites should not have televisions in their homes. Some members of the faith ignored the direction and “for a period of about five or six years, there was a, a kind of deliberate winking at this.” The speaker wants a definitive edict: “I wish that the group would think through some things and if ten years ago it was not good for me to have a television set, why is it possibly okay now?”³⁵ Another fugue-like section, offers a constellation of comments on how the church, the family, and the nation, through the education system and foreign affairs, exert often conflicting influences on Mennonite identity. One character discusses the conflicts his German heritage raised both externally and internally when he came to Canada during the Second World War. Another discusses the conflict between church and school when she had to tell her teacher that, as a pacifist, she couldn’t buy war support stamps.³⁶ The Mennonites’ pacifism can be linked directly to Gould’s biography. His kind-hearted, non-violent attitude toward both animals and people surfaces in his success in getting his father to give up fishing, his distaste for violence in films, and his bequeathing of his estate in equal parts to the Salvation Army and the SPCA. His documentary subjects’ pacifism, and his own feelings about cruelty of all kinds, can both be considered forms of solitude, caused by rebelling against one value system while embracing another.

All three documentaries also focus on the importance of art through their representation of human speech as musical. Gould’s writings, his radio and television broadcasts, and even his insistence on carrying out many personal relationships exclusively over the telephone confirm he was an intensely verbal person, and whether through music, writing, or speaking, his life’s focus was communication. Part of the documentaries’ beauty arises from the contrasting sounds of the characters’ voices and

speech patterns. Richard Kostelanetz notes how Gould in *The Idea of North* explains national subject matter by featuring “Canadian accents that are audibly different from American” (560). Though all three documentaries represent Gould’s Canadian heritage in this way, the voices and accents reflect territorial, ideological, and class identities as well. The characters in *The Latecomers* articulate their Newfoundland origins, and in his written accompaniment, Gould notes that “a sense of cadence, or rhythmic poise” made his characters’ speech “a tape editor’s delight.” Newfoundlanders’ speech was an art form in itself. Just as each voice in a counterpoint has its own melody, each character in Gould’s documentaries is distinct not only through the expression of specific ideas, but through the sound of the voice. Without visual images to identify them, the characters are literally a combination of their ideas and the distinct sounds of their speech. For example, Marianne Schroeder is unique because of her experience as a nurse in Coral Harbour, but also because the pitch and timbre of her voice identifies her as the only woman in the documentary. By refusing to represent his characters through anything other than their voices and ideas, Gould carries out one of his primary beliefs about biography—that it should characterize its subjects through their ideas rather than the events in their lives. Furthermore, by featuring the unique characteristics of his interview, Gould effectively demonstrates his idea that sound can be infused with meaning and vice versa.

Gould’s life, art and creativity surface as subjects in all three documentaries, and in ways that parallel his own identity most directly. As I’ve already shown, *The Idea of North* focuses on achieving the solitude necessary to think and act creatively. *The Latecomers* explores the relationship between art, place, and fashion, and *The Quiet in the Land* considers the links between art and spirituality. *The Latecomers* proposes a

notion of art intimately related to the harsh landscape and depressed economy of Newfoundland. Newfoundlanders have “never been a particularly creative people,” comments one character, because “all one’s energies and all one’s waking moments, really, have had to go into the fight for survival.” But this same character suggests that the making of boats is creative, the boats themselves art.³⁷ This example reflects Gould’s lifelong interest in exploring boundaries of “high” and “low” art. *The Latecomers* also explores artistic inspiration and the Zeitgeist, important ideas for Gould since he believed that great art follows from the inspiration of the artist, and is not limited to the traditions of the time.

Gould creates the most explicit passage regarding art in *The Latecomers* by staging an argument between two of his voices. It is worth quoting it at length:

Man: I think there’s too much emphasis placed on this business of mutual stimulation between artists. The artist who’s really worth anything, works best when he’s alone, I think.

Woman: I can sit in my bedroom alone and be very creative, but creativity is judged to a certain extent by what other people think, whether other people assume this is creative.

Man: Any writer who isn’t doing his own thing isn’t doing anything worth doing at all. The idea that you have to know exactly what the current trends are . . . this sort of thing is just nonsense.

Woman: By being a total hermit you can be creative for a while, but after a while you have to get out in public to know whether you’re being creative.

Man: You have to write for yourself first of all and if it happens to be relevant to

other people too, why that's wonderful.

Woman: Art is judged by people. . . . It's judged by how much people will pay and who will listen to you or who will buy your work. You know, unless you're well off, you can't sit and be creative for years on end. You eventually have to make money to keep yourself.³⁸

This passage is widely discussed as an example of how Gould uses technology to create documentary effects that are groundbreaking and problematic, because they don't represent the "truth" of what the people said. Gould interviewed his subjects separately, then edited their statements together to create the impression of a conversation between several members of the same village, suggesting just how much his documentaries are dramatic performances of self. To state the obvious, the conversation above about art, seemingly between husband and wife, is one that took place with Gould and about Gould after he left the concert stage to pursue a more solitary approach to creativity.

In *The Quiet in the Land*, Gould also explores the notion of "high" and "low" art, and art's potential for evangelizing as well. Because the characters actually discuss music, the third installment in the trilogy also seems more transparently autobiographical. His subjects discuss the fear of art forms that the church considers too "light" or too cerebral. They talk about "depriving" themselves of certain kinds of art, and the statement, "We were discouraged from reading jokes in the funny papers, because this kind of thing was somehow light stuff. There was stuff mixed in there that wouldn't be good for us," introduces a fugal section in which several characters discuss forbidden and avoided things: alcohol, playing cards, dancing. As they discuss the value of this kind of deprivation, background lounge music and overlapping voices suggest they are sitting in

precisely the sort of café the character who introduced this theme was forbidden to enter by his parents.³⁹ This conservatism with regard to “low” art parallels the church’s restrictions on music seen as too experimental. Howard Dyck describes the church’s bafflement over his interest in twelve-tone music, and its concerns that such “dissonance” clashes with the “harmony of the Christian experience.” But Dyck responds that “I don’t get the impression at all from the Bible that God was afraid of the fine arts.” In fact they are instruments of His will:

So if I listen to a Beethoven symphony, I get more out of it even than just chord progressions and notes; there’s, there’s a deeper quality to it. It is part of the human spirit. It’s a good thing in itself, even if Beethoven didn’t write it to the glory of God, let’s say the way Bach might write his fugues and all the rest, I’m not trying to say that it’s the same kind of thing you get in the scriptures, but I would say it’s the kind of thing you get from a mountain, from a tree, from a star. It is a part of God’s world that is the abundant light that is there if you enter into it.⁴⁰

Gould’s other documentaries commented on his own art in only highly allegorical ways. *The Idea of North* presented land surveying as an art of sorts, but focused primarily on abstract notions of creativity. *The Latecomers* deals with literature through the voice of a Newfoundland novelist. *The Quiet in the Land* integrates fragments from an interview with Dyck, himself a musician, and as Rhona Bergman has noted, Dyck often seems to be speaking for Gould. Early in the documentary, Dyck proposes a solution to the artist’s simultaneous need for solitude and community that Gould had staged as an argument in *The Latecomers*: “I think we need to learn to go our own way, but I think we need to

learn, really, to get on in this world of ours without becoming tainted by it. And that's really what great art is all about, isn't it? I mean that's what the fugue ultimately is all about—using, if you would, the techniques that the composer had at his disposal and making something of it, which is really quite otherworldly.”⁴¹ Dyck himself observed in his interview with Bergman that we need to approach Gould's apparently autobiographical statements with caution, and the radio documentaries, and perhaps especially when they seem most revealing, all resist being interpreted as unproblematic representations of self. But in fact, this resistance to any truth claim is why radio documentaries are such an effective self-representational form for Gould, because taken allegorically, they reveal the extent to which a celebrity self like Gould's is constructed through various contradictory texts, and therefore always somewhat obscured.

In fact, radio was arguably the appropriate medium for representing Gould. To begin with, as Kevin Bazzana has explained, Gould “was an *aural* person. His senses of sight and taste and smell were poorly developed, but what he took in through his ears, be it music or speech or noise, affected him deeply” (*WS*, 284). Many of Gould's friendships were conducted through long hours over the telephone. And Gould commented frequently about radio's importance to him as a child learning about music, as a young performer beginning his career, and as a mature musician and broadcaster. The sheer volume of work he did for radio is stunning. In her catalogue of Gould's “CBC Radio and TV Shows,” Nancy Canning lists over one hundred broadcasts from the 1950s to Gould's death. As a result, as Kingwell has suggested, Gould's voice has become a distinctive memory in Canadian collective consciousness. Radio documentaries resonated strongly with a whole range of Gould's personal traits and beliefs. As many biographers and

Gould himself have claimed, he was someone who could engage in multiple tasks and take in multiple forms of information simultaneously. Widely reported to have extraordinary abilities as a listener, he regularly had more than one radio on at a time. And there's his story of achieving an enhanced understanding of a Mozart fugue he was practicing when his parents' housecleaner turned on the vacuum, and he had to engage with the music while simultaneously taking in the machine's sounds and vibrations. Most biographies present this account as proof that Gould experienced sound differently from most people. His contrapuntal radio represents the pinnacle of his ideas about technology's potential to transform music, and his documentaries, in which characters who never meet provide responses to questions that Gould then splices together to create the impression of a conversation, are his ultimate experiment in creating meaning through editing. But as he explains in introduction to *The Idea of North*, Gould also intended his contrapuntal radio documentaries, to "test, in a sense, the degree to which one can listen simultaneously to more than one conversation or vocal impression" (393). Just as opera composers were not "deterred from utilizing trios, quartets, or quintets by the knowledge that only a portion of the words they set to music will be accessible to the listener," neither was Gould concerned with his audience's similar limitations (393). But Gould's radio documentaries do not just test their listeners' sense of hearing. They also force them to experience the world, however briefly and artificially, like Glenn Gould.

