

**Re-balancing power and de-centering voices:
Everyday interpretation as critical event—the example of Penderecki’s
*Magnificat***

*Em Rabelais**

Abstract

Dominant narratives in bioethics acknowledge the harms to health that manifest from structural oppressions, yet there exists resistance to seeking or enacting solutions. Non-dominant narratives are concealed from and by dominant structures, making them known yet simultaneously veiled; a purpose of avant-garde is the possibility for unconcealment, yet expressions of avant-garde often remain inaccessible. Composer Krzysztof Penderecki’s employment of familiar, accessible modes of musical conveyance within avant-garde structures is also his critique, and this becomes even more apparent with his 1974 *Magnificat*. The radical content of reversals in the Lukan author’s messaging was packaged to be familiar to first-century audiences. Placed together, a musical avant-garde and *Magnificat* are found in recognizable forms, allowing readers to view these representations as unmasked and to focus on the work that we make the texts do for ourselves. My purpose in this paper is to explore and expose narrative reversals within Penderecki’s use of avant-garde (including his choice of texts) while investigating what that might mean for power and narrative voice. Non-dominant narratives, because they are concealed from and by dominant structures, are often not easily understood by those attuned to the dominant structures. Narrative delivery through a combination of unfamiliar (non-dominant narratives) and familiar (framing of dominant structures) techniques has potential to de-center dominating voices. In doing so, my hope is that this paper will contribute to finding understandings that straddles the fences of narrative dominance, accessibility, and accepted content.

Key words: narrative dominance, Krzysztof Penderecki, *Magnificat*, avant-garde, bioethics, health equity

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The avant-garde: *a contestation of the humanistic concept of experience and of its mediating function between body and history, the personal and cultural, but also as a radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness.*¹

Introduction: Et ait Maria | Καὶ εἶπεν Μαριάμ

Can non-dominant narratives be made more accessible to and seen as acceptable by those who dominate broader social narratives? Can the abled embrace narratives from the disabled? Can white folks embrace narratives from people of color and about the indoctrinations of whiteness? Can cisgender and heterosexual folks embrace narratives from trans- and gender non-conforming people? My answer to these questions is “yes,” and those with non-dominant narratives need not do the work of convincing those within narrative dominance. That work—toward embracing non-dominant narratives—should be done by those of us seeking to ameliorate and prevent harm to those outside of narrative dominance. Of course, with the input and guidance of those who know well their own non-dominant narratives. While I am brought here from my work in bioethics and healthcare, I think we must look outside of biomedicine for examples and approaches to understanding the impact on health from broader social narratives.²

Dominant narratives guide and rule society’s norms and mores. Non-dominant narratives skirt “below the surface” of narrative dominance. They may be unknown, but more often they are known and concealed, acknowledged and rejected by narrative dominance. Non-dominant narrative acceptability generally only occurs when approved or shaped by dominant narratives. The narrative text and the musical conveyance I discuss in this paper exist above and below *narrative dominance*. They push the limits of *accessibility*, and question what dominant narratives *consider to be acceptable* and understood content. Krzysztof Penderecki’s (b. 1933) work *Magnificat* (1974) is a musical setting of the Christian Bible’s Lukan text (Luke 1.46-55).³ Penderecki grew up in German- and Soviet-occupied Poland, has strong Catholic roots, and

¹ Ziarek, Krzysztof. *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event*. Avant-Garde & Modernism Studies. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001, p. 4.

² There are certainly calls to do this from areas within bioethics. An example includes those working on *narrative bioethics*, in which the humanities become centralized in approaches to addressing questions. This approach is not normative; for a recent “call to action” on this front, see: Manchola Castillo, Camilo Hernán, and Jan Helge Solbakk. “Bioethics and Imagination: Towards a Narrative Bioethics Committed to Social Action and Justice.” *Medical Humanities* 43, no. 3 (Sep 2017): 166-71.

³ Luke is the third “gospel” text of the Christian canon. Because authorship is unknown, I refer to “Luke” or “Lukan” by convention, rather than a specific individual/author of the text. The naming “Magnificat” comes from the first word of the canticle in the Latin translation from Greek (Μεγαλύνει). *Magnificat* (without italics) refers to the Lukan text; *Magnificat* (with italics) refers to a musical setting—generally that of Penderecki, unless otherwise noted—of the Lukan text. Biblical texts are separated into chapters and verses, where verses are generally coherent phrases that may consist of less than to more than one sentence. Luke 1.46 refers to the book of Luke, chapter 1, verse 46. See Appendix for the primary Lukan texts, including Penderecki’s Latin and my translation to English from the original Greek, found in Nestle, Eberhard, Erwin Nestle, Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. *Novum Testamentum Graece*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1999, pp. 153-54. I also consult Nestle, Eberhard, Erwin Nestle, Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. *Novum Testamentum Graece Et Latine*. 27 ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2002.

experimented within and outside of avant-garde compositional approaches. Luke's *Magnificat* is an important, and in some ways foundational, text in both eastern and western Christianity. The text connects its audience with the divine, makes and keeps its promises, and—quite important to this paper—includes reversals of power that are interpreted both metaphorically and literally. Penderecki's *Magnificat* takes on major themes contained within Luke's narrative that intersect with the purposes of avant-garde-ism, including "radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness."⁴ Penderecki addresses a musical and social problem: how do we bring non-dominant narratives "above the surface" of narrative dominance? How can non-dominant narratives be both understood and accepted? Penderecki focuses on the "radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness" in part by accessibilizing the avant-garde for his audience. *Magnificat*'s intersections of style, content, and agenda in avant-garde music raise questions about how the accessibility of the musical medium and its framed content have implications for interpretation and positioning of narratives within and around dominant structures. Can a shift in avant-garde approaches, generally seen as less accessible, help convey meanings about non-dominant narratives to broader audiences? Can this shift be manipulated such that these important narratives might thereby become accessible for those broader audiences? Is it then also possible that, in accessibilizing the non-dominant narratives in Luke's *Magnificat*, they might be brought "above the surface" and rendered acceptable?

Penderecki employs his accessibilized avant-garde compositional approach in *Magnificat* to challenge traditional readings of the biblical text and to highlight *Magnificat*'s less-discussed themes. In doing so, he exposes prophesy and paradox as elements of a non-dominant narrative in the Lukan text. Penderecki's approach to the avant-garde provides an illustration of a critique of interpretive processes as well as making this critique accessible to contemporary audiences. *Magnificat*, then, is itself a critique of the act of interpretation. Penderecki's awareness of and participation in avant-garde-ism, as well as his study of biblical and theological matter, positions him to expose and convey the avant-garde in the Lukan text.

