Raymond Monelle. 2006. *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, and Pastoral.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Reviewed by Andrew Haringer

Raymond Monelle, who passed away earlier this year, was something of an anomaly in the academic community. As far as I am aware, he is the only musicologist to have a pop song written in his honor: "Keep in Sight of Raymond Monelle" by Canadian indie band Barcelona Pavilion. He was that rare breed of the true performer-scholar who remained active as a composer, jazz pianist, and conductor, nurturing the boyhood talents of now-prominent Scottish musicians Donald Runnicles and James MacMillan in the latter capacity. Following his retirement in 2002, he even wrote a novel about the adolescence of Alban Berg, which currently remains unpublished.[1]

However, it is for his groundbreaking work in musical semiotics, and topic theory in particular, for which Dr. Monelle is most likely to be remembered, and here too he deviated from the norm. Over the past two decades, he developed an approach to the study of music signification that was at once solidly grounded in the methodologies of the past, and yet refreshingly devoid of dogmatic prejudice and any pretense of quasi-scientific rigor. It was this judicious blend of a solid foundation and an adventurous spirit that ensured glowing reviews of Monelle's first two books by scholars of such different temperaments as Kofi Agawu (1994) and Susan McClary (2001). It is therefore surprising that his third and, in my estimation, greatest book—*The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, and Pastoral*—met with so little fanfare when it appeared four years ago.[2]

Modern topic theory owes its beginnings to Leonard Ratner's seminal work, *Classic Music* (1980). In a mere twenty pages, Ratner puts forth the revolutionary claim that eighteenth-century composers relied upon a lexicon of "*characteristic figures*"—dance rhythms, military and hunt styles, Turkish music, and so on—as "*topics*—subjects for musical discourse" (1980:9). Ratner's disciples, Kofi Agawu and Wye Allanbrook, continued his work, enlarging the topical world to address questions of form and syntax. Indeed, Nicholas McKay makes the keen observation that, while topic theory has avoided much of the backlash against formalist analysis by dint of its status as "hermeneutics," the first wave of topic theorists has still tended to focus on close readings of pieces (2007). In contrast, Monelle's works show greater interest in unpacking the cultural units of topics themselves.

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Monelle's first two books—*Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (1992) and *The Sense of Music* (2000)—established him as a major voice in the field of music signification. In *Linguistics*, it is clear that the author has done his homework, with thorough readings of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce, Noam Chomsky, and Umberto Eco. The density of the text and the prevalence of daunting charts and diagrams places the book squarely in the world of musical semiotics, which remains, in Eero Tarasti's words, "a kind of avant-garde of musicology" (1996: xii). Despite *Linguistics*'s relative inaccessibility to all but the initiated, one can see important groundwork being laid for the robust critical apparatus Monelle would later develop in *The Musical Topic*. Two examples are worth mentioning. First, Monelle rejects the idea of referentialism, "The one-to-one or this-means-that view," (1992:13) advocating, instead, a far more nuanced understanding of the multitudinous ways in which signs operate. Second, he points out the discrepancy between signs and reality, an important aspect of Saussure's semiotics: "The conventional sign for the sun—a circle with radial lines emanating from it—does not resemble the 'real' sun, but it matches our awareness that rays of light emanate from the sun. At least, we *imagine* that light behaves in this way; this constitutes our 'perceptual model'" (1992:202).

In between *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* and his next book, Monelle contributed an essay to Tarasti's compilation *Musical Semiotics in Growth* (1996), in which he expresses leeriness towards positivistic systems of thought, endorsing instead a postmodern approach. This distrust of formal categories is the framing device for *The Sense of Music*, which begins with the fictitious Dr. Strabismus's quest for a comprehensive theory of music, and ends with the doctor accepting the impossibility of such a feat. Nevertheless, *Sense* marks Monelle's formal entrance into the world of topic theory, and the book establishes a number of important paradigms that predominate in *The Musical Topic*. Again, two examples are of paramount importance. One is the concept, derived from Peircian semiotics, of iconicity versus indexicality. Iconic topics imitate, typically in a highly stylized manner, extramusical sounds or images (birdcalls, the *pianto* or *seufzer*, running water, etc.), while indexical topics rely on conventions within the realm of music (dance measures, horn calls). Another is the notion of euphoric and dysphoric readings, which bears some similarity to Robert Hatten's ideas of "markedness" and "troping" (Hatten 1994, 2004)—the intentional marking or combining of topics in some way, respectively. In both cases, special attention is paid to the way composers inflect a given topic: for example, Monelle considers Liszt's etude *Wilde Jagd* as a dysphoric version of the "noble horse" topic, a reading to which I return at the end of this review.