Gould's self-representative radio documentaries also force us to consider the different communicative potentials of music and speech. The documentaries are the product of a lifelong consideration of counterpoint, and of Gould's attempts to bring out the unique voices of each musical line. And yet, while the characters' voices can be

beautiful and musical, and he arranges them in a contrapuntal musical texture, as if each carried a different musical line, the documentaries ultimately frustrate the listener precisely because language cannot not mean. Several musical lines can become a whole, working together in harmony. It is very difficult, however, to achieve the same thing with language, because speech acts can never wholly forfeit meaning. For this reason, Gould's documentaries may be his ultimate success in attempting to focus on musical architecture and the unique sound of each musical "voice." As his attempts at representing himself in speech became more and more fragmented and forced, and music increasingly seemed to lack a sufficient amount of concrete self-representational possibility, the radio documentaries offered a liminal space between music and speech, where Gould could represent his major ideas and preoccupations of self without claiming to present a personal or definitive portrait. A perfect combination of music, written language, and speech, all conveyed through technology, and without even the intention to achieve linguistic coherence, the *Solitude Trilogy* is Gould at his most comprehensive and idiosyncratic.

But what was the cost? By representing himself through the voices of other real people, Gould's documentaries raise serious ethical issues about auto/biographical representation. When orchestrating his characters' voices, Gould often showed little concern for the context or meaning of what they said. In fact, his subjects themselves sometimes expressed dismay at how Gould spliced together fragments of their interviews to make statements different from what they originally intended, molding their thoughts to serve his purposes. Roy Vogt, one of the interviewees for *The Quiet in the Land*, wrote to Gould, expressing his discomfort with Gould's controlling approach to the interviews,

and taking him to task for using Vogt's comments "not as the expression of an individual but as a foil for the ideas of others" (Friedrich, 198). In his reply, Gould defended his approach by emphasizing his notion of contrapuntal radio. Counterpoint is "a method of composition in which, if all goes well, each of the individual voices leads a life of its own," but "even in the most complex contrapuntal textures certain concessions must be demanded of each musical strand as an accommodation to the harmony and rhythmic pace of the whole." Furthermore, he does not "feel that my personal convictions encourage me to distort the interview material which is made available to me," and, in fact, he "would do less than justice to my role as producer if I were to deliberately sacrifice the 'contrapuntal' integrity of one value-system in order to enhance another" (Roberts, *Selected Letters*, 150). That Gould calls his interview subjects "value-systems," rather than thinking of them as individuals embodying various value systems and ideas, and that he does this in a letter to one of his subjects, strongly suggests that at least as an artist, he saw them as ideas coming together to represent a larger whole. In "On Hurting People's Feelings: Journalism, Guilt, and Autobiography," Carolyn Wells Kraus discusses what she calls "the hidden autobiographical nature of writing" that has long "haunted" journalists (292). She explains the dilemma writers face in their attempts at "shaping without deforming, depicting without disfiguring, drafting without mutilating their subjects' lives" (296). Though Gould's radio documentaries are an extreme example of autobiography composed from the biographies of others, Gould apparently suffered no such dilemma. His radio documentaries therefore offer insight into his own extreme narcissism, and his willingness to appropriate and modify the identities of others in his own self-representational art—a particularly interesting position, given his own attempts

to wrest control of his own representations from his critics and biographers.

David Herman claims that, “In autobiographical contexts, an allegory is a specific kind of self-construction; it is the construction of a self chosen over other selves and in response to conditions and constraints that those other (possible) selves, would be incapable, or less capable of negotiating” (353). Gould’s allegorical selves in his radio documentaries not only enact his thesis that an individual is a contrapuntal composition made up of many selves, but also his desire for privacy and solitude while still remaining engaged in art. By constructing a self-representation through musical allegory, Gould was attempting to be “in the world but not of the world,” though the question remains whether his human materials have any agency in being part of his composed world.

The Kaleidoscopic Self: A Glenn Gould Fantasy

In his later years, Gould’s experiments with self-representation became increasingly odd as his sense of humor, his love of role-playing, and his compulsion to examine self-reflexively his own stereotypes sharpened. As early as 1965, Gould was writing articles under the pseudonym of Dr. Herbert von Hochmeister, a character he describes as “vaguely based on Karajan” (Cott, 87). Over time, he developed an entire cast of personae for his CBC radio and television broadcasts. Robin Elliot reports that Gould had up to twenty-four alter-egos, with fully drawn histories, and “this does not include the real people, such as Tim Page and Jonathan Cott, whose identity Gould could also co-opt in interview situations” (114). Especially since Elliot lists him as a puppet interviewer, it is interesting that some of Gould’s most extended comments about his personae appear in an interview with Jonathan Cott for *Rolling Stone*. According to Gould “a certain part of your persona operates efficiently within the structure of a certain

life style, a certain name, while another part may operate best only providing you change those factors. I, for instance, was incapable of writing in a sustained humorous style until I developed an ability to portray myself pseudonymously” (86). He explains that he positioned Hochmeister as a critic living in the Northwest Territories, because “Herbert could then survey the culture of North America from his exalted remove, and pontificate accordingly.” Apparently creating Hochmeister so liberated Gould that “the floodgates were open, and subsequently I developed a character for every season” (Cott, 87).

Gould is hardly the first artist to make personae a part of self-representation. In *Adverse Genres in Fernando Pessoa*, K. David Jackson discusses many writers who employ personae to “disguise or erase authorship” (24), including Ezra Pound’s *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly*, Marcel Duchamps’ *Rose Sélavy*, and of course the various masks of Pessoa himself. Pseudonyms have a long history in music as well. In *Sociologists and Music: An Introduction to the Study of Music and Society*, Paul Honigsheim lists various reasons why musicians have adopted them: to remain anonymous, to avoid persecution, and to prevent mispronunciation of difficult or foreign names, or being confused with others if a name is very common (116). Enlisting other characters to speak about himself autobiographically links Gould to Gertrude Stein’s adopting her partner’s voice in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and to Pessoa’s cast of personae in his poems. Stein used Toklas to conduct some autobiographical experimentation and play, to record her feelings for Toklas, and to comment on her own genius in ways that seemed more appropriate coming from an other. Greg Mahr argues that Pessoa’s “heteronyms” allowed him to explore poetic forms that were unpopular at the time. Pseudonyms freed Pessoa to compose “unselfconscious, lyric verse, without disobeying the modernist edict that poetry

be the subject of the poem” (30). Gould, however, goes beyond even Stein and Pessoa’s use of alternate identities.

Like Pessoa, Gould wrote from the perspective of his multiple personae, and created biographies for them. Unlike Pessoa, he also performed them publicly in costume, taking auto/biographical role-playing to a whole other level. One of his most incredible experiments with personae is *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, CD two of his *Silver Jubilee Album*. The *Fantasy* begins with an interview in which Gould replies to four music critics: Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite, Karlheinz Klopweisser, Theodore Slutz, and Marta Hortaványi. Margaret Pacsu plays herself as the moderator; she is also Hortaványi. Gould plays himself, the three male critics, and the somewhat half-witted producer, Duncan Haig-Guinness. The interview segment ends with a play within a play. At Gould’s request, Pacsu plays a CBC tape of his “Hysterical Return” to concert life. Many characters from the interview are supposedly on hand for, and therefore on the tape of, the “Hysterical Return.” The tape is a parody of Vladimir Horowitz’s “Historic Return” concert at Carnegie Hall in 1965, which ended his long withdrawal from the stage that had started in 1953. Gould had apparently been pressuring Columbia to let him record a parody of Horowitz’s “Historic Return” since 1973. Just why he wanted to parody Horowitz’s return has puzzled many biographers, and it certainly puzzled his record company at the time, but of course, such a concert, and the Columbia live recording of it, was the antithesis of everything Gould stood for.⁴² The project was repeatedly suppressed—not least because Horowitz was a Columbia artist himself. By 1980, however, Horowitz had left CBS for RCA Victor, and this bizarre little autobiographical piece lodged within an equally odd staged interview finally reached an audience.

Both pieces explore various elements of Gould's public identity, and though the intent was humorous, he gave a significant amount of thought and attention to the entire project. In *Glenn Gould: A Life and Variations*, Margaret Pacsu describes working with Gould on the *Fantasy*:

The pace was really horrendous, and he was very hard to work with, not from my point of view but the technical point of view, because he knew everything, he could hear everything that he wanted. You know, every edit, every single sentence. There weren't four or five versions, there were twenty-five and thirty five and forty-five. But it was a very satisfactory experience. (257)

Pacsu's comments and the numerous drafts of the *Fantasy* in the Glenn Gould Archive confirm that Gould approached this piece with the same care he brought to his other projects. In the *Fantasy*, Gould brings together personae he had been developing for several years, through the same editing skills employed in his radio documentaries, to create the sense of a genuine conversation between his alter-egos, complete with overlapping dialogue. Richard Kostelanetz describes it this way: "What Gould had done, in the end, was to compose a baroque radio play about himself, playing not only himself but several other characters in an intermittent fugue, incidentally demonstrating that, thanks to multitracking, self-reflexive comic narcissism is among the unprecedented options available to the radio artist in the late twentieth century" (569). The *Fantasy*, however, is far more than an experiment in technology and narcissistic play. Though Gould adopted a method that seemed more obviously autobiographical, the personae represent an even more obvious resistance to any truth claims, because the result is a self so fractured and self-contradicting as to be kaleidoscopic. Produced twenty-five years

into his recording career, the piece is a retrospective of Gould as a musician that simultaneously comments on his eccentricities and media image, refers mockingly and seriously to his performance practice, expounds on his philosophies of recording versus concertizing, refers the listener back to his larger autobiographical project of *The Solitude Trilogy*, and even hints at his new recording of the *Goldberg Variations*.