In this paper, my first purpose is to explore and expose narrative reversals within Penderecki's use of avant-garde while investigating what these reversals might mean for power and narrative voice. A second purpose includes exploration and exposure of Penderecki, Penderecki's use of avant-garde, the Lukan text, and Penderecki's treatment of the Lukan text as an historical example. I perform the latter to bring attention to non-dominant social and political narratives. I will first discuss and contextualize Luke and *Magnificat*, followed by Penderecki and his development. The major focus of this paper is on how Penderecki employs the avant-garde in and through his *Magnificat* and what that consequently means for the Lukan text in Penderecki's world. Penderecki and his approach to avant-garde are a springboard for rethinking, reviewing, revisioning, or reforming the content's *interpretation* itself, to the extent that doing so might facilitate understanding potentially difficult-to-understand narratives. My conclusion includes suggestions for present-day non-dominant social and political narratives focused on health disparities and inequities that might benefit from similar treatment.

This paper is not a theological treatise nor focused on biblical interpretation; nor is it a musical study, *per se*. As such, I have limited my use of technical terminology in both religious and musical studies, providing brief explanations where necessary. While neither musical nor religious studies are my primary research area, I have studied both in order to prepare myself as a bioethicist: both music and religion can bring people together and tell stories that can help others understand alternative perspectives, which is a common need in bioethics. The dominant

⁴ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 4.

narratives of bioethics and health-related education and research are quick to acknowledge the profound harms to health that result in health disparities through structurally-supported racism/white supremacy, poverty/wealth accumulation, sexism, ableism, and heteronormative sexual and binary gender.⁵ These structures reinforce normativity through assumptions of whiteness, financial solvency, able-bodiedness, and heterosexuality and result in health disparities, of which there is substantial evidence. Every several years after further accumulations of this research, there are calls for additional future research and policy change.⁶ The first part of this repeated response (calls for research) is generally seen as safe and comfortable because there is no explicit challenge to structurally-supported racism, sexism, ableism, etc. The latter (calls for policy change) is not safe nor comfortable to the dominant narrative because such changes are a challenge to that narrative. Aside from occasional calls for structural, upstream fixes, most research (and funding opportunities) does not shift focus upstream to address the causes of disparities. The non-dominant narratives of those experiencing health-related harms are simultaneously accepted and rejected. Examples include: the lived experiences of persons of color, navigating society with a disability, and crossing security checkpoints as a transgender person. The harms to health are regarded as problems, yet current narrative dominance does not support actionable solutions. This is one of the concerns that brought me to this project.

Why does the dominant narrative reject action in the case of these disparities? Because addressing these disparities head-on includes acknowledging the positionality of those upholding narrative dominance. This positionality includes normative whiteness and white supremacy, able-bodiedness, and heteronormativity. For one raised within narrative dominance, and with the aforementioned positionalities, non-dominant narratives are difficult to understand. Non-dominant narratives then exist only outside the realm of possible experiences; they are seen as fantasy. The examples: White folks are generally not aware of the targeted and suspecting attention that people of color receive from police. The able-bodied are happy to include a handicap sign on a bathroom, yet neglect to provide accommodation for the heavy, and thus uneasy-to-open, door. Security personnel, such as those at airports and borders, target persons appearing outside their expectations, including gendered expectations; trans- and gender non-

⁵ For examples, see: Whitehead, Tony L. "Urban Low-Income African American Men, Hiv/Aids, and Gender Identity." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (Dec 1997): 411-47; Green, Sara Eleanor. "'We're Tired, Not Sad': Benefits and Burdens of Mothering a Child with a Disability." *Social Science & Medicine* 64, no. 1 (Jan 2007): 150-63; Jones, Camara Phyllis, Clara Yvonne Jones, Geraldine S. Perry, Gillian Barclay, and Camille Arnel Jones. "Addressing the Social Determinants of Children's Health: A Cliff Analogy." *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 20, no. 4 Suppl (2009): 1-12; Drescher, Jack. "Queer Diagnoses: Parallels and Contrasts in the History of Homosexuality, Gender Variance, and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39, no. 2 (Apr 2010): 427-60; Feagin, Joe, and Zinobia Bennefield. "Systemic Racism and U.S. Health Care." *Social Science & Medicine* 103 (2014): 7-14; Bailey, Zinzi D., Nancy Krieger, Madina Agénor, Jasmine Graves, Natalia Linos, and Mary T. Bassett. "Structural Racism and Health Inequities in the USA: Evidence and Interventions." *Lancet* 389, no. 10077 (2017): 1453-63.

⁶ For examples, see: Institute of Medicine. *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. Edited by B. D. Smedley, A. Y. Stith and A. R. Nelson. Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2003; Myser, Catherine. "Differences from Somewhere: The Normativity of Whiteness in Bioethics in the United States." *American Journal of Bioethics* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 1-11; Danis, Marion, Yolanda Wilson, and Amina White. "Bioethicists Can and Should Contribute to Addressing Racism." *American Journal of Bioethics* 16, no. 4 (2016): 3-12.

conforming persons are regular targets of security services. A further challenge to those raised within narrative dominance includes accepting responsibility for upholding their own comfortable structures; it is those structures that have led to the creation of non-dominant narratives about racism, ableism, and sexism.

Avant-garde and Luke's *Magnificat*, while created or conceptualized centuries apart, read the world in a similar way: positioning for possibilities of change through the hope of reversals of power. The positioning is performed by first-century *Magnificat* as a text, avant-garde as an approach or interpretive lens, and by those who use *Magnificat* and avant-garde, including Penderecki and me. I am situated in the twenty-first century United States and experience *Magnificat* and avant-garde through biblical, political, social, psychological, and other filters. Penderecki and I focus on *Magnificat* and avant-garde in what we make texts do for us, including aligning them to our needs, motivations, and understandings. The use of texts in this way, biblical or otherwise, is not new, and it is not always benign. Biblical narratives have explicitly been used to support settler colonialism;⁷ white supremacy and slavery;⁸ pathologization and criminalization of non-binary and non-heterosexual practices, expressions, and identities;⁹ and separating immigrant children and parents.¹⁰ Implicitly, religious texts have also been aligned to governance, as in the cases of settler colonialism,¹¹ white supremacy and slavery,¹² and abstinence-only sex education and promotion of heteronormativity.¹³ Biblical narratives thus have power, which is why I make clear my intentionality in this project.

The work I ask of *Magnificat* and avant-garde—through Penderecki—is to be presented as an example of non-dominant narratives being made understood in an accessible way for those in narrative dominance. Before addressing Penderecki's use of avant-garde within *Magnificat*, I first provide background in the next section on the two texts at play: *Magnificat* and Penderecki. *Magnificat* encapsulates themes spanning the whole of the Lukan author's texts, and I include discussions of its dominant and non-dominant interpretations to facilitate seeing how these are employed by Penderecki.

⁷ Prior, Michael. *The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique*. Biblical Seminar. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997, cf. pp. 35, 68-70, 287-88.

⁸ A primary text example includes: Van Evrie, J. H. *White Supremacy and Negro Subordination; or, Negroes a Subordinate Race, and (So-Called) Slavery Its Normal Condition, with an Appendix, Showing the Past and Present Condition of the Countries South of Us*. New York: Van Evrie, Horton & Co., 1868. Other sources: Raboteau, Albert J. *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980; Cone, James H. *God of the Oppressed*. Revised ed. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997; Marsden, George M. *Religion and American Culture*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1990, pp. 63-69, 147-52, 230-36.