In *Sense*, Monelle expresses the deepest admiration for Ratner's develop-

ment of musical topic theory, but critiques the notion that justification of this theory can be, or should be, found in the writings of contemporaries: "If theoretical ideas have any real interpretative force, it is unlikely that they will have been proclaimed by contemporaries, for contemporaries are engaged in the *justification* of their music and thus in concealing vital features" (2000:24). This is not to say that Monelle is dismissive or unaware of historical sources; on the contrary, in *Sense* he displays a laudable grasp of broader historical issues that other topic theorists have ignored. Rather, Monelle distinguishes himself by approaching the past with skepticism, questioning the distorted ways in which societies view themselves.

The Musical Topic marks the culmination of Monelle's developing thought on the book's titular subject. As he writes in the preface, "Academic minds, somebody said, are either arrows or storage rooms. Most of us spend our early years trying to become arrows, but if you were born a storage room you had better find some way, finally, to be yourself" (ix). A self-confessed "lifelong storage room" himself, Monelle has drawn upon an impressive array of sources in a variety of fields, producing an interdisciplinary study of unusual scope. With the book's adventurous forays into social and military history, the visual arts, and literature, Monelle is right to suggest that "Topic theory, in fact, may signal the moment when musicology ceases to be wholly, or even primarily, about music" (ix).

The Musical Topic is in four parts: a concise introduction, and more expansive sections for each of the three topics listed in the subtitle. In Part One, Monelle summarizes his approach to topic theory in three chapters: "Topic and Expression," "The Literary Source of Topic Theory," and "Signifier and Signified in Music." In the first, he fleshes out some important propositions first introduced in *The Sense of Music*. Just as that book offered extended chapters on the topical worlds of Wagner and Mahler, here Monelle affirms the importance of topics in Romantic as well as Classical music. At the same time, he agrees with Agawu's observation that Romantic composers are more likely to modify topics in some way, as opposed to the objectivity of Classical composers. In a related observation, Monelle again emphasizes the flexibility of topics: sometimes they are simple correlative signs, but more often they encompass a whole host of signifiers that "can embrace a complex world of fantasy and myth" (7).

In the second chapter, Monelle acknowledges his debt to continental literary topic theory, a German scholarly tradition that has received scant attention from Anglophone musical topic theorists. He refers to Ernst Robert Curtius's landmark book *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1948), which showed how medieval authors frequently relied on Classical conventions, such that their writings are incongruously filled with lions,

olive trees, and other faraway curiosities.[3] From this and other literary topic studies, Monelle concludes that topics do not necessarily correspond to a contemporary signified, and that the signified may be wholly imaginary. Monelle also taps into the German tradition of musical topical theory, which naturally draws heavily upon the German literary topic tradition. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of German versus Anglo-American musical topic theory, Monelle credits the Germans for their thorough cataloguing of the primary source evidence, but faults them for their reluctance to interpret this evidence. Conversely, he finds English language scholars quick to make interpretative leaps, but loathe to painstakingly lay the necessary groundwork. It soon becomes clear that Monelle's solution is a harmonious blend of the best traits of these approaches.

Monelle concludes his theoretical summary with a chapter on the "Signifier and Signified," the interpretative framework that governs the subsequent sections on hunt, military, and pastoral topics. The signifier is the musical means by which the topic is represented, the signified the cultural idea it represents. By adopting these terms, Monelle aligns himself with Saussure, in that he views the signifier–signified relationship as a closed one, requiring no link with reality. Instead, Monelle sees the signifier/signified as a cultural unit, carrying with it a whole range of meanings.

With Part Two, *The Musical Topic* truly begins with Monelle's illuminating study of the hunt in music. Chapter 4 focuses on the brass hunting horn, the chief signifier of the topic. Here, Monelle finds a prime example of the divide between signifier and signified, as an instrument that came of age in the eighteenth century served to conjure up images of the "heroic parforce hunt of the Middle Ages" (35). Prior to the time of Louis XIV, hunters relied on the oxhorn, a simple signaling device that was literally a one-note instrument. In contrast, the increasingly elaborate calls facilitated by the brass horn were less effective in encouraging the dogs in the chase, but infinitely preferable from the standpoint of aristocratic self-aggrandizement: "Thus, the signifier of the hunt topic was already halfway to being its own signified. It was implicated in the imaginative recreation of the hunt as a cultural unit. It may well have originated as a theatrical instrument. Such was baroque culture; the world was a stage" (41).

Monelle's admiration of Teutonic tenacity in scholarship is evident in his exhaustive cataloguing of hunting calls, from Jacques du Fouilloux's ca. 1561 manual *La Vénerie* to the Dampierre style calls of the eighteenth century. In so doing, he tracks their development from single-tone, purely functional calls, to the more elaborate triadic calls of the early eighteenth century, to the diatonic, "resolutely melodic" (56) calls of the high Dampierre style. In this final form, calls were often performed in bi- or tricinia, and were cast in binary forms imported from concert music. Because of this,

Monelle considers the earlier calls to be the main source of the hunt topic: " . . . manifestations of the hunt topic, as it appears in instrumental music, are usually much simpler, more wedded to the third-register triadic shapes of the older fanfares" (57).