A Glenn Gould Fantasy displays Gould's ability to laugh at himself and his media representations. His notorious eccentricities are foregrounded. The piece begins with Gould and Pacsu both agreeing that the studio is an uncomfortable temperature. But Gould finds it too cold, while Pacsu finds it stiflingly hot, so they agree to leave the temperature where it is. While this is going on, several voices are humming in the background, one sounding notably like Gould's famous interventions into his own recordings. In fact, a disembodied Gould voice hums along throughout the program, not only humorously commenting on his vocalizing, but also identifying *A Glenn Gould Fantasy* as one of his recordings and the interview as an example of his art. Further well-known traits are mocked as well. Though Gould is an internationally-renowned artist, the program's fictional producer, Duncan Haig-Guinness, claims he doesn't know who Gould is. And when Pacsu asks whether he is ready to face his interviewers, Gould announces: "Well, I've just taken a valium, Margaret, and I'm trying to be as calm as one can be when confronting a bevy of music critics"—a joking reference to his reputation for drug use.

Of course, the *Fantasy* highlights one of Gould's most interesting eccentricities: his predilection for taking on personae. They come complete with detailed bios and photographs, and each with his own accent and vocal idiosyncrasies. Reflecting Gould's

interest in the North, his two primary critics, the ones who arrive on time and take opposing views on Gould, have Arctic histories. British conductor Sir Nigel Twitt-Thornwaite has spent some time in Tuktoyaktuk, and Karlheinz Klopweisser, German “composer and musicologist,” conducted “trail-blazing musicological research” in Greenland (*Silver Jubilee Album* “Liner Notes”). In a pointed dig at Gould’s critics, and at his own interest in self-representation, Twitt-Thornwaite and Klopweisser initially seem interested only in talking about themselves. When Pacsu asks if they would like to start off with a question for Gould, there is a moment of silence before she offers to play some music with which Gould is associated. The *Fantasy* therefore showcases many of the contradictions found in Gould’s work and career. He exaggerates his eccentricities to the point of ridicule, but by including them in this only partly-silly autobiographical representation, he acknowledges their importance to his public self.⁴³

When Duncan Haig-Guinness, also played by Gould, and the persona not pictured in the liner notes, cues up the *Goldberg Variations*, he accidentally plays it at very high speed, then slows it down gradually to the correct tempo of the 1955 *Goldbergs*, thus making fun of Gould’s notorious interpretations, initiating a (relatively) serious conversation about Gould’s performance practice, and foreshadowing the release of the 1981 *Goldbergs*, with their noticeably slower tempo. With the *Goldberg* “Aria” in the background, Pacsu lists the composers in Gould’s repertoire in alliterative sets, from “Byrd to Berg to Bizet to Beethoven, from Scarlatti to Strauss to Scriabin to Schoenberg.” The language displays Gould’s fondness for alliteration in speaking and writing while drawing attention to the range of his music. And of course the omission of Bach, his signature composer, suggests that he is “every bit as happy” playing other

composers. These comments about Gould's repertoire lead Twitt-Thornwaite to complain about Gould's performances of composers like Gibbons on the piano rather than traditional instruments: "So far as I'm concerned, and I know I speak for *all* musicological colleagues on the subject, it totally invalidates the historical experience." Establishing a pattern for the rest of the interview, Karlheinz Klopweisser comes to Gould's defense, declaring that Twitt-Thornwaite does "not speak for all my colleagues." Klopweisser then argues that Bach displayed "a very great disinterest in the sonorities of the instruments for which he wrote." Bach's music "is not the work of an instrument; it is the work of all instruments, or also it is a work of none. It is a work of *absolute imagination* not only on the part of the great Bach himself but on the part of everyone who reads that score and imagines for himself the ideal . . . tone, landscape for this construction." Sir Nigel disagrees: "There is such a thing as authenticity, and one can never accord it too much respect."⁴⁴

It is far too simple to conclude that Klopweisser speaks for Gould, though he seems to on numerous occasions. With their highly affected accents and sharply expressed opinions, Twitt-Thornwaite and Klopweisser are equally ridiculous. But they do create a space for some very nuanced discussion. Take for example the conversation about Gould's two recordings of Mozart's K330. Though it begins with his interpretive method, Gould (played by Glenn Gould), steers his personae into an encounter with the topic of concertizing versus recording. Speaking about the two Mozart recordings, Twitt-Thornwaite says that "The one is as absurdly fast as the other is absurdly slow and both fail to penetrate the true pulse of Mozart." Klopweisser defends Gould, or at least the first performance, finding in it "a pointillist element, through which every detail is revealed

with great precision, and this, for my personal taste I find very important. It is like a skeleton; it is like an x-ray of the music.” But while Klopweisser can eloquently explain the intent of Gould’s unorthodox interpretation, he is silent about the second recording, allowing Gould to lay out his ideas about recorded music as greatly preferable to live performance. He declares that his second Mozart recording is less successful for the same reason that his concert performances lacked creativity:

In those years, I very often had to play the same work three or four times in a row . . . and I always found that, particularly when the first night had gone really well, the second and third and fourth performances represented, um, well really you know really a sort of slow death of the spirit because one kept trying to remember, or I did anyway, what it was that made that first night work well. . . .⁴⁵

This is only one of many comments on the value of recorded music, and for much of the rest of the *Fantasy*, Gould and his personae discuss his editing techniques for his musical recordings and his radio documentaries. Echoing Gould’s views as expressed in “Stokowski in Six Scenes,” Pacsu says that “You often describe your task as akin to that of a film director, or possibly a film editor, who takes the raw material of the work, the novel or the stage play or whatever, and reshapes it, using the tools of another medium. Would that be a substantially accurate summary?” Twitt-Thornwaite predictably responds “It would be a substantially ridiculous summary,” but Gould’s almost overlapping voice agrees: “Yes, it’s absolutely accurate Margaret. For me, the language of film offers the best possible lingo with which to describe the ideal conditions for the recorded performance. The concert hall sequence of going from A to zed, if you’ll forgive me for being Canadian, going in one fell swoop from beginning to end, um, you know, doesn’t

have to play a part at all.”⁴⁶ As an example of this filmic technique, Gould describes how the surf sound for one scene of *The Latecomers* is actually taken from a tape made in the Galapagos Islands. He then uses the documentaries to describe the limits of musical technology, thus positioning his spoken word compositions as some of his most important work, and the ultimate manifestation of his philosophies of recording.

Having introduced *The Solitude Trilogy* into the discussion, the focus shifts from the *Fantasy* as a humorous autobiographical piece to the more intensely personal radio documentaries. In response to Theodore Slutz, another of Gould’s critics who has arrived late and has contributed so far only very self-absorbed comments on his own creative work, Gould remarks in pianissimo that the documentaries are “such a personal statement” that he cannot articulate their meaning. Klopweisser and Pacsu, the two characters most sympathetic to him, accept that with this, Gould has in fact answered the question about meaning. But this doesn’t deter the critics from stepping in to explain the *Solitude Trilogy*, even if Gould himself cannot. For Klopweisser, the theme of isolation is prominent throughout, but “the drama, so it appears to me, is created by [the characters’] concerns, their uncertainties, their reflections, their doubts about what alternative states might be available to them.” He also recognizes “a very strong statement against the *Zeitgeist*,” and Gould supplies him with the idea that the characters want to be “in the world but not of the world.” Here, Klopweisser does seem to speak for Gould, though not unproblematically—more evidence that Gould uses the *Fantasy* to help his listeners understand his experimental documentaries, and his alter-egos to express aspects of his identity that cannot be expressed through a single, unified narrative voice.⁴⁷

One of the purposes of *A Glenn Gould Fantasy* seems to be to highlight the

importance of the *Solitude Trilogy* to Gould's life and work. The fifty-four minute radio drama quotes the documentaries at length. Three minutes is devoted to the introduction to *The Idea of North*, and two minutes to a section of *The Latecomers*. These quoted segments take an even more obvious autobiographical meaning thanks to their positioning in the self-referential arguments of the *Fantasy*. For example, at the end of the introduction to *The Idea of North*, Pacsu says "That was Glenn Gould" at almost precisely the same moment as Gould makes his now-iconic, pronouncement, "This is Glenn Gould, and this program is called *The Idea of North*"⁴⁸ This layering of the authorial label, the title of the piece, and the autobiographical "I" heightens the sense of the documentaries as self-representation. Similarly, during a discussion of Gould's editing techniques, in which Twitt-Thornwaite takes him to task for abusing his authorial power and abandoning any attempt at artistic integrity, a section from *The Latecomers*, drawn from that constructed conversation between husband and wife, drops in. "In other words, you're maintaining 5000 people to satisfy your desires," the female voices says.⁴⁹ This could refer to Gould's use of personae to represent himself; but it could also suggest that Gould recognizes the ethical dilemma inherent in orchestrating others' highly mediated voices to portray himself. Then Marta Hortaványi, Gould's only female persona, offers an alternate take on *The Latecomers*. Supposedly a Hungarian critic who "rocketed to international musicological celebrity with the 1935 publication of her thesis 'Counterpoint and Capitalism: An Argument for Thematic Investment,'"⁵⁰ Hortaványi declares *The Latecomers* is an expose of the dangers and decadence of capitalism. When she plays it for "the kindergarten," which she apparently does, she only deletes the final line with the religious reference, because the topic is inappropriate for children. But she

also offers the final link between Gould and his radio documentaries when she asks the obligatory question about Gould's career:

Hortaványi: It is now since 1964 that you isolate yourself from the public, from concert life. You become as one of your own characters in Solitude Trilogy.

Twitt-Thornwaite: Oh, I say, that is a charming conceit, dear lady.

Hortaványi: Is it possible you will change your outlook and return to public concert life?