⁹ Comstock, Gary David. *Gay Theology without Apology*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 1993; Drescher, "Queer diagnoses"; Greslé-Favier, Claire. "Sexual Abstinence Education and the Reassertion of the 'Biblical' Patriarchal Family Unit in the Contemporary United States." In *Pieties and Gender*. International Studies in Religion and Society, 65-82: Brill, 2009.

¹⁰ Notably, the passages cited here were also used to justify slavery: Zauzmer, Julie, and Keith McMillan. "Sessions Cites Bible Passage Used to Defend Slavery in Defense of Separating Immigrant Families." *The Washington Post*, June 15 2018, www.washingtonpost.com.

¹¹ When not explicitly aligned to biblical narratives, settler colonialism has implicitly included the narratives of "chosen people" and those who must be the example of god's expectations (with existence of such god unconsciously assumed as fact), including John Winthrop's 1630 comments to the Puritans about being "as a city upon a hill" in Massachusetts Colony.

¹² These examples are seen in the scientific and medical understandings of Van Evrie, *White supremacy and Negro subordination*.

¹³ Greslé-Favier, "Sexual abstinence education."

Texts: Magnificat | Μεγαλόναι

The first text: of Luke

The *Gospel According to Luke* is the third text in the Christian canon, which consists of four “gospel” texts depicting the life of Jesus and is followed by several other texts depicting life after Jesus’s death and includes letters seen as significant to the early Christian churches. While not placed sequentially in the Christian canon, the *Gospel According to Luke* and *Acts of the Apostles* are understood to have the same author, with *Gospel According to Luke* as the first part of the Lukan text. Much interpretive work has been done commenting upon, theologizing over, and dissecting: the Lukan gospel text alone; the Luke-Acts texts as a unit; the Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55) as a unit; and the syntax, poetical structure, verb forms, and word choice in the context of Magnificat, Luke, Luke-Acts, whether the speaker is Mary or Elisabeth, and any Hebrew Bible references within these texts.¹⁴ For this project, it is not important to understand the nuances of those interpretations, but I do think it is important for the reader to have information about how Luke and Magnificat are situated within tradition in order to understand Penderecki’s treatment of the text.

Luke has 24 chapters, with all but the first two describing the adult life of Jesus. Magnificat sits within the middle of Luke’s chapter 1, and takes place while Mary, the speaker, is visiting her older relative, Elisabeth, who is pregnant with John (later known as “John the Baptist”) and was told that her son will have a prophetic role (Luke 1.15-17). Elisabeth announces her excitement that the mother (Mary) of κυρίου μου (commonly translated as “my lord”; Latin is “Domini mei”) has come to visit her (Luke 1.43). Mary joins Elisabeth’s

¹⁴ Cadbury, Henry J. *The Making of Luke-Acts*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927. London: SPCK, 1958. Cadbury “aim[s] to deal [...] with the making of this work [Luke-Acts] itself,” p. 3, primarily in the materials available for the study of Luke-Acts and investigations of the personality and purpose of the author); Conzelmann, Hans. *The Theology of St. Luke*. London: Faber, 1960, is primarily interested in form criticism; Farris, Stephen. *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*. Sheffield: JSOT, 1985, covers origin, meaning, and significance of the Lukan infancy hymns; Creed, John Martin. *Gospel According to St. Luke: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices*. London: MacMillan, 1990, is primarily interested in literary criticism; Dornisch, Loretta. “A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke: Introduction and Luke 1: The Infancy Narratives.” *Biblical Research* 42 (1997): 7-42; Hendrickx, Herman. *The Third Gospel for the Third World*. Vol. 1, Preface and infancy narrative (Luke 1:1-2:52), Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996, “intends to pay special, though not exclusive attention to whatever may be of particular interest to third world readers,” p. vii; Reid, Barbara E. *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996, “aims to show that there is more than one way to read the biblical tradition and that it matters vitally how one reads,” p. 1, but still presents a rather traditional exegesis of Luke 1.46-55, p. 75-77; Tannehill, Robert C. *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation. Volume 1: The Gospel According to Luke*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986; Verheyen, Josef, ed. *The Unity of Luke-Acts*. Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1999, looks at unity between Luke and Acts as encountered in various subthemes; Bemile, Paul. *The Magnificat within the Context and Framework of Lukan Theology: An Exegetical Theological Study of Lk 1:46-55*. Regensburger Studien Zur Theologie. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1986, provides “in-depth theological and exegetical study of this age old hymn” p. 1; York, John O. *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke*. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991, seeks to find the purpose for Luke’s use of reversal, p. 10; Brown, Raymond E. *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*. New York: Doubleday, 1993, is “primarily interested in the role these infancy narratives had in the early Christian understanding of Jesus,” p. 7; Ringe, Sharon H. *Luke*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995; Tiede, David Lenz. *Luke*. Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988; Tannehill, Robert C. *Luke*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.

excitement with Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55; see text and translation in the Appendix). The section closes by indicating that Mary stayed with Elisabeth for three months before returning home (Luke 1.56).

On the surface, Magnificat, spoken by Mary, appears as a song of joy and thanks, praising her god as her savior. Mary speaks about past deeds that include scattering arrogant persons (1.51), bringing down rulers and raising up the lowly (1.52), and filling the hungry and sending the rich away empty (1.53). Luke's use of the Magnificat text as part of context for the entry of Jesus into the story serves as both a reminder of those past deeds as well as an announcement (or prophesy) for what should (or will) come into existence. This framing marks Magnificat as a guidepost for the audience: these events happened in the past and, because of what is happening here with Mary, will also happen in the future because of the introduction of Jesus.¹⁵

Traditional theological interpretations of Mary's visit to Elisabeth and the Magnificat generally focus on "joy, blessing, [...] and the fulfillment of divine prophesies."¹⁶ The prophesies include Mary being the mother of "my Lord," and most biblical interpreters discuss the passage's potential origin in the Hebrew Bible text of First Samuel chapter 2. In the older text, the character Hannah presents a song to which Magnificat bears similarity. Hannah presents this song just after giving birth to her son, Samuel, who eventually anoints David as king. Notably, messiah¹⁷ generally refers to a leader who is descended from David, and the Lukan author lets the reader know that the son of Mary will be a descendent of David¹⁸ and called υἱὸς θεοῦ (son of god).¹⁹ The reversals described in Magnificat have generally been understood to come to fulfillment upon the judgement of Jesus's "reign,"²⁰ which is expected to happen not in the present world, but in the experiences of a presumed afterlife. These reversals (1.51-53) are also viewed in the context of mercy (1.55), in which there is a reversal of economies in favor of generosity: "Those who are hungry get to enjoy good things, and those who are rich do not get to add to their riches."²¹

The primary theme contained in Magnificat is the imagining of another world order; imagining, steadfast both in the past and in an age to come, (eschatological) reversals of position: the rulers are brought down and lowly raised up; the hungry are filled and the rich are sent away empty. This theme is dominant in the Lukan author's agenda. Although the theme of imagining some other world order is not new, it has a capacity to be *new* or to have *new-ness*, insofar as the outcome or promised but unprecedented event that is sought in this new world order is a rethinking, reviewing, re-visioning, or reforming that incorporates some other context (such as the interpreter's contemporary circumstances). Emphases on newness and new world order, in addition to being qualities of the reversal theme, are also themes themselves shared with avant-garde art. The reification of the Lukan/avant-garde themes of new world order would exhibit newness through their actualization in the *present* or *future* world (as understood by the avant-garde)—or in the *next* world (i.e., the afterlife or the kingdom of god, as understood by the Lukan author).