The disconnect between topics and reality is a recurring theme of *The Musical Topic*, and this becomes clear in the following chapter on "Hunts Noble and Ignoble." As Monelle writes, "There ought to be no anomaly in the picture of a manly, adventurous, highly organized pursuit, associated with a style of music-making that was noisy, exuberant, and magnificent. But this was not how it was" (59). He provides jarring descriptions of the two most common types of hunting in early modern Europe: the parforce hunt and the *chasse aux toiles*. The parforce, with dogs and horsemen pursuing quarry through forest and open country, was hardly a fair fight, but the *chasse aux toiles*—in which animals were herded into enclosures and summarily executed—was brutal, wholesale slaughter.

It is therefore surprising to learn that contemporary writers held the hunt in such high esteem. To again quote Monelle:

> The noble ideals of hunting were often mentioned by writers of the eighteenth century, especially the French. The stag was a noble animal; the hunt was a scene of courage, joy, and oneness with nature; hunting accustomed a man to hardship and sacrifice; it was a training for war and a kind of substitute for military actions. Considering the decadence of the contemporary hunt, this high-mindedness may seem curious. (65)

In this sense, Monelle sees in the hunt topic a kindred spirit to the "noble horse" topic that he so faithfully pursued in *The Sense of Music*.[4] As he explains, both the musical hunt and musical horse carry more semantic baggage than their linguistic equivalents. Hunts may be noble or ignoble, and horses may be draft animals or gallant chargers. But musical hunts and horses are *always* galloping, heroic, and masculine, unless they are dysphoric, such as in Franck's *Le Chasseur maudit*. This holds true, in Monelle's view, even after actual hunts cease to bear even a passing resemblance to their musical equivalents:

> By 1900, the signifier of the musical topic was probably independent of the music of the hunting field; its aristocratic associations adhered it to ancient memories of princely huntsmen, while modern German sportsmen are generally bourgeois. The popular sport of hunting . . . is associated with jaunty hats, good beer, and healthy bank balances. It is little relevant to general culture, as little an inheritor of the noble and ritual hunt of Gaston Phoebus as the British yacht club embodies the world of the first-rate man of war. (71)

Given this divide, one might think that Monelle's thorough chronicling of actual hunts, though interesting, is somewhat superfluous; however, despite the warped perception of aristocratic hunting as a manly pursuit, the details of the hunts themselves are often relevant to musical signification. This becomes clear in the next two chapters, which conclude Part Two with an impressive chronological survey of the hunt topic in Western music. At first, musical hunts were depicted faithfully, such as the one in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, which uses a rhythm from du Fouilloux's sixteenth-century hunting manual. Monelle devotes several pages to Haydn's "Hört das laute Getön" from *Die Jahreszeiten*, which is a perfect musical account of a hunt, with recognizable Dampierre calls performed in a logical order. Here, Monelle makes an important distinction: " . . . it might almost be said that this example is scarcely a case of musical topicality; like the gramophone record of a nightingale in Respighi's *Pini di Roma*, these calls are hardly more than untreated extraneous sounds, rather than representations" (79). Leopold Mozart's *Sinfonia di Caccia* is even more picturesque, replete with musket shots, actual barking dogs, and shouting huntsmen. As Monelle dryly notes, "It is not clear where the barking and shouting should begin and end, or where the gun should be fired" (87).

Of course, Monelle is more interested in moments where topics are invoked for more elaborate reasons, and the examples become more nuanced in the Romantic era. He cites Weber's *der Freischütz* as an important stepping stone towards a more stylized topic, just when actual hunting was falling out of fashion: "To the modern listener, nothing could sound more redolent of the hunt than these horn figures; yet there is already some reason to feel that the signifier—the hunting field call—is being embroidered and romanticized. The cross-rhythms, octave doublings, and posthorn-like melodic octave figures are not typical of the field call, but evoke a picture-book hunt in an age when hunting-horn playing was in decline" (79). The depth of Monelle's knowledge of little-known repertoire is evident in his discussion of Albert Lortzing's *Der Wildschütz* (1842). He regards this comic opera as a watershed moment, since it marks the first instance where all of the horn calls are far removed from actual hunting calls: "It would seem that the signifier of the hunt topic is now an imaginary hunting horn, rather than any instrument that might have been heard in the field" (80).

