

voices are in, so they just find a pitch at some peculiar interval above or below and stay in parallel harmony from there onwards. So in folk music you often have this sense of a limitation being turned into a strength.⁵⁰

It is easy to imagine the attraction that certain kinds of Japanese music have for Eno. As he explains,

When I sit at home listening to things on a quiet evening I find I really am capable of listening to uneventful things with great pleasure. In fact almost the degree to which they are uneventful is interesting to me. For instance I'm very keen on shakuhachi music and koto music, partly because it has those very long spaces and very restrictive pitch palate ...⁵¹

Since the late 1970s, Eno has listened to and drawn lessons from Arabic popular music. During a trip to Ibiza, an island off the coast of eastern Spain, he tuned into North African radio stations and was inspired by the vocal styles he heard:

I was prepared to give up completely because I think they have the edge on us in singing. Not only the Arabs, but the Thai, Japanese, Africans, and so on ... What's really interesting about these pieces is the way they quite effortlessly accommodate electric organs and instruments we tend to associate with rock music, just build them in with no problem whatsoever.⁵²

In the radio interview from which this quotation is taken, Eno played a tape he had made off the air in Ibiza, and confessed that he had no idea what the singer was singing about. In the interview with John Cage, he said that he usually listens to gospel and Arabic music while he's "cleaning the house."⁵³ As is the case in so many realms of experience that Eno has dwelt in, one detects a mixture of child-like enthusiasm and naïveté, of deep reflection and a certain contextlessness. Like any other thoughtful person of the late twentieth century, he is confronted with an explosion of information pressing in at every turn, and faced with the dilemma of forging some kind of meaning out of it all. The contemporary musicologist Joseph Kerman has succinctly posed the dilemma as it affects the direction and goals of his own discipline: "more and more facts, and less and less confidence in interpreting them."⁵⁴ In his creative work, Eno has drawn on a very broad range of musical "facts," and has come up with some extremely provocative and beautiful results.

In this survey of music that has attracted, repulsed, and influenced Eno, doubtless much has been left out. An alert journalist, during a visit to Eno's New York loft in 1981, noted "a tidy stack of records: *Les Liturgies de l'Orient*, *Music of Bulgaria*, *Actual Voices of Ex-Slaves*,

⁵⁰ Aikin, "Brian Eno," 57.

⁵¹ Amir Khanian, "Eno at KPFA," 14.

⁵² Amir Khanian, "Eno at KPFA," 24.

⁵³ Tannenbaum, "Cage and Eno," 69.

⁵⁴ Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 54.