¹⁵ Phrasing is my translation from: Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum graece*.

¹⁶ Tiede, *Luke*, 51-52.

¹⁷ The word "messiah" from the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ means "anointed." The Greek equivalent is χριστός ("Christ") with the same meaning.

¹⁸ Luke 1.32.

¹⁹ Luke 1.35.

²⁰ Tiede, *Luke*, 56-57.

²¹ Ringe, *Luke*, 35.

These Lukan (eschatological) reversals are a starting place in this analysis, as they have been taken and made to work for various purposes depending on which power controls the narrative (of history, economy, politics, and the like). Established and historical understandings are inescapable, as they are formative components of church, societal, and political dynamics. Examples of the interweaving of biblical texts into formative narratives include the mythologized origins of the current United States. Some of those leaving Europe because of (intra-christian and intra-church) religious differences—the Puritans, for example—came to North America to enact their own approaches to life, which included mandating education as a necessity for children. At the same time, and rarely taught in United States history courses, the Puritans were white settler colonialists who led a theocracy that had no tolerance for outsiders (or insiders who did not follow their rules), and the prioritized education was their own religious education, reserved for men. While these two historical understandings of United States “ancestry” are woven into the development of the United States, the former narrative dominates. Specifically related to the text at hand: Magnificat mentions that poverty and wealth will be overturned, and other parts of canonical Christian texts state that poverty will be persistently ubiquitous.²² As discussed, Magnificat’s description of upsetting economic, political, and other inequities are interpreted as something to happen in the next world (the afterlife). Interpretations of texts about persistent poverty are generally made about the present and future world, and such understandings have been used to justify “free market” capitalism.²³ At the same time, non-dominant approaches to these same texts interpret them as initiatives for working toward poverty eradication.²⁴ The narrative of christo-capitalism dominates while poverty eradication is given “lip service.”

Traditional approaches to Lukan interpretation act within this paper as a springboard for which to enter discussion of non-dominant understandings of the narratives (and of avant-garde). The Lukan text has these dominant and non-dominant narrative interpretations. For Luke and his immediate audience, Magnificat was important because of what it signaled was coming: the promised son of god. Two thousand years later this text is important because of its symbolic use in ritual (birth narrative for all of Christianity; liturgical text for Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches). Penderecki chose Magnificat because of these significances, but also because of how it described reversals related to Penderecki’s world and to the avant-garde. Penderecki’s approach to this text takes advantage of those conflicting understandings in order to let the text work for him, his understanding of his place in the world, and his use of the avant-garde.

The second text: of Penderecki

Krzysztof Penderecki (b. 1933) was an eyewitness to the German occupation of Poland, with Auschwitz in the backyard of his home city, Dębica, and the later communist occupation of Poland. A devout Roman Catholic as a child until age fifteen, he nearly entered the church as clergy. His teenage years included first the German occupation with the city’s Jewish population

²² See Matthew 16.11, Mark 14.7, and John 12.8.

²³ Analyses start with: Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Routledge Classics. London ; New York: Routledge, 2001.

²⁴ Theoharis, Liz, and Willie Baptist. “Reading the Bible with the Poor: Building a Social Movement, Led by the Poor, as a United Social Force.” Chap. 2 In *Reading the Bible in an Age of Crisis*. Political Exegesis for a New Day, 21-52: Augsburg Fortress, Publishers, 2015.

taken to Auschwitz or killed in Dębica and was followed by Stalinist oppression.²⁵ Beginning university in 1951, he studied classical antiquity including Greek, Latin, and philosophy. He soon thereafter entered the State Academy of Music in Kraków where he lived, studied, and composed in almost total isolation from the musical world outside of Poland. This isolation contributed to his original musical language by leaving him separated in space and time from Western compositional influences. It was not until 1956 that musical isolation from the West was fractured with a live performance of Stravinsky's *Le sacre du printemps* (1913); Bartók and Schoenberg came later.²⁶ After graduation with the highest distinction from Kraków Academy of Music, he was appointed to the faculty of his *alma mater*. To earn extra money, he also lectured at the Kraków Theological Seminary.²⁷

Penderecki's earliest works (before 1962) are sometimes seen as inaccessible—although still enjoying some success among modernist musical circles—because of their stylistically pure avant-garde approaches that include his new compositional methods. Compositionally, he describes himself as “aggressive” and rejects “the tradition that had been presented to me at the Academy. I wanted to annihilate the past. I was waiting for the occasion to demonstrate something *different*.”²⁸ Penderecki entered three works (entries were anonymous) exemplifying his compositional approach into the second competition (1959) for young composers sponsored by the League of Polish Composers. Three prize-winning works were chosen, and all three were Penderecki's.²⁹ In his first compositional phase of 1960-1974, Penderecki set aside strict avant-garde musical techniques to search for his individual niche by weaving traditional compositional approaches into his avant-garde. In doing so, he continued to search for universal themes with which to unite people and evoke a potentially more accessible “response at all times” that can transcend boundaries (geographic, cultural, and others).³⁰ In doing so, he incorporated an agenda—social, moral, political, and with his struggle toward universal values—into his music, which was initiated by his *Tren ofiarom Hiroszimy* (*Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*; hereafter referred to as “*Threnody*”) for 52 strings (1960), dedicated to the victims of Hiroshima, and *Dies irae* (1967), for those killed at Auschwitz. He understood himself as “a composer [who] had to do something for society [. . . and] that music had a very important role.”³¹ Writing about composing, Penderecki quotes writer Amos Oz:

When a man sits down to, say, compose, on the one hand he must be alert and have senses as keen as an assassin on the Night of the Long Knives, when every moment may be critical, and on the other – he must lose himself as if in sleep. If he is only alert, he will not create a work. If he loses himself completely in sleep,

²⁵ Robinson, Ray, and Allen Winold. *A Study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*. Celle: Moeck Verlag, 1983, p. 9.

²⁶ Penderecki, Krzysztof. “Krzysztof Penderecki (1933).” Chap. 43 In *Three Questions for Sixty-Five Composers*, edited by B. A. Varga, 191-95. Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, University of Rochester Press, 2011, p. 192.

²⁷ Robinson and Winold, *A study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, 9-11.

²⁸ Penderecki, “Penderecki (1933),” 192 (emphasis in original).

²⁹ Jacobson, Bernard. *A Polish Renaissance*. London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996, pp. 137-38.