Gould: No, Madame. There is no possibility of that. That would seem a very retrogressive step to me. I can't even conceive of going back to that way of life, actually.

Hortaványi: So it is not possible, like other artists who withdraw for a time, that you make a hysteric return?⁵¹

Here Gould puts one of the most serious statements—that he is like the characters from his radio documentaries—in the voice of his most ridiculous critic, thus confounding once more any notion of definitive self-representation. Furthermore, Hortaványi raises the possibility that Gould could make an “Hysteric Return.” And indeed, the last nine minutes of the *Fantasy* are supposedly a tape of a performance that is even odder than the preceding fifty-four minutes.

The “Hysteric Return” juxtaposes the notoriously Gould with the notoriously not-Gould. Set in the Arctic, it features Gould performing an entirely Romantic program with the Aklivik Orchestra live aboard an oil rig for an audience comprised of Geysler Petroleum executives and Gould's critics. For the encore he “adjusts his inflatable scarf” and dons “a second pair of fingerless mittens” before kneeling in front of the last tuned

piano on deck—his folding chair was an unfortunate victim of a gust of Arctic wind. “I very much doubt he will be able to make use of the pedal,” Duncan Haig-Guinness remarks, as Gould begins to play his own transcription of a Ravel Symphony. But the performance is announced hockey-game style by Byron Rossiter, the real host of *Hockey Night in Canada*. In the midst of his encore, Gould’s audience begins to abandon ship. Cassie Mackerel, an American correspondent played by Pacsu, speaks with the chair of the board of Geyser Petroleum (played by Gould) who confirms a substantial oil find nearby. Rossiter then announces that since Gould no longer has an audience, and the concert can no longer be labeled a public event, the CBC is signing off. The “Hysterical Return,” therefore, and the entire *Glenn Gould Fantasy*, concludes with Gould taking a bow (“Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.”) alone on the platform, to the sound of barking seals.⁵²

I have described the *Fantasy* at length because, aside from hearing the piece, there is no other way to convey the extent of Gould’s riotous self-representation. Biographers don’t know what to do with it. Peter Ostwald called it “an incredible outpouring of creative madness” (312). Otto Friedrich wearily notes that “There are many clever moments in the talk-show section of *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, but most of the record dealt with questions that Gould had lectured on many times before.” The “Hysterical Return,” however, strikes Friedrich as “a piece of wildly surrealistic abandon unlike anything else he had ever attempted. For this man who yearned for total control, it was an excursion into the nightmare of total loss of control” (258). In his typically balanced and understated way, Bazzana calls the *Fantasy* “a humorous documentary,” and the “Hysterical Return” “a self-contained showpiece” (WS, 411), but notes that for some

Columbia executives, “Gould was not as funny as he thought he was” (WS, 412). In *Partita for Glenn Gould*, Georges Leroux, not content to see Gould’s personae as ridiculous or simply to ignore them, hoping they’ll go away, locates in Gould’s self-representational play “the freedom of which he was capable”:

What other artist could take the risk of making such emphatic and often incomprehensible declarations as he makes on his notorious Silver Jubilee Album. He could do it, and even had to do it. . . . The cast of characters he incarnated reveals an unusual sense of the burlesque, at the same time as it illustrates his capacity to understand the points of views of others, including those whose aesthetic views he did not share. . . . There was no derision here, just a desire, from deep in his withdrawal to the studio where he continued to work, to belong to the everyday world and to continue speaking out. We can only imagine the heights his prolixity might have attained had he come to know the freedom of the Internet. (47)

In the most useful consideration to date of Gould’s personae, Leroux sees them as a representation of “a nostalgia for unified society where art could take its place simply, without exposing the artist to the imposed discipline of withdrawal” and as evidence of Gould’s “joyous and mocking approach to life” (48). Coming closest to treating Gould’s personae as life writing, Mark Kingwell argues that Gould’s multiple personae either suggest that “the most interesting results in any art may derive from a play of personae rather than a disciplined deployment of some unified aesthetic standpoint,” or that “like Elvis Presley or Howard Hughes, Gould was lost inside the mirror-house of his own images, a prisoner of sprawling self-conception” (185). Both are somewhat true.

I would add that Gould's constant concern with self-representation led him to create autobiographical texts that teeter on the brink of the existing limits of self-representations of musicians. They are the material consequences of a mind that never shut off and knew few imaginative boundaries. They are also a meta-biographical deployment of a fractured self deliberately designed to obscure and preclude any attempt to represent him definitively in the future. And they finally speak back to critics and journalists who had represented him in the past. The ultimate in self-parody, they confirm suspicions that the self is only composed of performative acts. His many self-reflexive writings and performances betray a constant awareness of how his self-image is presented by others. In "Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould About Glenn Gould," he takes himself to task for statements about recording, harshly criticizing, then calmly defending, those claims. In "Glenn Gould Interviews Himself about Beethoven," he humorously grills himself about his previous critical statements concerning the composer. In "A Biography of Glenn Gould," his review of his own biography, Gould compliments Geoffrey Payzant for writing a book that does not "aspire to an opus-by-opus survey of Gould's notoriously controversial interpretations," but instead uses musical examples to illustrate "moral and philosophical" issues (444). If, as Paul John Eakin suggests, selves are not only represented but constructed through narratives, when publicists, critics, and journalists wrote about Gould, they were not only co-opting his public identity, but in fact composing his self on some level. By becoming the topic of their conversation, Gould somehow became less himself. As a result *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, released only a year before the second recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, is the ultimate in Gould's self-reflexive play. Admittedly, Gould's narration of self through his various personae

provides many cringe-inducing examples of where musical selves probably should not go. But through its use of multiple dissenting voices, and its references to Gould's other autobiographical work, the *Fantasy* effectively encompasses Gould's self. In this piece, Glenn Gould is not just the man who left the concert stage and argued vehemently for the value of recording over performance. Nor is he simply the unusual interpretations of his repertoire, or a series of notorious quirks. He is all of this, and he is the response it has provoked from his audience and critics. In short, he is not just the topic of the conversation, he is the conversation itself. Gould repeatedly stated that one of his intentions as a musician was didactic. He wanted people to sit up and take notice, to hear the music in ways it has not previously been heard. He wanted to breathe life into what, in his time, was already an art form heading toward obsolescence. In the *Fantasy*, he portrays himself as the fruition of those desires—the ultimate Gould according to Gould.

Though *A Glenn Gould Fantasy* proved to be a perplexing but final verbal self-representation by a musician and thinker endlessly preoccupied with auto/biographical discourse, there's some evidence that more life writing lay down the road. Bazzana suggests that had Gould lived longer, he may well have written his memoirs, perhaps in response to Robert Silverman's suggestion that Gould contribute autobiographical writing to *Piano Quarterly*. Apparently Gould “had the idea of writing his memoirs in sections, starting with one season of his concert career and then working backward and forward to compile a diary of his life” (WS, 468). Though Gould got no further than a brief consideration of his 1958-59 concert season, Bazzana informs us that “the project remained open. In fact, the last page of his last surviving notepad—perhaps the last words he ever committed to paper—is a list of American orchestras with which he had

performed” (WS, 468). Bazzana has also called Gould’s plans for future recordings as a conductor “mouth-watering” and “heart-breaking,” arguing “there is no more poignant might-have-been than Gould’s planned conducting career” (WS, 482). This may be true—except perhaps for those who study life-writing. For us, Gould’s existing autobiographical works force us to speculate on what his eventual memoir might have been like. What ideas would it have included? What forms might it have taken? Which Goulds would have been given the opportunity to speak? And finally, how might this work have extended the possibilities for musical autobiography?

CONCLUSION

Several of the major Gould biographical texts end by noting that a Gould recording of Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C, No. 1 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* was placed on board the 1977 Voyager Space Probe, as part of a gold-plated copper disk phonograph record containing images and sounds from Earth, including twenty-eight pieces of music from various historical periods and cultures. According to NASA, this record is meant to "communicate the story of our world" to extra-terrestrials ("The Golden Record"). On the grandest scale imaginable, the Golden Record embodies the notion that identities are constructed through music. Though only one of many pieces featured on the Golden Record, it is worth considering how Gould's contribution represents humanity. Certainly his Bach has been recognized as a high moment in human creative achievement. His technical skill alone is astounding, but his unusual interpretive methods, his faith in and virtuosic manipulating of technology, and his willingness to clock hours and hours of labor to realize his ideas, make him the perfect representative of a space mission that itself required great technological ingenuity—according to NASA, "a total of 11,000 workyears" to carry the project through its Neptune encounter ("Fast Facts"). The appearance of the Voyager probe in Gould biography of course carries metaphorical connotations as well. Gould, the otherworldly genius, is launched back out into the farthest reaches of space, the incomprehensible returned to the equally incomprehensible. Though dead, he lives on in humanity's conception of its collective self. And just as scientists will continue to try to understand the universe, biographers will continue to search for a more supple understanding of Glenn Gould.

Outer space crops up during Gould's lifetime as well. In "Stokowski in Six

Scenes,” one of his most interesting and engaging autobiographical essays, he describes interviewing the great conductor for a 1970 radio documentary. Stokowski was 88 at the time, and Gould was clearly awed and somewhat intimidated. But by the time of the interview, he had met Stokowski several times, and had overcome his initial difficulty at even stringing words together in the maestro’s presence. The interview was also being filmed for National Educational Television, and before the tape rolled, Stokowski asked for a preview of the questions. Gould told his idol that he would raise predictable topics—specific composers, the “composer-performer relationship,” “fidelity to the score,” and so on (278). But Gould actually began with the following:

Maestro. . . . I have this recurring dream. In it, I appear to be on some other planet, perhaps in another solar system, and, at first, it seems as though I am the only Earthman there. And I have a tremendous sense of exhilaration because I seem to believe, in the dream, that I have been given the opportunity—and the authority—to impart my value system to whatever form of life there might be on that planet; I have the feeling that I can create a whole planetary value system in my own image. (279).