Such free treatments of the hunt topic become the norm for the rest of the century. Monelle hears a conflation of military and horn call conventions in *Der Wildschütz*, which increases in Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust*, and culminates in Wagner's *Tannhaüser* and *Tristan und Isolde*. In describing the horn calls in *Tristan*, Monelle notices a trend towards a distillation of horn calls to their purest, triadic form, "But they also introduce new

features; they are elsewhere dysphoric, sounding minor triads instead of major . . . " (80). Monelle gives the sense that as actual hunts receded into history, what remained were the persistent ideas of manly heroism embedded in the topic.

The incorporation of such military-call attributes as the "ritiriton" effect of double-tonguing raises the issue of topical overlap. Monelle acknowledges moments when the line between huntsman and soldier can blur, but settles upon several features that mark a topic as specifically hunt in character: use of the horn, six-eight meter, bi- or tricinia, presence of an octave "whoop," and a lower register (84). While specifics like these lend methodological heft to Monelle's contentions, the final hunt section on the pastoral horn shows just how messy and multifarious the world of topics can be. Monelle notes the prevalence of horn passages suggesting a nocturnal forest rather than a matutinal hunt, quoting E.T.A. Hoffmann: "certain horn tunes transport us instantly to the forest" (101). He contrasts these calls, which suggest mystery, the forest, and magic, with horn calls suggesting the alphorn. Such distinctions are intriguing, but future scholars will have to further develop the inroads begun by Monelle here. Since it lacks the thorough historical evidence found throughout the rest of the book, this section reads as something of an afterthought.

Monelle's final, eloquent summation of the hunt topic occurs through an analysis of Britten's protean *Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*, in which he sees four basic manifestations of the hunt topic: alphorn, nocturnal forest horn, the classic Dampierre horn, and the hunt/military hybrid. His interpretation of the mysterious, nocturnal horn in "Elegy," based on a poem by William Blake, is the sort of criticism that Monelle's "warrior-hero" Joseph Kerman would no doubt appreciate. Showing his predilection for moments where composers transport the semantic potential of topics into wholly different realms, he writes, "the horn's mystery, at first a metonym from the forest in which the horn was played, now hints at the dark labyrinth of the mind, the death of innocence in the face of experience and sin. Both Blake and Britten are concerned with darkness, the dark night of the soul" (108).

Part Three deals with the military topic, and also begins with the signifier, or rather signifiers: marches and trumpet calls. Like the Dampierre horn, both came of age in the eighteenth century. Prior to this, armies did not march in step, and musical marches were associated with ceremonial functions, whether sacred or secular. As organized drilling came to dominate army training after the example of Frederick the Great, the military march appeared as a recognizable musical genre.[5] As Monelle points out, this coincided with an expansion of military bands after the model of Janissary

wind and percussion ensembles, sparked by a craze for all things Turkish at the end of the eighteenth century. Military bands grew even larger in the post-Napoleonic era, and often employed musicians from outside the army. As with hunting calls, military marches quickly became more about display rather than function: "Already, the signifier was mingling with the signified, and military bands became a means of invoking the cultural myth of soldierly splendor, as well as merely a part of military life" (122). By the end of the nineteenth century, most marches were essentially concert pieces in dance and trio form; one would have great difficulty actually keeping step to, for example, Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" marches.

Monelle answers concerns about the number of non-military marches in music by noting their lack of uniformity. Whereas military marches are easily identified by their brisk tempi, distinctive instrumentation, and martial character, processionals of an ecclesiastical or civic function adhere to no fixed set of rules. The funeral march is the most likely contender for independent topic status, with certain conventions established as early as Purcell's music for the funeral of Queen Mary. However, Monelle argues that these marches only really take shape at the end of the eighteenth century, and are defined more by their use in concert music rather than at actual funerals. Spurred on by the valorization of military dead in the Revolutionary era, such marches as those in Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony and op. 26 Piano Sonata evoke the world of bellicose heroes, not a functional processional. Monelle summarizes the stylized nature of such marches: "But the 'funeral march' topic was never truly *Gebrauchsmusik*; it was always an evocation. When fully fledged (in the first movement of Mahler's Third Symphony, for example) it feels monumental, immemorial. This is because of its involvement in heroic tragedy, the noble deaths of Roland and Hector, not because of any ancient pedigree of the musical genre" (130).

The next chapter mirrors the earlier chapter on the hunting horn, offering a cultural history of the development of the military trumpet. As with hunting calls, military calls were initially transmitted aurally, and only became standardized beginning with Frederick William II of Prussia's efforts towards the end of the eighteenth century. Monelle once again calls our attention to important but overlooked distinctions, notably the hierarchy between cavalry and infantry. While trumpeters, with their own pecking order from town players to guild members at court, were sufficiently regal for the elite cavalry, the infantry relied instead on the flügelhorn, with a conical rather than tubular bore. As Monelle explains, "It was the natural instrument for infantry trumpeters, since the first foot soldiers to acquire trumpet signals were the *Jägertruppen* or *corps de chasseurs*, light-armed troops recruited from huntsmen and foresters, who specialized in scout-

ing, guerilla tactics, and fighting behind enemy lines, being accustomed to woodland and rough country" (138–9). This discrepancy complicates matters, as does the fact that many infantry calls were borrowed from the cavalry. Therefore, what chiefly distinguishes infantry from cavalry calls is a lower register and mellower timbre.