³⁰ Chłopicka, Regina. “Stylistic Phases in the Work of Krzysztof Penderecki.” Translated by Władysław Grzegorz Chłopicki. In *Studies in Penderecki*, edited by Ray Robinson and Regina Chłopicka, 51-64. Princeton, N.J.: Prestige Publications, 1998, p. 55; Bylander, Cindy. *Krzysztof Penderecki: A Bio-Bibliography*. Bio-Bibliographies in Music. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004, pp. 8-10.

³¹ Penderecki, Krzysztof, and Ray Robinson. “Krzysztof Penderecki: An Interview and an Analysis of Stabat Mater.” *The Choral Journal* 24, no. 3 (1983): 7-11, 13-16, p. 9; Thomas, Adrian. *Polish Music since Szymanowski*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 180-81.

music will not be created either.³²

Although Oz is providing the reader with an example of what can occur to produce a maturely substantial work, Penderecki's compositional approach influenced the choices he made for each work, especially in the ways in which he wove the external influences (for example: Hiroshima, Auschwitz) into the musical fold.

His *Passio et mors Domini nostri Iesu Christi secundum Lucam* (1963-1965; hereafter referred to as "*Passio*") was probably the first major work that encompasses "the suffering and death of Christ, but it also is the suffering and death at Auschwitz,"³³ the "cruelty of our own age, the martyrdom of Auschwitz,"³⁴ and he adds to this list "the martyrdom of Sarajevo."³⁵ It was perhaps paradoxical to produce a successful avant-garde musical work based upon a biblical text emerging from an eastern European country in the 1960s, yet he continued to do so for many years, leading to *Magnificat* among others. Religion was forbidden in Poland, and Penderecki "wanted to do something for religion. I was raised as a Catholic, I wanted to fight against the regime, to make religion important."³⁶ Penderecki understood both his Catholicism and religion in general as important inspiration for and components of his desire for a universal humanism, which was a theme throughout his early compositions. *Magnificat* is Penderecki's final work in his first (post-student) compositional phase and was commissioned by the Austrian Radio and Television for the celebration of the 1200th anniversary of the Salzburg Cathedral. Previous centenary celebrations included commissions by leading contemporary composers, and thus Penderecki was sought for the commission.³⁷ With this work, he reached a technical impasse, as the 45-minute long piece contains forty-eight parts, and he does not think anyone "could possibly perform it without making mistakes," especially with the assemblages of quarter-tones.³⁸ Overall, the piece depicting Mary's song of joy and praise that is well-known across Christian worlds is solemnly haunting and set within the less well-known avant-garde. When listening, the music is simultaneously familiar (polyphony with some traditional harmonies) and foreign (unexpected sounds from the instruments and voices; clashing dissonances). The fifth section of *Magnificat* features two choruses singing "he brought down the rulers from thrones and raised up the lowly, he fills the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1.52-53) in uncomfortable dissonance while a separate boys' choir sings above them "My soul magnifies the lord, and my spirit exceedingly rejoiced" (Luke 1.46-47). At times the choirs are instructed to scream the phrase "and the rich," interspersed with the boys' choir reminding the audience who is bringing down the rulers and who is sending away the rich. The entire section uses the text not

³² Penderecki, Krzysztof. "My Iliad and Odyssey." Translated by Władysław Grzegorz Chłopiczki. In *Studies in Penderecki*, edited by Ray Robinson and Regina Chłopiczka, 9-11. Princeton, N.J.: Prestige Publications, 1998, p. 11.

³³ Robinson and Winold, *A study of the Penderecki St. Luke Passion*, 6.

³⁴ Tomaszewski, Mieczysław. "Penderecki's Dialogs and Games with Time and Place on the Earth." Translated by Władysław Grzegorz Chłopiczki. In *Studies in Penderecki*, edited by Ray Robinson and Regina Chłopiczka, 13-32. Princeton, N.J.: Prestige Publications, 1998, p. 19.

³⁵ Penderecki, Krzysztof, and Ray Robinson. *Labyrinth of Time: Five Addresses for the End of the Millennium*. Chapel Hill: Hinshaw Music, 1998, p. 17.

³⁶ Penderecki and Robinson, "Penderecki: Interview and analysis," 9.

³⁷ Schwinger, Wolfram. *Krzysztof Penderecki, His Life and Work: Encounters, Biography and Musical Commentary*. Translated by William Mann. London: Schott, 1989, p. 78.

³⁸ Penderecki, "Penderecki (1933)," 193; Penderecki and Robinson, "Penderecki: Interview and analysis," 7.

as the traditionally-understood song of praise, but as a warning to the rulers and the rich. Following *Magnificat*, Penderecki's second compositional phase embraced a (post-Wagnerian) neo-Romantic style that lasted approximately ten years (1975-1984) and is followed by a shift toward new sonorities similar to his style in the 1960s.³⁹

Surveying the twentieth century, Penderecki attempts to determine the current state of the arts, especially in avant-garde music. He does not see creative innovations in music, especially the avant-garde, writing that "the way to fulfillment is only through wandering around aimlessly."⁴⁰ Quoting MacKinley Kantor: "If development is conventionally shown as a straight line, as a spiral, or as concentric lines, then my output would be graphically represented as a labyrinth. The lack of an exit shows that we are progressing well. In art—of course."⁴¹ Penderecki continues, insisting that one must look for hope in paradoxes. Progress in music, for him, means moving backwards. This is his paradox as he understands it nearing the year 2000 and reflecting on the state of the arts versus a century earlier when avant-garde art was flourishing. Penderecki moved backwards by incorporating traditional compositional approaches into his works, including the movement he made toward neo-Romanticism beginning in 1975.

Paradox is evident within Penderecki's *Magnificat* in the dissociation between what the audience expects (liturgical song of joy and praise) and what they receive (solemnity and dissonance; a focus on reversals of power). The dominant and traditional narratives of *Magnificat* are not seen in Penderecki's *Magnificat*, which grabs hold of the reversals of power in Luke 1.52-53 and highlights them within avant-garde packaging. Avant-garde seeks subversion through "radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness," and Penderecki does not disappoint in redefining interpretation when the everydayness of *Magnificat* was expected. In the following section, I provide contextualization for avant-garde, how it influenced Penderecki and how Penderecki influenced the avant-garde, and how the Lukan text situates with Penderecki and avant-garde.

Avant-garde

This paper is not about (biblical or musical) interpretation, nor specifically about the avant-garde. My intention in this paper is to find a critique of (biblical or musical) interpretation *through* an accessibilized avant-garde in order to deliver a particular non-dominant narrative understanding (*Magnificat* as usurper by hoped-for reversals of position) to an audience that lives within the dominant narrative (*Magnificat* as liturgical and traditional song of joy and thanks). I am exploring how one experiment (*Magnificat*) "bear[s] critically upon the issue of modern"⁴² (biblical and musical) interpretation and how it delivers its packaged non-dominant narratives within the vehicles of dominant narrative and accessibilized avant-garde. Thus my focus in this paper is on the radical content (reversals of position) within a familiar text (*Magnificat*) via accessibilized avant-garde compositional techniques, which are products of Penderecki's motivation for promoting humanism. Both the Lukan text and avant-garde divulge something new: *Magnificat* and the Lukan author focus upon the coming arrival of the "son of god" and that event's consequent reversals of power; avant-garde shows the audience something in a way they hadn't seen before. This uncovering of an event or experience, as a part of avant-gardism, "radically departs from the dominant conceptions of modernist art: art for art's sake,

³⁹ Penderecki, "Penderecki (1933)," 193-94; Penderecki and Robinson, "Penderecki: Interview and analysis," 9.

