

## Charles Ives, a Connecticut Yankee

Kazoo chorus  
with flutes, fiddle & flageolets  
piccolos, ocarinas & fifes;

or: "I heard something else --

there are many roads, you know  
besides the Wabash."

The Unanswered Question in a clear Connecticut sky,  
a triple hammered to right,  
Columbia the Gem of Mutual Life.

Read in two voice --  
or a battle of the bands,

Giants vs. Cubs  
August, 1907  
Polo Grounds  
The Perennial Questions  
of Existence,

roughly  
& in a half-spoken way  
played as  
indistinctly as possible  
or gradually excited,

marginalia  
erasures  
scratches,

all but impossible to decipher The Camp Town Races  
in Central Park in the Dark.

Tone roads taken and not taken  
are to represent the silence of the druids in Concord.

Read in two voices  
or tap dance in black face,

Mike jaunts  
out to CF.  
Johnny at bat  
hits over Mike's head  
oboe on the mound  
ball strike ball ball  
strike  
the classic 3 & 2 rhythmic  
situation

Watchman, tell us of the night  
What the signs of promise are:  
Traveler, o'er yon Mt.'s height  
See that Glory-beaming star!

Watchman, aught of joy or hope?  
Traveler, yes: it brings the day.  
Promised day of Israel  
Dost thou see its beauteous ray?

Music not evolved but mutated  
in a sudden paroxysm of Fourth of July!  
All Hail the Power!  
All Hail the Power!

Ives, must you hog all the keys?  
Why it's just like a town meeting --  
every man for himself!

Little Richie Wagner,  
Pussy Debussy -- a Vermont December would do you in,  
Mama's boy Mozart,  
Chopin the transvestite --

Jigs gallops reels  
& for every man his own symphony  
& the space to compose it in  
for every man his own Unanswered Questions  
& his own answers in music that sounds like life.

“Stop being such a goddamned sissy!  
Stand up for fine, strong music like this  
& use your ears like a man!”

## **Berlioz Wins a Bride**

“If she for one moment could conceive all the poetry, all the infinity of a like love, she would fly to my arms though she were to die in my embrace.”

Hector Berlioz

Berlioz, the beautiful hawkman  
fell in love with the Muse in the guise of Miss Smithson, the Irish actress --  
poor Miss Smithson,  
poor poor Miss Smithson.

Berlioz pined for her unrequitedly.  
Berlioz raved for her Romantically.  
Berlioz purple prosed her drunkenly through the suburban fields of Paris,  
Chopin was concerned for him.

Berlioz saw her embrace her leading man on the stage --  
oh fickle Muse, oh fickle fickle Muse!  
Oh migraine Muse!  
Berlioz ran from the theater weeping to pen his revenge on this black lady.

High as a spiraling hawk on opiated hash  
Berlioz led her to the dock of Art  
where the ragamuffin orchestra judged her:  
catcalled its dissonant abuse  
Whore! Slut! Scarlet woman!  
While Berlioz,  
self righteous impresario of the Fantastique,  
acting as both conductor and executioner,  
dark hair wild,  
hawk eyes mad  
started the march to the noose  
with a juggle on the tympani  
and ended it with the sweet snap of her importunate neck!

But poor Miss Smithson not being Muse cold or Muse true  
being flesh and blood did yield to Hector's rude nebulosities of love  
and did marry him  
and there did die in his embrace,  
or worse yet turned into an Irish shrew  
with an Irish obsession for the booze,  
and around and around they went  
in an accelerando

each with a silver plated pistol  
making a witches' Sabbath of the marriage.

He threw her scapula to the rats  
hungry for the gory in the music;  
she threw his Tuba Mirum to a goat dressed up as the Pope  
snarling, "There's your patron!  
and here's your Muse!"  
Hitching up her skirts to the naked partita  
doing a drunken bump and grind,  
"Your inspiration, my music box!"

The two of them chopped up the instrument,  
gutted the strings,  
pulled out the keys like rotted teeth,  
hacked off the gangrened pedals  
then splintered the body  
but the thing kept playing  
and playing  
its walpurgisnacht  
its Totentanz  
until she died in the variations.

Poor Miss Smithson,  
poor poor Miss Smithson.

Let us imagine his Requiem is for her.