In the subsequent chapter on the Military Signified, Monelle runs into a bit of trouble with some reductive statements, perhaps inevitable in so sweeping a project as his. Consider the following: "The invention of the stirrup in the eighth century permitted the use of the horse on the battlefield and created the most effective weapon of the time, the cavalry charge" (142). Alexander the Great would no doubt be taken aback by this claim, given his decisive charges at Granicus, Issus, and Gaugamela; in fact, cavalry charges predate the stirrup by over a millennium, although the stirrup revolutionized warfare by allowing the full power of the horse's momentum to be transferred to the tip of a lance. Even so, the case can be made that the primary value of the cavalry charge was psychological, inspiring terror in an opponent rather than posing the greatest threat. To his credit, Monelle points out that cavalry had been bested by infantry as early as the Battle of Creçy in 1346 (143).

Of course, this ties in well with Monelle's larger point that militarism is as much about cultural identity theater and self-promotion as it is about practical matters. The Military Signified is, like that of hunting, manly heroism, and yet Monelle sees a marked decline in actual heroism in the wars of the eighteenth century. With the rise of firearms and the concomitant decline in hand to hand combat, soldiers had fewer opportunities for personal glory on the battlefield. Additionally, the protracted, bloody campaigns of seventeenth-century Europe had given way to more limited engagements. In fact, good generals sought to avoid battle whenever possible; Frederick the Great was unsurpassed in this regard. While the chivalric idea persisted, contemporaries viewed actual armies as drunken rabble led by foppish officers (148). Again, Monelle perhaps overstates his case. It is true that "Soldiering was as much theatrical as warlike" (147) in the eighteenth century, but these battles were no doubt "memorable enough for those who took part," as the narrator of Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* notes with typical understatement. A cursory glance at casualty lists for eighteenth-century battles belies Monelle's claim that "Before 1789 . . . human losses seldom exceeded 10 percent of the force deployed" (150).

In the nineteenth century, armies greatly increased in size due to mass conscription and improved technology, allowing for the control of larger forces on the battlefield. Following the French Revolution, military service lost much of its earlier stigma, and became attached to ideas of patriotism

and nationalism. This linking of military service with national pride had reached the level of xenophobia by the end of the nineteenth century: "The absurdity of this kind of nationalism was buttressed by a new vision of chivalry, romantic, arrogant, and trivial" (151).[6] One could take issue with Monelle's characterization of Carl von Clausewitz as a proponent of the nineteenth century's expanding military-industrial complex, an opinion largely derived from the military historian John Keegan. Several scholars have questioned Keegan's claim that Clausewitz somehow advocated total war (Bassford 1994; Gardner 2009); in fact, Clausewitz was deeply troubled by the carnage of the Napoleonic Wars. For him, absolute war, far from being a consummation devoutly to be wished, was a disturbing trend to be resisted.

These minor reservations aside, Monelle's broader point about the persistence of the chivalric idea is well argued. The theatricality of military dress increased in the eighteenth century, reflected in a dazzling array of regiment uniforms. This trend peaked in the Napoleonic era, but as the nineteenth century progressed, a distinction arose between dress and undress uniforms, with the latter tending increasingly towards drab colors and camouflage. As war and military service came to involve a broad swath of the population, ideas of chivalry shifted from an increasingly cynical elite to the general public. Monelle includes a nice bit of doggerel from the Zulu Wars commemorating a selfless cavalry officer who surrenders a horse to its rightful owner, thereby ensuring his own demise. Such sentimentalities in higher literature are rare in the era of the realist novel, but old habits seem to die hard when it comes to topics. Monelle summarizes this disconnect thusly:

> The pusillanimous soldiers of the classical era, the arrogant coxcombs of Romanticism, were not objects of admiration, and presumably were not directly parts of the signification of the musical topic. Nevertheless, musicians returned continually to the military topic, almost always in euphoric vein. They expressed, not the reputation of the contemporary army, but the persistent myth of the warrior. (159)

Chapter 11 takes the same tack as the final hunt chapters, situating the military topic within music history. Monelle's impressive grasp of the repertoire again serves him, here exemplified by an intimate knowledge of march tempi and trumpet calls. For example, he is able to identify that the slow movement of Haydn's "Military" Symphony begins as a *pas ordinaire* march, until the trumpet sounds the *Generalmarsch*, at which point there is an explosion of Janissary-style instruments. Entering the nineteenth century, Monelle again sees a move from quotation towards stylization. He tracks this in microcosm across three Liszt symphonic poems: first, the *Gebrauchsmusik*

of *Festklänge*; next, the distorted marches of *Hungaria*; and finally the dysphoric "Schlachtruf" of *Hunnenschlacht*, a baleful fanfare in minor that spans far beyond the normal range of a military signal (170–71).