⁴⁰ Penderecki, "My Iliad and Odyssey," 10.

⁴¹ Penderecki, "My Iliad and Odyssey," 10.

⁴² Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 3.

formalism, art as a sector of culture, [and] artwork as a commodity.” The avant-garde approaches art, as Ziarek understands it, “as the temporal event of unconcealment.”⁴³ This uncovering of art, an event, or an experience in a way that deviates from dominant narratives itself aligns with the Lukan author’s purpose in showing the world something new. The profound growth of avant-garde in the first half of the twentieth century, as well as Penderecki’s use of avant-garde, is a “response to the crisis of the humanistic concept of experience.”⁴⁴ Penderecki’s overarching concerns at that time included humanism and experience. His choice of text (*Magnificat* with its reversals of power) and use of accessibilized avant-garde in *Magnificat* is an example of how he uncovers his narrative and positionality (Catholic, Polish, concern for avant-garde and humanism) within *Magnificat* itself.

Defining avant-garde

Kostelanetz—a writer, artist, and critic of the avant-garde—first defines *avant-garde* as its original use, being “those out front, forging a path previously unknown, a road that others will take. Initially coined to characterize the shock troops of an army, the epithet passed over into art.” He continues:

Used precisely, avant-garde should refer, first, to rare work that on its first appearance satisfies three discriminatory criteria:

It transcends current esthetic conventions in crucial respects, establishing discernible distance between itself and the mass of current practices; it will necessarily take considerable time to find its maximum audience; and it will probably inspire future, comparably advanced endeavors.

Only a small minority working within any art can ever be avant-garde; for once the majority has caught up to something new, whether as creators or as an audience, those doing something genuinely innovative will, by definition, have established a beachhead someplace beyond.⁴⁵

This analytical definition of the descriptor *avant-garde* seems to be Kostelanetz’s benchmark for determining how true an artist is to the category. He says of Penderecki, as he “gained recognition, his music became slickly pretentious, if not simplistic and derivative,” also crediting Penderecki with several innovative avant-garde techniques, and concludes that “it is unfortunate that such innovative intentions do not always produce comparably innovative results.”⁴⁶

Penderecki’s use of the avant-garde is not as pure, according to Kostelanetz as, perhaps, predecessor Schoenberg or contemporaries Boulez or Cage (1912-1992). For this reason, Kostelanetz potentially does not appreciate what Penderecki has to offer to the field. On quite a different level, Ziarek defines *avant-garde* (impulse) as signifying:

⁴³ Ziarek takes this definition of avant-garde art from his understanding of Heidegger’s approach to art. Apocalypse, from the Greek *αποκαλυψις*, literally means “unveiling” or “uncovering.” The title of the last book in the Christian canon is *Αποκαλυψις Ιωαννου*, translated to English as “Revelation to John,” and it contains prophetic revelations of eschatology. I investigate prophetic and eschatological aspects of this material below.

⁴⁴ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 3-4.

⁴⁵ Kostelanetz, Richard. *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes*. 2 ed. New York: Routledge, 2001, p. xix.

⁴⁶ Kostelanetz, *Dictionary of the avant-gardes*, 471-72.

a project of rethinking and reinventing the everyday “poietically,”⁴⁷ which questions the representation of the everyday within ordinary language practices and common knowledge, on the one hand, and the techno-scientific logic of representation, on the other. Avant-garde poetry reformulates and redesigns the structures and vocabulary of everyday discourse in order to bring into light what I call the poietic dimension of the everyday.⁴⁸

Ziarek considers the avant-garde to be “a radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness.” He means that avant-garde is a means by which one is able to *re-design* or *re-designate* what and how one knows or sees or feels or experiences. The avant-garde does not just take up humanistic conceptions or mediate “between body and history;”⁴⁹ it also attempts to shake someone out of their own self, out of one’s own ego-invested consciousness, in order to introduce the greater socioculture in which one exists. Although a person is living in the *now* with regard to their conscious self-awareness, the avant-garde removes that state and investigates what one is doing in that state. Avant-garde poetry can be writing poetry about the (process of) writing of poetry. Avant-garde painting can be painting about painting or a painting that reminds you it is a painting. The avant-garde in music (perhaps music composed about composing music) moves beyond traditional harmony, melody, etc. The avant-gardists push their audience beyond what has or could be classified as normative and/or comfortable in order to persuade the audience to perceive differently. Placed in “the context of everydayness,” as Ziarek puts it, the avant-garde attains a level of accessibility, in which those unfamiliar with the techniques used by avant-gardists would then be able to understand the purpose of the avant-garde in the context of what is being avant-garded.

Prophetic aspect(s)

Is avant-garde an altered state of consciousness? Might it play the role of altered state of consciousness or altered reality, as in the workings of a shaman?⁵⁰ Might it be a form of prophecy? Avant-garde does exist in spaces outside of (in front of?) convention. In Luke, prophecy is being fulfilled in the now and points toward desired change in the future. The Lukan narrative places the reader in the midst of the prophecies of an approaching era, where and when such prophesy is presently being fulfilled. The passages at the beginning of Luke signal an end to prophecy by its own fulfillment: angelic message to Elisabeth that her son John (later known as “John the Baptist”) will hold a prophetic role (1.15-17); Mary will have a son who is a descendent of David and will be son of god (1.31-33). The texts position a coming *newness* at this end in the culmination of the prophecy’s fulfillment: Mary’s song Magnificat depicts reversals of economic, social, and political positions (1.46-55); Zechariah, husband of Elisabeth and father of John, regains his ability to speak with a song that builds upon the Magnificat and has a focus on mercy and salvation, reinforcing John’s role as prophet for new things that are to

⁴⁷ By *poietic*, Ziarek says it “does not signify here an aestheticization of the ordinary, a simple flight from its ‘reality,’ but, instead, an attempt to rethink the everyday through a reinvention or a ‘recreation,’ as Gertrude Stein calls it, of poetic language.” Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 6.

⁴⁸ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 6 (my emphasis).

⁴⁹ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 4.

⁵⁰ See Ashton, John. *The Religion of Paul the Apostle*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 29-72; Goodman, Felicitas D. *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 137-42.

come (1.67-79). The avant-garde is obsessed with the fulfillment of ideological persuasions (such as with: Marxism, utopianisms, humanism). Avant-garde's prophetic-ness seeks to provide an alteration to current world order. In addition, avant-gardists identify with themselves as a sign of change; as soon as an avant-garde achieves success, it is replaced by a new avant-garde, simply because the avant-garde cannot be popular—by definition. The prophetic nature of the avant-garde as it plays out in *Magnificat* is what I find so interesting, especially since it is consciously apocalyptic: envisioning a new world order, an upside-down-ness of the current order, and an end to what is now.