## Musak

somewhere in the heartland of the nation, Kansas City say or maybe Omaha there is a secret underground installation in this concrete complex buried beneath the stockyards Musak is rendered from music take a song, any song with guts and balls the white smocked Musak technicians cut it open, sluice out the guts, extract the heroic, send the remnant to a few symposia on the meaning of "love" they pump the resulting comatose thing full of strings, attach a few angel wings, shoot it up with Hollow Man, then channel to an ad man composer or poet of hymns to sing to some king driven mad, centaur being flensed, flautist having donkey ears attached to his head or great weaver of Prometheans being turned into a spider

"I think that I shall never see a poem as beautiful as a tree" is how the power of Orpheus came out of the processing plant "pity this busy monster manunkind not" the liver of Prometheus after Musak processing "still falls the rain" the last string of the lyre used as a garrote "Oh, tannenbaum!" squeaks the tiny voice of Attis from inside the tree

lobotomized Eurydice genderless upbeat schlock Semele so you boogaloo down the aisle not noticing what demon you're buying as you're shopping 101 Strings Does the Dismemberment soothes you into missing the earthquake rising from the casket beneath Kobe  
kill them kill all the songs

or at the dentist's having a root canal done on your resistance to  
aliens by the angels humming Mysterious Mountain  
kill all the songs!

or in the church where they put you to  
sleep with A Mighty Fortress so they can insert Le Sacre du Printemps up your Twentieth  
Century

kill all the songs!

or on the psych ward taking your pill of Amahl so you can still give  
your gifts to the Kings

kill all the songs! kill the poor things!  
the hawks with one wing!

give them the lead gift

they're not responsible

and did you know they have Spartacus arranged for the Mormon Tabernacle Choir? while  
Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony sings in its chains for Rogaine?

kill all the songs!

give them the lead gift in the twilight  
kill the poor things!

kill all the songs!

## Listening to Music

in the evening I drink wine and listen to music  
To Copland  
Appalachian Spring  
“tis a gift to be simple” cranked up loud enough  
so the rocks to hear it

Billy the Kid  
bad and proud of it  
broke and entered the Muses’ Bank  
made off with the Genesis account  
Shostakovich  
the Tenth to keep Stalin dead  
Vaughn Williams’ Antarctic Symphony  
“to forgive wrongs darker than night or death  
to suffer woes hope thinks infinite”  
and sing it!  
not like chains  
but like spring!  
like, it is not cold here!  
it may be cold where you are  
shivering in your poetry prisons  
but it is not cold here!

it is not cold where I have raised  
Prometheus from the bottom of Lake Nancy  
I refuse to freeze  
beneath a blanket of meekness  
in front of a dead fireplace at some church  
with the Id Monster chained in the basement

it is before in The Beginning here  
when it was good  
before Time with his scythe  
created that weeping wound  
covered by a big popple leaf

I will not repent my life  
I will not forget my wife

that I father things  
that I have spoken to all the kings  
who harden their hearts when Orpheus sings  
it is cold on the golf course  
where you hide down in Florida!  
in Harpers where the poem shivers on the page  
pawing desperately through Emily Dickinson's under things  
searching for a body  
trying to build a fire  
in the frozen slush pile

after a while the dog in your manger  
waiting for a fire builder  
will get up  
trot off through the woods  
toward the source of this music  
the real spring

## Wagner

Wagner, Mr. Marvel, decided to become a composer  
before he could play a single note  
so you know he had gall,  
balls  
with a capital "B."  
It must have been playing that angel as a child that did it.

Wagner lived off "impressionable" women for a while  
while his creditors plagued him like veritable Walkuries --  
he owes them an inspirational debt.

Early on Wagner, like Napoleon, crowned himself  
Official Musical Mutant and Composer of the Future.

It was all just in fun, of course  
to play Superman,  
steal other men's wives  
while the queer King of Bavaria  
kept you in silks, blank checks  
villas and Festspielhaus  
so you could fiddle with the Mythos  
the dead serious ostinati in the blood,  
Schopenhauer's "proto images of the world"  
and not laugh when Berlioz quipped  
"Yes, Richard, but in Paris we call that digestion, letting a little wind."

But the polemics against the Jews  
the Aryan hysterics,  
the forever Flying Dutchman of your hate  
were not "farting," Richard.

As for the Siegfried  
we were all spellbound  
by the acid trip swastikas in its eyes  
before Brunnhilde could destroy the place.