Even more interesting for Monelle are pieces where the military topic is stripped to its cultural resonances, with no explicit picturesque function. The brash march of Tchaikovsky's "Pathetique" Symphony is a good example of such a departure: "The topic is therefore working in its true sense, evoking its associations without the listener having to bring armies to mind" (171). Similarly, the development of Brahms's Tragic Overture includes "a kind of nocturnal march for muffled wind and bass pizzicato, a highly evocative moment that suggests an army of silent ghosts" (174). Most personal for Monelle is the appearance of fanfares in the development of Mendelssohn's Hebrides: "Somewhere in the sound of the Scottish sea, which surrounds the nation and everywhere penetrates its heart in sea lochs, is echoed the martial glory of her past" (175).

Ultimately, Monelle finds that most instances of the military topic are unabashedly heroic and lacking in irony. Mozart's "Non più andrai," the melody of which consists almost entirely of military calls, is a notable early exception, but Monelle finds few subversive marches throughout the nineteenth century: "Even Mahler's elegies fail to capture the horror of war, but merely reflect bitterly on its sad consequences" (180). Debatable though this last point may be, dysphoric marches and trumpet calls become more common in the twentieth century, such as Holst's "Mars," written on the eve of the first World War, or Britten's "War Requiem," written after the second. Nevertheless, Monelle concludes Part Three by noting the ubiquity of heroic marches from eighteenth-century Opera Seria to twenty-first-century film scores: "We may sneer at the foolish young officers, the absurd uniforms, the saber-rattling militarism, the juvenile puffery of the nineteenth century, but musical semantics shows the military theme still central to culture. For culture is infallibly mapped by musical topics" (181).

It is with the final section on the pastoral topic that *The Musical Topic* truly hits its stride. Here, with "the most profoundly mythical of all topics" (185), Monelle is free to explore a complex world of literature, poetry, and art. Given the wide-ranging nature of the topic, it is fitting that he begins with the signified, hardly a monolithic entity. Monelle begins with Theocritus's *Idylls* from the third century BC, rustic verses inspired by the poet's native Sicily. With Virgil's *Eclogues*, based on the wholly imaginary Arcadia of the Peloponnese Mountains, the pastoral had already taken on a mythic quality. The elegiac tone of these poems introduced the theme of paradise lost into the pastoral, compelling later writers to regard Virgil as a sort of proto-Christian.

Italian Renaissance writers continued this idea of lament, while introducing new dramatic and narrative genres, and an increased emphasis on eroticism in such works as Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) and Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (1589). Rather than the pastoral representing a time of simple morality, it was now equated with a carefree, hedonistic existence. Of course, these pastorals were allegories for court life and romance, and this conceit defined both the French and Italian pastorals of the eighteenth century. Metastasio returned to Tasso's *Aminta* in an effort to refine and ennoble Italian verse, retaining the genre's links with classical mythology. In contrast, the French pastoral presented an idealized version of contemporary peasant life, devoid of mythical creatures, unless one counts the fantasy of Marie Antoinette and her retinue dressed as shepherds and milkmaids at Versailles's *Petit Hameau.*

Drawing upon Pope's injunction that the pastoral should be occupied "in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries," Monelle argues "that the artificiality of pastoralism was as clear to contemporaries as it is to us" (200). In a moving section on the plight of the European peasant, he presents us with a reality nearly as grim as the hunts depicted in Part Two. Still, all of this is to miss the point for Monelle, who writes, "It is misguided to attack the pastoral for ignoring the hardships of the peasant of the time. It was not meant to have any relation to the peasant of the time" (201).

Despite its simple and natural trappings, then, the pastoral has long carried with it nobler aspirations. Nowhere is this truer than in the last two incarnations of the topic covered by Monelle, the religious pastoral and the sacred landscape. Beginning with the importance of shepherds in Scripture (Abraham, David, and, metaphorically, Jesus), he notes the particularly strong links between the pastoral and the nativity. According to the Gospel of Luke, the birth of Christ was first revealed to shepherds, and Monelle identifies a whole tradition of music making to commemorate this, especially the "pifferari" of the Abruzzi shepherds outside Rome. Monelle first sees the idea of the sacred landscape emerge in literature in the 1790s, with the poetry of the English Romantics, especially Wordsworth. In these works, God was sought in Nature, and a personal, individualized experience was sought rather than a reliance on generic tropes. Also, as Monelle points out, "The new scenery is not only northern and realistically observed, it is also subject to wind, storm, and flood" (206). In both cases, then, important differences distinguish these pastorals from rustic and classical incarnations.