His exhilaration is short-lived. Encountering another earthling, he learns that he “will not be able to proceed, uncontradicted” in his educating indigenous life forms (279). Gould then gives Stokowski the opportunity to do so instead. Explaining that this planet is inhabited by “a race of highly developed beings who, to all appearances, have achieved a state of peaceful coexistence—a state of civilization higher than our own—and have done this, moreover, without reference to the notion we call ‘art’.” Gould then asks the Maestro, “Firstly, would you want them to know about the ‘artistic’ manifestations of our

world? And, secondly, if you did, how much would you want them to know?” (279)

Stokowski pauses. But then he launches into a truly remarkable response, which begins, “Think of our solar system, its colossal size. I have the impression that there are many solar systems, that ours is a very big one, but that there are others which are much larger. . . .” (279). Then, speaking at the height of the Vietnam war, Stokowski considers both the potential for beauty and destruction in human achievement:

At present, all over the world is war—so much destruction and so little compared with that destruction, that is creative. Many minds who are in what we call “war”—those minds might have enormous creative power. But they are killed, smashed by the destruction. If one studies history, one sees a series of wars. One sees clearly that nobody wins any of those wars. Everybody loses. They are madness. They are the lowest forms of intelligence. The men who control things at the top, they have this low form of intelligence. They create these wars. It is time all humanity understood. (280)

In the long soliloquy Gould later claimed he hoped for, Stokowski elaborates on the nature of art. It is “like the great roots of a great oak tree, and out of those roots grow many branches, many kinds of art: the dance, architecture, painting, music, the art of words,” and for an artist struggling to improve his art “there is no limit upward, no limit” (280). He ends by saying that, if given the opportunity to share his values with a higher life form, he would try “to give a clear impression . . . of what I think is beautiful and orderly, what I think is creative and what I think is destructive. It would be possible, I hope, to let them see what is happening on this Earth—so much destruction, so little that is creative” (282). Stokowski’s answer ended here, but in his essay Gould explains how

he restructured it for the final eventual documentary. Confessing that he “could not bear to take my leave of Stokowski while he mused upon man’s capacity for self-destruction,” Gould reveals that he removed two words from Stokowski’s first sentence. Justifying this “creative cheating,” Gould argues that Stokowski’s own career warrants this kind of technological manipulation:

In his lifetime he had witnessed the triumph, and confirmed the essential humanity, of those technological ideas which had inspired his activity as a musician. . . . He understood that through its mediation one could transcend the frailty of nature and concentrate on a vision of the ideal. His life and work had testified to our ability to remove ourselves from ourselves and achieve a sense of ecstasy. (282)

Then Gould ends his own essay with the restored first sentence that he relocated to end of Stokowski’s soliloquy: “Think of our solar system, its colossal size, *its possibility*” (282).

Gould’s documentary on Stokowski is also a documentary about himself. His emphasis on Stokowski’s filmic relationship to the score, and his view of technology as a “higher calling,” mirror Gould’s own artistic concerns. The description of the moral potential for art and technology could easily be Gould’s own. As Kevin Bazzana suggests, “Stokowski was the Glenn Gould of the early twentieth century, proselytizing on behalf of recording and broadcasting and film, and working with engineers to improve recording technology and recording methods” (WS, 308). Gould’s Stokowski documentary therefore highlights some key elements in his own textual auto/biographical “life.” For instance, the sheer amount of mediation parallels how Gould’s life was often represented and re-presented. In Gould’s essay about Stokowski, a previous incarnation

of Stokowski by Gould is transformed again into the interviewer's own representation of himself. But then I transformed it again, foregrounding and withholding passages important to my own argument. Where has Stokowski gone in this analysis? In "Stokowski in Six Scenes," Gould describes the maestro's surprise at the first prompt: "Stokowski, anticipating a short question, had been looking at the camera as instructed, but he was now looking directly at me, and with a look that seemed to say: 'Whose interview is this, anyway?'" (279). The answer is that whenever Gould is involved in artistic production, the material—whether someone else's recorded voice or a musical composition—is ultimately Gould's. He consistently justified using others' voices and radically transforming others' musical compositions by claiming they all became part of his own attempt to explore the limitless potential of art. And as I've argued, as he did so, he also explored the seemingly limitless potential for self-representation. Indeed, one reason Gould so often wrote back against his biographical representations, even at the earliest stages of his career, was their potential to mummify him, to impede his own explorations in this area. Gould's lifelong project was not only to explore the potential for technology in music, for music in human speech, for portraying new ideas in groundbreaking and often outrageous interpretations of tested repertoire, but also for representing the self in text.

As I hope I have shown, there are countless ways of looking at Gould's life, career, and posthumous existence. Tim Page's claim that "Almost anything you could say about Glenn Gould, you could say the opposite and have it be somewhat true" is a truism hovering over Gould representations. Two examples from my own research can illustrate this point. In the introduction, I carefully distinguished my identification of Gould's "life"

as a “limit-case” from Leigh Gilmore’s use of the term. For her autobiographers, alternate forms became the means not only for representing traumatic experiences but also for avoiding further trauma that might be provoked by critical responses to more straightforwardly autobiographical self-representations. It occurs to me now, however, that in some ways Gould experienced representations of his self by others as traumatic. Since he came from a very private, decidedly non-celebrity family, the sudden explosion of representation both positive and negative that followed the release of his first recording, and the way that Columbia chose to market him by drawing attention not only to his music but to more personal aspects of self, may have in fact been somewhat traumatic for Gould. In *Excitable Speech*, Judith Butler writes that “to be injured by speech is to suffer a loss of context, that is, not to know where you are” (4). But she also speaks to the interpellative power of language, suggesting that “by being called a name, one is also, paradoxically, given a certain possibility for social existence, initiated into a temporal life of language that exceeds the prior purposes that animate that call” (2). Gould certainly recognized the double-edged sword of his own celebrity. He needed to be represented by others to keep him in the public realm and to allow him to disseminate his ideas. But Gould was not content to become simply a celebrity—someone who according to Daniel Boorstin is “well-known for their well-knownness” (57). He therefore responded to biographical representations that sought to construct “Glenn Gould” by producing self-representations that made the performative nature of the self undeniable, calling into question the ability of a biography to present a “true” portrait of its subject by producing and inspiring countless variations. All biographical representations of Gould bear the mark of his auto/biographical play. But his biographers’ response to Gould’s

shaping of his own “life” has often been to recognize it, but to avoid genuine engagement, writing off his most obvious explorations of self as eccentricity, or as the embarrassing unraveling of a highly self-reflexive and creative mind. And Gould’s most riotous forms of self-representation—his use of personae and his staged interviews—are undeniably egocentric and solipsistic. But they also help us recognize the limits of musical auto/biography, and of auto/biography in general. Auto/biographical discourse by or about Glenn Gould necessarily takes place at the intersection of music, literature, history, politics, gender, sexuality, technology, image, celebrity, education, the body, spirituality, geography, and psychology. Gould’s “life” continues to interest readers and listeners long after his death, because he explores the limits of human potential in so many ways—for human achievement, for establishing and renegotiating community, and for examining and representing of self.

I have argued in this final chapter that music does carry contingent meaning and can be considered as autobiographical representation. In his *Extraordinary Canadians* biography of Gould, Mark Kingwell links music and the self somewhat differently: “Music is perception, but it is not only perception; it is also a perception of that which makes perception possible, a glimpse of the conditions making perception possible. . . . A person is not one thing. A person is a composition improvised by the maker. We each can try to play it” (197). My second example of just how various Glenn Gould’s representations can be draws on Kingwell’s notion of the biographical subject as a composition interpreted by the biographer, but also stresses how the biographer’s own experience is critical to the performance that results. As I neared the end of this project, I re-examined Bruno Monsaingeon’s film of Gould’s 1981 *Goldbergs*. I had been working

on this project for several years, and in a much earlier draft, I had written that the film and recording presented an “older, more mature musician in the autumn of his life.” My dissertation director aptly pointed out that Gould was only forty-nine when he made the film, so it may seem autumnal only because Gould died shortly afterwards. After thinking about this “autumnal” characterization for a bit, I returned to the film to see if I still agreed with myself. What struck me was not just how much biographical representation depends upon the one doing the representing, but also how profoundly changes in the biographer’s life can affect an understanding of the biographical subject. Though the 1981 Gould is certainly not the willowy, intensely attractive young man of the 1955 album cover, I no longer thought he looked near death. In fact, what struck me, close to ten years after my first viewing, was how fantastically agile those 49-year-old fingers remained, how extraordinarily they still negotiated the most challenging technical passages of the piece.

Now thirty-eight myself, I plan to return to the piano after completing this project, because I am already feeling the arthritis that will eventually probably prevent me from playing, as it did my grandmother. Other elements of my interpretation have changed as well. I originally struggled to articulate Gould’s relationship with the music as he hovers over the keyboard, almost seeming to coax and cajole from it the sound for which he is searching. Now, after the birth of my two children, Gould appears to me as locked in the kind of relationship one might see between a parent and child—the two naturally enraptured by each other’s simple existence, fully absorbed in their shared world. Eleven years from now, when I am the same age as Gould was in the film, I suspect it will reveal to me something else again. In addition to how he links music, culture, and textual

representation, it is this potential for shifting meaning that has fascinated, and will continue to fascinate me.

As yet more anniversaries of Gould's birth and death approach in 2012, I wonder what new texts will show up. We have not seen, and will never see, the last Gould biography. At least for me, one reason that Gould remains so compelling for so many people so many years after his death is he represents limitless possibility—for art, for music, for language, for texts, and for performing selves.