Avant-garde art is prophetic; it prophesizes. Part of its expression of prophesy is toward utopian ideals, which are also present in Luke's text and Penderecki's goals. Penderecki chose Luke's texts for both his *Passio* and *Magnificat*, and both texts contain these themes of prophesy for a sought-after utopia. In this case, the avant-garde is not just a critique of the content; *it is the content itself*. With *Magnificat*, Penderecki is not only re-wrapping a song of joy and praise—that, yes, may have theological implications for a comforting son-of-god prophesy—into a to-be-understood “radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness.” He is also using his accessibilized avant-garde music to directly point to the content whose meanings—if those reversals of position were taken literally and packaged together with the comforting son-of-god-prophesy—would actualize “a radical redefinition of experience in the context of everydayness.” Penderecki's musical packaging is avant-garde (and prophetic); *Magnificat*'s content is also avant-garde (and prophetic). Even while leaving strict avant-garde composition behind, Penderecki retains the purposes of avant-garde, incorporating elements of musical tradition and still conveying a similar message. His success in doing this comes in part from joining with and highlighting the avant-garde of *Magnificat*.

Penderecki's musical avant-garde

The avant-garde in European music is many things. Probably begun by serialism in the early twentieth century, it grew to include the use of many musical tools, including atonality (music organized without reference to a central note or key), microtonality (exploration of intervals smaller than one half-tone), tone clusters (several tones played at once), and others.

Penderecki's early compositional career consisted of creating primarily true-to-form avant-garde works, the most famous of these being his *Threnody* (1960). In *Magnificat* and other works he combines avant-garde techniques with more traditional styles of composition, such as contrapuntal lines (independent, melodic phrases occurring at the same time; of which there are as many as fifty-five in *Magnificat* at one time) and pockets of harmonic tonal clusters.

Penderecki describes his use of avant-garde in his compositional history with quotations from Julian Klaczko (political commentator and critic, who is paraphrasing Goethe):

that “just as in literature, so also in the life-story of every eminent human being, we can see the epoch of the Iliad and the epoch of the Odyssey.” The first is the “period of youthful heroism,” “the epic of struggle,” and the second is the “period of manliness and the search for the return,” the “epic of tired age and

nostalgia for home.”⁵¹

He continues, “I also have my Iliad and my Odyssey. For me, Troy was the avant-garde, the era of youthful rebellion and faith in the possibility of changing the way of the world through art. The avant-garde offered the illusion of universality,”⁵² the mythos of apocalypse. As the composer progressed in his compositions, he gradually began both phasing out avant-garde compositional techniques—including the hegemonic serialism—and incorporating techniques from early compositional traditions, emerging electronic music, and sonorism.⁵³ Penderecki states that it was not until *Cosmogony*,⁵⁴ at the beginning of the seventies, however, did I manage to free myself of that utopian faith in the possibility of building “one great family of man,” which was an equally important element in avant-garde doctrine. Of course, it was hardly my intention—even as I sought inspiration in tradition—to become a traditionalist. [...] This is the moment where my Ulysean adventure begins, which “through travails, dangers and pain travels toward the lost Ithaca,” my Odyssey, in other words, the creation of my own way, the search for the center.⁵⁵

One of Penderecki’s most complex works, *Magnificat* came just after this transition point in 1974, a zenith in the beginning of his “search for the center.” As mentioned above, it incorporates elements of traditional compositional techniques which provide “an opportunity for overcoming this dissonance between the artist and the audience.”⁵⁶ What Penderecki is speaking of here (one of his intents at least) is not in favor of pure avant-garde music. If it were, a connection between the artist and audience would not be a (primary) concern; though, by creating this opportunity, he has provided a possibility for the audience to engage and recognize his agenda. It is during this compositional stage of Penderecki’s career that he begins to retreat from the technical significance of the avant-garde and to transition to something that includes the theoretical, timing, and paradoxical aspects of the avant-garde. Penderecki considers his work to be “a homogenous alloy resulting from a unifying experience,” and in many ways considers himself to be a “hybrid.” He was tempted by “many styles,” the “polystylistics—so fashionable now—[that were] already present in the *Passion* and *Matins* [*Utrenya*],” which reflects his hybridity: being from the Eastern Marshes of Poland, an Armenian grandmother, German grandfather, and being always attracted to Orthodox liturgy yet fascinated by “Western culture and its rationalism, and also by its capacity for expressing the most complex states and feelings.”⁵⁷ As such, he chose *Magnificat* as the text for his commission to write for the 1200th anniversary of the Salzburg Cathedral.

Penderecki’s Magnificat. *Magnificat* as an element of liturgy is placed near the end of

⁵¹ Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 15.

⁵² Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 15.

⁵³ Thomas, *Polish music since Szymanowski*, 165, 179-80.

⁵⁴ This oratorio-style work (like *Passio* and even *Magnificat*) was composed for the United Nations in 1970. He originally intended to set the music to writings of Copernicus, but altered the subject matter to that concerning “Heaven and Earth, as treated in literature, theology and science. Three soloists (soprano, tenor and bass) and the chorus sing these words in their respective original languages: Latin, Greek, Italian, Russian, and English. Penderecki studied countless volumes of relevant literature before selecting his text from the Book of Genesis, the *Antigone* of Sophocles, from Lucretius and Ovid, Nikolaus von Kues and Copernicus, Leonardo da Vinci and Giordano Bruno, and the first astronauts in space, Yuri Gagarin and John Glenn.” Schwinger, *Penderecki: his life and work*, 61.

⁵⁵ Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 16.

⁵⁶ Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 16.

⁵⁷ Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 17.

vespers (evening prayer) in western Christian liturgies and is also incorporated into matins (morning prayer) in eastern Christian churches. It has a history of musical interpretation at least as early as the sixth century. Since then, Magnificat has been given monophonic settings (single voice; before ca. 1450), polyphonic settings (multiple voices; ca. 1450 - ca. 1600), and almost all genres that have since evolved. Although Penderecki's is not written as part of a vespers, it does retain liturgical form, in that it concludes with a doxology (liturgical praise to god).