Having established the major subtopics of the pastoral, Monelle next turns to the pastoral signifier in chapter 15. This is comprised of three components: instruments, the siciliana rhythm, and the principle of simplicity.

As Monelle argues, "the most pervasive signifier of the pastoral topic is the drone bass" (208) suggesting bagpipes, and he offers a characteristically thorough description of the instrument and all its variants. Two other drone instruments underscore the gulf between the pastoral and real life. First there is the "delicate little musette," stylized bagpipe of the French nobility, which, "like the brass trompe de chasse . . . demonstrates a mingling of the discourses of signified and signifier" (210). In contrast, the hurdy-gurdy or *vielle* was the actual instrument of the poor musician, favored by itinerant Savoyards. Still, the instrument was adopted by the elite, who possessed ornate versions suitable to their stature. To quote Monelle: "Thus, starving paupers were playing in the street the same instrument that occupied the most privileged in their courts and drawing rooms. Nothing could illustrate more vividly the separation of the idealized pastoral spirit from the misery of real peasants, at least in the imaginations and consciences of the wealthy" (214–15).

The siciliana, with its lilting compound meter that supposedly originated with southern Italian peasants, bears some similarities to the "pifferari" music played by the Abruzzi shepherds. However, Monelle considers it "more fragrant, more courtly" (220), another rarefied invention of aristocrats. While Alessandro Scarlatti is credited with popularizing the genre, Monelle points out that Scarlatti left Palermo at the age of twelve, and that the sophistication of his sicilianas renders them a far cry from any music he may have heard in his childhood. As Monelle writes, " . . . there were never such peasants; there was never such a style; the sweet and lilting siciliana was an invention, already an aspect of the signified" (219–20).

The third chief signifier of the pastoral is the idea of musical simplicity, whether actual or implied. Pastoral pieces are typically in major; employ simple, stepwise melodies across a limited range; avoid complicated harmonies; and rely on basic, repetitive rhythmic patterns. Of course, none of this is revolutionary; Hatten offers a more comprehensive list of pastoral traits (Hatten 1994:97–99), and Monelle himself derives his list from Hermann Jung's exhaustive study of the topic (1980). What is striking, though, is the distinction Monelle draws between these earlier evocations of the pastoral, and the nineteenth-century interest in folksong, which would define Romantic composers' approach to the pastoral. Ultimately, Monelle argues, both these "high" and "low" pastorals were illusory. "Bourgeois dreams of the *Volksseele* were disingenuous" (228); Romantics had little desire to truly get their hands dirty with the common people, and their folk sources were often distorted or, in the case of the Ossian poems, spurious (222–23). Monelle concludes the chapter with the following comparison: "The aristocratic pastoral was purely conventional, and came clean about this. The bourgeois pastoral was earnest, spiritual, and a little dishonest" (228).

The final two chapters continue the pattern of musical examples across the centuries, beginning with a number of excerpts from Baroque music. Only here the interpretations are noticeably more nuanced, due to the multifaceted nature of the pastoral. An excellent example is Monelle's comparison of the nativity scenes in Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*. The former is a picturesque "Pifa," a mimetic depiction of rustic shepherds; the latter, a sophisticated synthesis of rustic and Christian pastoral traditions. As Monelle writes:

> The cosmopolitan and highly professional Handel deploys many and various effects, derived from his experience of Italian and French music and his extraordinarily rich invention. Nevertheless, he lacks the intellectual concentration of Bach; the theological subtleties, the identification of the Christian heaven with Virgil's Golden Age, the association of the pastoral with death—this sort of thing is not a part of Handel's more public and conventional art. (234)

Similarly, Monelle offers a reading of Beethoven's scene by the brook from his *Pastoral Symphony*, which he identifies as an example of the sacred landscape pastoral. In this, he sees another example of a phenomenon he first observed in *The Sense of Music* through the simultaneous emergence of a new topic across several artistic media. Just as the noble horse in music coincided with the *galop volant* in the visual arts, so too does Beethoven's highly personalized landscape find its poetic analogue in Wordsworth's identification of the divine in nature. In both cases there is a sense of timelessness: the heavy repetition in Beethoven, the sense of repose in such poems as "Tintern Abbey." In both, one also finds a desire to convey a particular, intimate experience, with Wordsworth's use of specific dates and place names, and with Beethoven's use of distinctive birdcalls.

In contrast, Berlioz's scene in the field from the *Symphonie Fantastique* is so personal as to obscure the pastoral topic almost completely. While it contains the requisite compound meter and (initially) simple musical material, Monelle considers that "the bony textures, the bleak unisons, the general bizarrerie reveal a composer wishing to surprise, to address, to persuade, to be original" (246). Here Monelle draws a similar distinction to his earlier point about quotations versus topics: "It is a paradox that program music and topical reference are poor bedfellows. The topic always refers to a convention, to a cultural world that is much broader than the work itself. But a program tries to tell a unique story, to individualize the expression to one place, one person, one subject" (246).