NOTES

Notes to Introduction

1. On the release and reception of the 1955 *Goldberg Variations*, see Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange*, 153. Both the 1955 and 1981 *Goldberg Variations* are regularly included in record industry lists of best or most important albums of the twentieth century and even of all time. For some recent examples, see “250 Greatest Recordings of all Time,” *Gramophone* June 2010 and “100 Best Classical Recordings,” *The Telegraph*, 7 September 2009. Gould is commonly recognized as one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century. In 1998, *Maclean’s Magazine* listed Gould as the most important Canadian artist in history.

2. For more information in Guerrero, see John Beckwith’s *In Search of Alberto Guerrero*.

3. The full text of Columbia’s press release for the 1955 *Goldberg Variations* can be found in Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange*, 151-153.

4. In *Glenn Gould: The Ecstasy and Tragedy of Genius*, Peter Ostwald suggested that “some of the behavior he manifested in childhood and during his adolescence . . . does resemble a condition called Asperger Disease, which is a variant of autism” (42). Later writers have argued more forcefully that Gould did indeed have Asperger’s. See, for example Timothy Maloney, “Glenn Gould, Autistic Savant,” and Michael Fitzgerald, *The Genesis of Artistic Creativity: Asperger’s Syndrome and the Arts*. Recently, Gould’s ASD has often been taken as a given. For example, Gould is included as one of the “autism heroes” in Jennifer Elder’s children’s book, *Different Like Me: My Book of Autism Heroes*.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. The idea of normalizing the subject, which has been recognized in relation to biographical film, can be extended to print biographies as well. For Gould, life normalizing occurs in two ways: 1) by emphasizing his personal struggles through a focus on his eccentricities; or 2) by downplaying his eccentricities to make him seem more “ordinary.” While these strategies may seem to contradict each other, they both minimize the extent to which Gould is set apart from “normal” human existence and achievement. I refer to any attempt to make Gould seem more like the rest of us, most often manifested through an attempt to downplay his eccentricities as “normalizing.”

2. Originally published in French, Leroux’s fascinating book is outside the bounds of this study. I refer to it occasionally, but I do not discuss it in detail.

3. For a discussion of why this is so, see Nigel Hamilton’s *Biography: A Brief History*, 3–4.

4. While Kivy identifies the genius god myth as originating with Longinus, Murray notes that it was during the “Renaissance, with the heightened confidence in the manifold capabilities of man which categorizes Italian humanism” that the conception of “the poet like another god” became prominent (4). Musicians first achieved the elevated status formerly reserved for poets during the 18th century, when Handel “played his part on the great stage of ideas, among some of the largest intellects of his time” (Kivy, 36). Until this time, music was considered a craft rather than an art, and musicians were not seen to be worthy of the kind of serious veneration devoted to poets. Kivy’s and Murray’s assertions are not mutually exclusive, of course, since Kivy suggests that it was during the eighteenth century, when Addison and Burke’s writings on the sublime became

prominent, that the Longinian view of genius experienced a resurgence (53).

5. Glenn Gould was an only child, born to his parents relatively late in their lives after Flora had experienced a series of miscarriages. As an adult, he professed to have found his school days, including school itself and other social interactions with children his own age, traumatic. From an early age his parents generously supported his musical development. Not only did they help to develop his talent by sharing their own musicality, they also devoted considerable financial resources toward his musical training.

6. Graham Carr also reports that before the release of the 1955 *Goldbergs* “some critics complained at being bombarded by publicists’ phone calls and press kits” (14), which of course testifies to the importance of marketing in establishing early biographical representations of twentieth-century musicians.

7. The album cover for the 1955 *Goldberg Variations* can be seen here:
<http://www.google.ca/imgres?imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/e/e4/BachTheGoldbergVariations-GlennGould.jpg&imgrefurl=http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BachTheGoldbergVariations-GlennGould.jpg&h=600&w=600&sz=61&tbnid=rGkfFJVWaQ9OJM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=90&prev=/search%3Fq%3DGlenn%2BGould%2BGoldberg%2BVariations%2Bimage%26tbm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=Glenn+Gould+Goldberg+Variations+image&docid=1vgVvrt0iH7xTM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=CzA4TobmJrKisQL8jb0t&ved=0CB4Q9QEwAQ>

8. Glenn Gould’s String Quartet Opus 1 can be heard here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBuPbeDxaHU>

9. The interview has become famous because of a question about Gould's sexuality. Braithewaite asks, "Are you engaged, or do you have a steady girlfriend?" Gould responds, "I am not engaged," and the interviewer abruptly changes direction: "Getting back to your music. . ." (45). Several biographers have since referred to the interview as an example of Gould's cryptic responses to interest in his romantic life. See, for example, Bazzana, *Wondrous Strange*, 340 and Clarkson, *The Secret Life of Glenn Gould*, 79.

10. For an interesting discussion of drug use in the classical music world, see Blair Tindall's *Mozart in the Jungle*.

11. Though Bazzana's text is far from a psychobiography, his construction of Gould's genius relies on a theoretical lens common to psychologists. Bazzana's sense that Gould's genius developed out of his life circumstances suggests a correlation with Michael Howe's ideas of "manufactured genius"—that genius can be created if an individual is given the opportunity for the 10,000 hours of practice needed to reach extraordinary levels of proficiency in a particular area. Of course, to achieve these 10,000 hours of practice, it is probably necessary to exhibit a certain set of behaviors, for example, a strong work ethic and ability to concentrate for long periods of time, both of which Simonton finds common in those who achieve eminence. Also necessary are social and cultural institutions and ideas which value the kind of creativity the genius undertakes. The idea that genius exists within a particular domain has also been considered by writers such as Mihaly Csikszentmihaly in "Creativity and genius: a systems perspective."

12. The photo of Gould used by Bazzana at the beginning of his "Portrait of an Artist"

chapter can be found here:

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/028010/f1/nlc004726-v6.jpg>

13. The decision to put Gould's official biography in the hands of a journalist rather than a musician or scholar is telling. Payzant's book on Gould had appeared a few years before his death, so a scholarly text had been done. As a fan, researching and writing for the benefit of other fans, Friedrich could be accepted by Gould's large, developing cult following. Furthermore, much of Gould's notoriety came from journalists, and his prominent position in the popular press helped him remain a best-selling recording artist years after he left the concert stage. An award-winning author and prominent writer for the popular press, Friedrich could effectively market his book and therefore Gould. Though it is unclear who else was considered, Posen's choice of Friedrich as the author of the official biography can be seen as a continued manipulation of the press by the Gould camp in Gould's best interest—something to be expected from an authorized biography.

14. While few of the scenes I have cited from *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould* were available on YouTube at the time of this document's completion, "Forty-Five Seconds and a Chair" can be found here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5f25kL9Gio&feature=BFa&list=PL0E668955B561C23E&lf=results_main

15. The repetition of themes and ideas, but especially of language on the part of Bergman's interview subjects is truly striking. In addition to their descriptions of Gould as child-like, several of his friends also use the word "uncanny" to describe their experiences with Gould and note that he stood outside of his own time. This repetition

raises questions: Did Bergman's editing of her interviews go significantly beyond transcription? Did Gould perform his own identity to such an extent that even those closest to him rely on motifs of self constructed by him during his own lifetime?

16. *Glenn Gould: Hereafter* is not available in its entirety on YouTube. The scene in which the Italian Pilgrim chats with the Glenn Gould sculpture at the CBC can be found here (0:00-1:34): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY9LXThpxWA>

17. The segment in which Natalie Flood describes getting a tattoo of the motif from Gould's String Quartet can be found here (0:59)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY9LXThpxWA>

18. Gould regularly claimed British virginalist Orlando Gibbons to be his favourite composer. *Hereafter* suggests that Bach is Gould's favorite composer by juxtaposing a scene in which Gould is asked who his favourite composer is with a scene in which Gould speaks about Bach, but the film also hints at Gibbons, by playing one of his compositions on the soundtrack at the same time.

19. The BACH motif is a series of notes – B flat, A, C, B natural. In German musical notation, B natural appears as H, so the motif forms Bach's surname. The motif was common in Bach's work, but has also been widely used by other composers.

20. The psychological study of the perceived link between genius and madness has suggested many interesting correlations. Daniel Nettle's *Strong Imagination: Madness, Creativity and Human Nature* suggests that “[m]adness is not so much a mental malfunction as a state of horrible hyperfunction of certain mental characteristics,” and suggests that madness persists as a human trait despite evolution, precisely because “it is closely linked to a trait—creativity—which is highly advantageous” (10). Nettle supports

the link between genius and creativity by citing Kay Redfield Jamison's study on poets, writers, and visual artists, which indicated that "55 per cent of poets and 63 per cent of playwrights had a diagnosis of mood disorder" compared to "around 20 per cent for novelists, biographers, and artists" and approximately 6 per cent of the general population. Professor Arnold Ludwig in his book *The Price of Greatness* suggested that the incidence of affective disorder in musicians was somewhere in the range of 60-68 per cent (cited in Nettle, 144). One problem with the consideration of the link between genius and eccentricity in psychology studies is that the investigations often use biographies of the artists as information sources and diagnose the artists posthumously using biographical material. (This was not the case with Redfield's study, however.) Dean Keith Simonton explains that the genius/madness dichotomy has been prevalent in psychoanalysis since its inception, since Freud saw creative genius as a symptom of neurosis, and suggests that, for this reason, "when psychoanalysts conduct psychobiographical studies of historic personalities, they almost always end up providing a clinical diagnoses of some disorder" (285). Simonton himself suggests that the shared conditions of the lives of the eminent along with the challenges of living in the public eye "may leave emotional scars that never heal" (311).

21. The timeliness of Foss's revelations—25 years after Gould's death—making him front page news just as various new recordings and other celebrations took place marking the anniversary of his passing, makes the notion that Clarkson simply located Foss, who then suddenly agreed to talk after years of silence, somewhat suspect. Though the idea that Gould may have timed this revelation himself or that the estate provided some incentive for Foss to talk at this time may seem far-fetched, especially after she had

refused an interview with Bazzana, a much more knowledgeable Gould scholar, it is consistent with Gould's incessant manipulation of his public image during his lifetime, and begs the question of whether this is yet another of Gould's performances of self.

22. In his article in the *Toronto Star*, Clarkson suggests that the Dell letter may in fact be about Cornelia Foss, and that Dell may refer to her maiden name, Brendel. Foss, however, told Clarkson she doubts the note is about her, and refused to have Clarkson read it to her, noting Gould's intense desire for privacy during his lifetime.

23. Though Clarkson certainly exceeds all other Gould biographers in this area, physical descriptions of women's beauty, or lack thereof, are not uncommon in the Gould biographies. Friedrich describes Margaret Pacsu, a Gould colleague and friend, as "an extremely attractive brunette" (256). Peter Ostwald similarly describes her as "the attractive young CBC employee" (313). Both Tim Wynne Jones' *The Maestro* and Joe Fiorito's *The Song Beneath the Ice* play their Gould characters off of a pretty blond character who serves in some ways as both mother and lover.

24. *Genius Within* can be found in its entirety here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_7Vt-rNJrA0

Responses to the *Goldberg Variations* begin at 5:21.

25. *Genius Within*'s account of Gould's Russian tour begins at 21:40.

26. The segment documenting Gould's relationship with Foss's children begins at 1:03:00.

27. The Henderson segment begins at 15:04.

28. Barrault's account of Gould's use of her piano to practice occurs at 18:27.

29. Foss's account of the dissolution of her relationship with Gould begins at 1:23:15.

30. Tulke describes Gould's need for control at 1:20:43.
31. Bazzana talks about Gould's scripting of his public speech at 1:21:43.
32. Tulke describes Gould's demanding work schedule and his request to become his brother at 1:01:20.
33. Ray Roberts describes Gould's days with Roslak as his happiest at 1:41:25.
34. John Roberts talks about Gould's unhappiness after Foss left at 1:31:51.
35. "So You Want to Write a Fugue" can be heard at 1:51:35.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. The "I Am Canadian" commercial can be viewed here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRI-A3vakVg>

2. Some parodies of the "I Am Canadian" commercial can be found here:

William Shatner: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOnQROgk1IM&NR=1>

Quebec "I am Not Canadian"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TncdhLGjFTE&feature=related>

"I am A Muslim" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JQXh20OuhIc>

3. The majority of Canadian musicians active during Gould's time either resided or completed at least part of their education outside of Canada. Ernest MacMillan studied in London; Barbara Pentland studied in Paris and at Juilliard; Maureen Forrester studied in Canada, but later became the chair of the voice department at the Philadelphia Music Academy; Anton Kuerti, the next most well-known and celebrated Canadian pianist of Gould's generation, was born in Vienna, became a naturalized U.S citizen in 1944, completed a music degree at the Cleveland Institute in 1955. Though he had long lived and worked in Canada, he did not become a naturalized Canadian citizen until 1984.

4. The image of Gould in cold weather gear became a powerful signifier of his link with the Canadian North. Beginning in the 1950s, at the height of his concert career, Gould would often generate such enthusiastic responses from audiences that he would play numerous encores, then make his final bow wearing his now-iconic winter outfit. As Mark Kingwell reports, from 1957 on, “the cold-weather uniform was invariable and much-reproduced—the outfit became Gould’s favourite image of himself. The image’s message extended beyond mere material fact, issues of low body temperature, or fear of infection. The message was this: no matter what the ambient temperature, it was always winter wherever Glenn Gould stood” (70). Setting aside the implications for Gould’s music, the cold weather outfit signified that not only did Gould base himself physically and imaginatively in Canada, but he brought Canada with him wherever he went.

5. York devotes one of her chapters to a study of Margaret Atwood, a near contemporary of Gould’s whose performance of celebrity bears some resemblance to the pianist’s. York notes Atwood’s “self-conscious awareness of her own celebrity,” detailing occasions when Atwood has “parodied her own star text,” something that Gould did through his self-interviews, his pre-emptive reviews of his own recordings, his review of Geoffrey Payzant’s biography, and his use of personae to reiterate, mock, and dispute various public opinions about himself (100). The similarities between Gould’s and Atwood’s response to celebrity raises the question of whether there are distinct trends in Canadian artists’ responses to celebrity in general. As York notes, the kinds of “meta-commentaries” on celebrity undertaken by Atwood and by Gould both describe and contain media representations. They express an unease with, but also a savvy ability to control and manipulate media.

6. Other *Candid Eye* films include *The Back-breaking Leaf*, about migrant workers field workers in the Ontario tobacco industry; *Blood and Fire*, about the work of the Salvation Army; *Police*, about the Toronto Metropolitan Police Force; and *Emergency Ward*, about an emergency ward in the Montreal General Hospital.

7. Paul Hjartarson notes that for Glenn Gould and Canadian painter Lawren Harris, “the North is as much a direction as a geographical location: it can mean north of sixty—that is, north of sixty degrees north latitude—or simply north of Toronto” (67). Both Norths are at play in the NFB documentaries on Gould, demonstrating that at least some of Gould’s ideas of North were formed several years before the production of his radio documentary. Even in 1959, it didn’t seem to matter to Gould where North actually was, but rather what it symbolized.

8. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII (7:31)

9. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII (3:04)

10. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII (8:21)

11. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uS3Zr_egjI&feature=related (0:09)

12. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uS3Zr_egjI&feature=related (4:11)

13. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uS3Zr_egjI&feature=related (5:53)

14. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uS3Zr_egjI&feature=related (6:42)

15. Gould’s construction as a “local” celebrity was highly successful, especially among Anglo-European Ontarians of Gould’s age and their children. Throughout the course of this project, I have been astounded at how many people have a “Gould” story. My neighbor’s sister, for instance, was Glenn Gould’s chamber maid. My father’s cousin sits behind Carl Doolittle, the Uptergrove Doolittle’s son, in her church in Orillia. Despite

the fact that many Torontonians and Central Ontarians have their own “Gould” story, people often seem not to recognize how famous the local boy actually became. My grandmother and I got lost while attempting to visit Glenn Gould’s cottage several years ago, and we stopped to ask some locals of my grandmother’s generation how to find it. My grandmother rolled down the car window to ask people who turned out to be Gould’s neighbors where the cottage was, and they told us where to go but added, “They’re not there now, you know.” This was in the late 1990s, at least fifteen years after Gould’s death had been widely announced in international newspapers.

16. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII (5:35)
17. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAHhBsaqs8Q&NR=1> (0:23)
18. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAHhBsaqs8Q&NR=1> (4:51)
19. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAHhBsaqs8Q&NR=1> (1:07)
20. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtmifxrdsw&feature=related> (0:00)
21. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtmifxrdsw&feature=related> (4:25)
22. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtmifxrdsw&feature=related> (6:38)

See also: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII&NR=1
(0:47-2:23)

23. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKOtAHY_XII&NR=1 (8:47)

24. For example, see Grace and Henighan. .

25. Quoting from Gould’s list of questions for his interview subjects, Hjartarson provides a useful example of the way Gould shaped his interviewees’ responses (74).

26. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MeTImOtqYc> (0:00-1:39)
27. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MeTImOtqYc> (1:55)

28. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MeTImOtqYc> (9:51)
29. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MeTImOtqYc> (9:37)
30. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7LLmcFWp4E&feature=related> (0:10-2:54)
31. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7LLmcFWp4E&feature=related> (5:05-6:40)
32. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7LLmcFWp4E&feature=related> (6:47)
33. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7LLmcFWp4E&feature=related> (8:54)
34. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnxL3BI46eE&feature=related> (5:00-6:38)
35. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q610a7ScH6A&feature=related> (0:00-0:48)
36. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q610a7ScH6A&feature=related> (4:43-5:21)
37. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1n_2IWyjyjk&feature=related (0:30-1:55)
38. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1n_2IWyjyjk&feature=related (5:45-7:10)
39. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmLJHF9nAyY&feature=related> (1:00-9:58)
40. The *Hinterland Who's Who* commercials are another recognizable symbol of Canadian culture. A quick search on YouTube will bring up numerous examples of real *Hinterland Who's Who* ads, generally followed by nostalgic comments from viewers who fondly remember them from their 1970s childhoods, and several parodies. *The Hinterland Who's Who* Loon can be viewed here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwWHk8azaAc>

41. Though Girard and McKellar de-emphasize most of the aspects of Gould's life that would serve this function, they also create a representation of Gould as an acutely sensitive man, vulnerable to illness and anxiety, who continuously negotiated the boundaries between isolation and communication, eccentricity and expression.

42. The scene can be found here; however, it cuts off before Gould walks back into

the landscape: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DncC9dyJX4M>

43. In the actual interview, Cott does not respond to Gould's desire to spend a winter north of the Arctic Circle with "I hope you do." Instead, he follows with the considerably more useful response of "What would you do about playing the piano up there?" which leads Gould to some interesting statements about the effect not playing for any length of time has on his psyche (Cott, 104). The film therefore takes artistic liberties with the biographical material to make a particular statement about the media, Gould, and the North.

44. Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today" (1).

45. It is worth noting that both Kingwell's reconception of the North as community as well as solitude, and Fiorito's positing of Dom's North as a place in which solitude is near impossible, counter Gould's predominant mythology using ideas that were, in fact, first voiced by Gould in *The Idea of North*. That this is possible suggests the extent to which Gould's multiple, conflicting ideas of North and of self have been subsumed into a master narrative that positions Gould as solitary and the North, and by extension Canada, as empty space conducive to a particular kind of creative and philosophical contemplation.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. The cover of Gould's *Silver Jubilee Album* can be found here:

<http://www.google.ca/search?q=glenn+gould+silver+jubilee+album+image&hl=en&biw>

[=1440&bih=699&prmd=ivns&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=-DE4Tt3yJsqmsALoxYT1Dw&ved=0CBoQsAQ](#)

2. In Young's play, four aspects of Gould's identity, each played by a different actor, perform Glenn Gould. They are: PRODIGY, PERFORMER, PURITAN, and PERFECTIONIST. Occasionally, these embodied aspects of Gould's character also enact other people who interact with the various Goulds.