Monelle subsequently turns to a variety of new pastorals, from the folksong of Schubert, Brahms, and Mahler, to Debussy's reimagining of the *fête galante* and the English pastoral of Vaughan Williams. In the first case, Monelle emphasizes the primal, *ursprünglich* qualities imputed to folksong

by Romantics, which for Brahms "lay at the root of all song composition" (252). He spends several pages on Mahler's use of folksong in his first symphony, concluding that the composer "believed that the *Volk* embodied the spirit of anonymous nature" (258). In Debussy's *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, Monelle sees the composer drawing upon the influence of the Decadent artists, who sought to rehabilitate the aesthetic of pleasure found in the works of Boucher, Watteau, and Fragonard. With the piece's evocation of the syrinx or pan pipes, Monelle sees an entirely new pastoral, one not relying on earlier signifiers. Finally, he argues that Ralph Vaughan Williams's music is so saturated with the pastoral—drawing upon English folksong, compound meters, and drones as his lifeblood—that it ceases to work as a topic: "Vaughan Williams does not *cite* the pastoral style; it is his very soul" (270–71).

In a brief epilogue, Monelle acknowledges the extended topical analyses of such scholars as Agawu, Hatten, and Elaine Sisman. At the same time, he agrees with William Caplin's critique of the applicability of topics to formal function (2005), and advocates caution in expending energy on analysis before adequately addressing a piece's topical underpinnings. It is this painstaking attention to detail in cultural matters that will likely be Monelle's greatest legacy. In *The Musical Topic*, he has opened many doors for theorists and cultural historians alike. One could apply his findings to close readings of pieces, turn to new topics with similar rigor, or continue to explore some of the sub-topics introduced here (the nocturnal horn, the funeral march). Monelle set out to map a cultural landscape, only to find that "music is, in some ways, the truest cartographer" (272); that is, myths persist in music long after disillusionment has set in elsewhere.

In summarizing the value of *The Musical Topic*'s critical apparatus, I offer an example that shows the robustness of Monelle's interpretations even when he errs in certain respects. As mentioned earlier, Monelle thinks that "Liszt's *Wilde Jagd*, though in six-eight time, probably pictures a witches' ride rather than a hunt, as I have suggested elsewhere; such a reference is a kind of 'dysphoric horse,' nothing to do with hunting" (87). There is strong evidence that Liszt was here drawing upon the same legend of a cursed hunter as that which inspired Franck's *Le Chasseur Maudit* (see Merrick 2003). While the ferocious galloping of the piece is unmistakable, one can also hear tricinia dotted horn calls throughout; this, then, is a dysphoric reading of both horse and hunt topics. What is striking, though, is how Monelle picks up on the demonic elements of the piece, even though he appears to be unaware of its likely program. To trope on Pope, then, such a criticism is actually to praise Monelle with a faint damn. As mentioned before, minor errors are inevitable in a project of this scope; what matters is how resilient his approach proves even when such errors occur.

To end on a personal note, I should mention that the news of Professor Monelle's death affected me deeply. Though I never had the chance to meet him, I have come to think of him as an old friend in the past few years. Beginning with the happy discovery of *The Sense of Music* while studying for graduate school exams, I have spent many hours admiring his musical insights, his love of history, and his encyclopedic knowledge of the Western music tradition. His thought has fundamentally enriched my love of music, and for this I am eternally grateful. It is to Professor Monelle's memory that this review is respectfully dedicated.

Notes

1. See the obituary in *The Scotsman* for more information on Dr. Monelle's life, available online at http://news.scotsman.com/obituaries/Obituary-Raymond-Monelle.6217291.jp (accessed May 13, 2010).

2. I admit that a pun was intended here, but Monelle's own words undercut my lame attempt at humor: "Strictly speaking, the military trumpet signal should not be called 'fanfare', though eighteenth-century writers are as guilty in this matter as modern" (Monelle 2000:34).

3. A good visual equivalent of this phenomenon can be found in the thirteenth-century lion fresco from northern Spain housed in New York's Cloisters museum. "Lion from a Frieze, after 1200." The Cloisters Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. Image available online at http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/31.38.1a. (accessed May 13, 2010).

4. Given the equestrian nature of hunts, and the fact that both topics are in compound meter, it is not surprising that the two frequently overlap.

5. Frederick himself wrote the "Hohenfriedberger" march to commemorate his victory over the Austrians in 1745.

6. A chilling example of this occurs at the beginning of the 2005 film *Joyeux Noel*, in which French, German, and English schoolchildren recite actual anti-foreigner poems from the pre-World War I era.

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