3. Jazz autobiography has received the most critical attention of all forms of music autobiography. See, for example, Christopher Harlos, "Jazz Autobiography: Theory, Practice, Politics," Holly E. Farrington, "Narrating the Jazz Life: Three Approaches to Jazz Autobiography," and Daniel Stein, "The Performance of Jazz Autobiography."

4. The *Encyclopedia of Life Writing* includes entries on "Musical Autobiography" and "Musical Biography." Both entries focus on primary texts. The entry on "Musical Biography" indicates that critical work in this area is sparse and suggests that "[p]erhaps one of the reasons musical biography is so rarely treated as a separate critical domain . . . is that it is in itself a highly diverse genre" (627).

5. Bernstein's audience address can be found here:

<http://archives.cbc.ca/programs/130-4000/page/2/>

6. The Liszt-Beethoven Symphony no. 6 can be found here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YoQDofxpNsI&feature=results_video&playnext=1&list=PL7611A5017EECE820

The Liszt-Beethoven Symphony no. 5 can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjF3-fUfX3E&NR=1>

7. When quoting from Gould's radio documentaries, I struggled with whether to use Gould's transcripts, which are held in the Glenn Gould Archive, or quote from my listening experience alone. In the case of *The Idea of North*, a relatively accurate transcript exists; however, I found that Gould's transcripts for the other radio documentaries were often inaccurate when compared to the audio recordings. For this reason, though I have checked my quotations from *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, *The Latecomers*, and *The Quiet in the Land* against Gould's transcripts, I have not provided page numbers, as when disagreements arose between the transcripts and my own ear, I often used what I heard instead of what I read.

The passages quoted above can be heard here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjnHW0mzP9M&feature=autoplay&list=PL36CDD2D0D3D42E6E&lf=results_main&playnext=2

8. Gould's performance of the Mozart K.330 from his Saltzburg recital can be on YouTube in three parts here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGcg7cqr-d-s>

9. Ostwald's reference to Schumann in this context makes sense given the biographer's earlier text, *Schumann: Music and Madness*.

10. Gould repeatedly made personal references to the Goldbergs when marketing his 1981 recording. In his recorded interview with Tim Page, he states that he recognized the "fingerprints" but not the "spirit" of the person who made the 1955 recording.

11. While Seipmann forgives Gould this diversion from mainstream interpretations, noting that those with such obvious technical gifts should be excused for exercising them, and that Bach himself, was said to have done similar things in performance, other critics were not always as generous.

12. The 1955 *Goldberg Variations* can be heard here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGY9tHHM63Q>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uME_VqKM5iw&feature=related

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u8OURqmVpbY&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VF1ne-jH33g&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1bVPYvfb9g&feature=related>

13. Whether Gould in fact stated the entirety of the quotation, or whether the discussion of Bach' life is actually Monsaingeon's addition, is left ambiguous in the film. But Gould had enough power over his career by this point to make it is reasonable to believe that if he did not actually utter this statement, he heard it and approved of its use in the film.

14. Most of the 1981 *Goldberg Variations* film can be found on YouTube.

Variations 1-7 are here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7LWANJFHEs>

Variations 6-14:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPIS5yvvt2Y&feature=related>

Variations 15-19:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thk_Xap-IsW&feature=related

Variations 20-24:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1CDzn_7aLs&feature=related

At the time of this project's completion, I was unable to find Monsaingeon's introduction or the end of the film.

15. *The Gouldberg Variations* can be heard here:

<http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~chatzis/>

16. Ironically, in homage to a musician who spoke vehemently against live performances, Hatzis has composed a piece that depends upon each performer's improvisational interpretation of Gould's interpretive method, and thus can only be effectively realized in live performance. Though it is tempting to suggest that Gould might dismiss the piece based on this element, Hatzis can also be seen to be enacting his own identity while enacting a version of Gould's. This performance of self, along with the impressive use of technology in the employment of the MIDI piano, is consistent with Gould's own identity constructions.

17. By this point in his career, anyone seeking an interview with Gould had to write him a letter outlining what s/he wanted to cover in the discussion. Page promised to do the interview entirely on Gould's terms.

18. In a funny but telling comment on a YouTube recording of the 1981 *Goldbergs* interview with Page, someone states the following: "Great stuff. Its [sic] always wonderful to hear Glenn Gould speaking. He's always a step ahead of the interviewer." The interview can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTZ0Mpct-kY&NR=1>

19. Page's interview about his "radio documentary" interview with Gould can be found here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLuLh9wHr8o>

20. A notable exception to this form is a David Byrne self-interview in which Byrne, disguised as various interviewers, interviewed himself for a Talking Heads film concert. Byrne's use of physically embodied alternate selves is something like Gould's

use of personae in *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, only less technologically complex.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dE-mxVxFXLg>

21. The introductory segment of *The Quiet in the Land* can be heard here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpf9tFhqmXo> (0:00-5:28)

22. Though I refer to Gould's characters by name when quoting from *The Idea of North*, I have chosen not to do so with *The Latecomers* and *The Quiet in the Land*. In Gould's written and audio introductions to *The Idea of North*, he identified each of his characters by name and vocation, speaking about Wally McLean at length. *The Latecomers* has no audio introduction, and though he penned one, Gould did not introduce his characters in any depth and referred to only some of them by name. Gould did not write an introduction to *The Quiet in the Land*.

Though all characters were named in the documentaries' credits and later named in the liner notes of the CBC release of *The Solitude Trilogy*, and though they appear in the transcripts, Gould's increasingly vague introductions cause his characters to become less and less distinguishable as individuals who exist outside of the documentaries. Though there are often discernable differences in the sounds of their voices—a single woman among a chorus of men, a distinct accent—without the assistance of the transcripts, the characters become increasingly subsumed by Gould's purposes, and the documentaries themselves move increasingly further from the traditional documentary form that Gould sought to subvert.

23. This passage from *The Latecomers* can be heard here:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOooyndutQM&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F (0:38-2:27)

24. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOooyndutQM&feature=results_main&playnext=1&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F (5:14)
25. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLuLh9wHr8o> (2:25)
26. Significantly, Santayana's subtitle is *A Memoir in the Form of a Novel*, an example of the kind of autobiographical play that Gould appreciated and engaged in himself.
27. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpf9tFhqmXo> (5:28-7:44)
28. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S57OyIHDY&feature=autoplay&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F&lf=results_main&playnext=2 (0:19-1:44)
29. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpf9tFhqmXo> (6:36)
30. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Vgp1gHIDbA&NR=1 0:00
31. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDVHEV5RQy8> (0:00-0:26)
32. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S57OyI-HDY&feature=autoplay&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F&lf=results_main&playnext=2 (3:36)
33. In a somewhat humorous, seemingly direct representation of Gould, another character states, "After all, for the great lot of us at my age, the stop signs and speed limits and all of that, they're for the other fella." Gould was a notoriously bad driver. Representations of him as reckless and oblivious to traffic rules are so much a part of his life narrative that they are even included in biographies of Gould for children. Like all of his representations, Gould probably possessed a sense of humor about this one, and no doubt got a kick out of its inclusion in one of his autobiographical radio documentaries..

34. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S57OyI-HDY&feature=autoplay&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F&lf=results_main&playnext=2 (5:56-7:50)
35. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDVHEV5RQy8> (0:00-2:07)
36. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyGxrzo0VIE> (5:55-6:30)
37. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S57OyIHDY&feature=autoplay&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F&lf=results_main&playnext=2 (2:58)
38. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZIBEWvxI3LA&feature=autoplay&list=PL13525A00BBE71B6F&lf=results_main&playnext=4 (3:30-4:34)
39. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Vgp1gHIDbA&NR=1 (4:17-7:53)
40. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDVHEV5RQy8> (9:18) to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyGxrzo0VIE> (0:35)
41. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vpf9tFhqmXo> (3:32)

42. Friedrich describes an intense sense of competition that Gould held for Horowitz, suggesting that, while Gould good-naturedly mocked Rubenstein in his article “Memories of Maude Harbour,” for Horowitz, he “felt something more malevolent, something rather like envy,” not of Horowitz’s pianistic gifts, but “of the admiration they inspired” (238). Friedrich uses this story to explain some of Gould’s romantic recordings, but also to contribute to the larger thesis of Gould as conundrum, a man who claimed to hate competition while at the same time being very competitive.

43. The first ten minutes of *A Glenn Gould Fantasy*, with visual images of Gould in costume as his personae can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-9To6uvVPs>

The sections discussed above take place from 0:00-5:50.

44. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-9To6uvVPs> (6:08-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjnHW0mzP9M&feature=related> (1:37)

45. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjnHW0mzP9M&feature=related> (4:24-9:01)

46. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOW_unCwqVs (1:53-3:43)

47. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOW_unCwqVs (6:37-8:07)

48. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuOG32P01Ik&feature=related> (3:00)

49. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZuOG32P01Ik&feature=related> (5:29-8:54)

50. This publication, Gould notes, is “now known in Mme Hortaványi’s native Hungary only through its 1955 revision “Counterpoint and Collectivity: An Argument Against Thematic Hegemony” (*Silver Jubilee Album*, “Liner Notes”)

51. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g--3Z4lQn1Q&feature=related> (2:04-4:27)

52. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g--3Z4lQn1Q&feature=related> (5:40)-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DzlSDKqW9rQ> (end)

Notes to Conclusion

1. The beginning of Stokowski’s response can be found here

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efYs0TuuKCM> (5:37)

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