Magnificat displays an attained stylistic maturity for large orchestral-choral works and was composed after other works for chorus and orchestra. These include his *Passio* (1963-65; which was one of the first works in which he began incorporating elements of traditional musical composition within his avant-garde style), *Utrenya I and II* (Matins; 1969/70, 1970/71; liturgically complementary to *Passio*), and *Cantium Canticorum Salomonis* ([Song of Solomon] 1973; "It is in this work Penderecki greatly refined and enriched his technical vocabulary and expressive style in the sphere of music for chorus and orchestra. This attempt was brought to fulfilment in the *Magnificat*."⁵⁸) In addition to symphony orchestra, it demands a seven-part male vocal ensemble, a boys' chorus, bass solo, and two mixed choruses. The work is divided into seven sections: I: Magnificat anima mea...; II, Fuga: Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae...; III: Et misericordia eius...; IV: Fecit potentiam... (bass solo); V, Passacaglia: Deposuit potentes de sede...; VI: Sicut locutus est; VII: Gloria.⁵⁹

Briefly, my reading of the text *Magnificat* is that much of the work, but especially the opening statement, is dense with tension, and the entire work embraces solemnity. This latter aspect might contribute prophetic-ness to this song of joy.⁶⁰ The second section, a fugue, sounds as if the singers are crying in the midst of the thanksgiving statement. The third section ("and his mercy is for those fearing him") is a slow, forward-moving cycle that introduces the bass solo ("he made strength in his arm; he scattered the arrogant in the thought of their hearts"), which leads into the energetic Passacaglia with a marching beat that drives the chorus, singing eschatological statements (a place switching the rulers and the lowly, the hungry and the rich). As is typically set, the piece ends with a doxology, in which the orchestra dances. Penultimately, the chorus sings on all twelve tones ("et in saecula saeculorum" | "and in ages of ages" or, commonly, "world without end") before the "Amen" in unison. Throughout the piece, and outside of the few instances of traditional harmony, the listener is presented with clashing dissonances and unexpected sounds from the instruments and voices while simultaneously feeling as if they are being pulled through the music.

Perhaps one of the most powerful aspects of the piece is the multiple restatement of the "Magnificat anima mea Dominum" theme, sung by the boys' choir in section V, Passacaglia, a repeat of whom was doing the creating and destroying for this new world order. The theme is sung above (resembling a *cantus firmus*) the rest of the choir and orchestra while the choir sings the following reversals: Luke 1.52-54, "He brought down the rulers from thrones and raised up the lowly, he fills the hungry ones with good things and sent the rich away empty. He assists his

⁵⁸ Schwinger, *Penderecki: his life and work*, 226.

⁵⁹ My primary sources for the score and audio recording of *Magnificat* included: Penderecki, Krzysztof. "Magnificat: Na Bas Solo, 7-Głosowy Męski Zespół Wokalny, 2 Chóry Mieszane, Chór Chłopięcy I Orkiestrę Symfoniczną." Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1980; Penderecki, Krzysztof. "Symphony No. 2 'Christmas Symphony' : Te Deum ; Lacrimosa ; Magnificat ; Kanon." London: EMI, 2001.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Polish music since Szymanowski*, 186.

servant Israel to remember mercy.”

Magnificat’s narrative manipulation. Music is often dependent upon and derived from human speech. Being so, it is at times an attempt to convey narrative. *Magnificat*, in its use of avant-garde and traditional compositional techniques, is uncoupling the narrative (of the content) from its received (established) emotion. Understanding Mary’s words as joy and praise is safe. The audience (and religious practitioner) knows *Magnificat* is safe because of the joy and praise. Luke 1.52-53 (reversals of position) is interpreted as safe because the reader identifies themselves as “the lowly” and “the hungry.” Penderecki’s avant-garde exclaims: *You are no longer the lowly and hungry; you are the rulers and the rich. These reversals speak from the future when this world’s rulers are brought down and this world’s rich are sent away empty.* Viewed with avant-garde, *Magnificat* is no longer safe. By doing so, Penderecki is composing the piece almost in a more raw form so that it is enough like familiar music that the audience will listen to it, but enough unlike that it creates a listening experience akin to pain or severe unease. The dissonance, instruction for singers to scream, and the rare lack of dissonance are not just present in *Magnificat*; their employments are strategic in working with the text. This makes the music very much like what the content is about: the reversals of power were not (and for the current audience, will not be) comfortable. *Magnificat* as comfortable and safe (joy and praise) makes it a ballad, pop song, or some form matching liturgical expectations: a musical construction that is more familiar and comfortable to Western ears. Creating music as Penderecki did—music that is representative of its content—is perhaps why the audience rioted at the premiere of Igor Stravinsky’s (1882-1971) ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* in Paris in 1913.

Penderecki’s avant-garde, in addition to participating in interpreting itself (the composing of music), attempts to make present and understandable events and experiences that are phenomenal. For example, in his first important work, *Threnody*, the fifty-two strings play their highest notes, shrieking, crying, twittering, shift by quarter tones, explode in dissonance, etc., attempting to make real the terror and terrible atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Penderecki’s avant-garde wants to express potentially raw and dangerous unprocessed emotion. The Lukan text’s focus is about another kind of terror that plays out in reversals of power. The point of the passage is power: power wielded, power dealt, power withheld, power desired, and reversals because of that power. The terror here is for those who sustain current social, political, and economic structures. In this section of the music (Luke 1.52-53; *Magnificat* section V: passacaglia), Penderecki creates a sense of anger that is satisfied only because of justice meted through the reversals of power. Penderecki is giving voice through his accessibilized avant-garde to that which has not been done, said, or explicitly named in traditional interpretation of *Magnificat*. Incorporating tradition, he is showing his audience that a truth itself is the thing that one cannot ever name, using the cliché to make it attractive: because this is where life is at the end, represented by one in a “low condition,” who is knee-deep in pregnancy before marriage and holding a bomb. This bomb is not for liturgically-minded thanks and praise. This is a bomb not for destruction—at least not for its beneficiaries—but for radical reconstruction and change. Penderecki set up *Magnificat* within his avant-garde to ask “the lowly” and “the hungry” to take it and *do* it, now that this bomb is in a form they can understand. This is also Ziarek’s avant-garde, questioning “the representation of the everyday within ordinary language practices and common knowledge.” The *Magnificat* is powerful, radical; people cry when they hear it. If it is re-packaged into a recognizable, actionable form, then someone can take it and *do with* it; one can focus on the work that we make the texts do for ourselves. The avant-garde itself holds a

certain amount of power. It is rare, it is complex, its language is unknown, it is sometimes undecipherable, and it is inaccessible. Conveyed in a more accessible form (than with strict avant-garde techniques) to one unfamiliar with the rarified form of avant-garde, then that one can do something with it. Krzysztof Penderecki is conscious of the setting of the text. He is conscious of meaning(s) in the text. He is also conscious of what work he can make the text(s) do for him.

The avant-garde is when the shaman leaves this reality and enters another, not because of delusion or hallucination, but because they are the one who experiences another way of doing or of being and relays that experience to their community.⁶¹

Penderecki had “reached a point where opening the door behind us is the summit of creativity.”⁶² To be avant-garde is one thing. To take the purpose of avant-garde-ness and expose it to the world in a manner that the world can understand is another. The latter is where Penderecki began to venture beginning in the 1960s and 1970s.

Critiquing avant-garde

As mentioned above, it is necessary to critique avant-garde-ism itself (as a text) in order to fairly create a language suitable for discussing both biblical texts and the avant-garde together. The first critique is issued by Penderecki himself in *Magnificat*. He is critiquing the avant-garde even while providing his interpretive critique of the Bible (or a biblical pericope or biblical interpretation itself). The interweaving of musical tradition—elements of plainchant, polyphony, etc.—into the avant-garde work is critiquing *avant-garde itself* by indicating that it alone is not (or, no longer is) effective. For example, John Cage created a piece “4’33” (1952), calling for four minutes and thirty-three seconds of the performer playing nothing.⁶³ Not all who engage “4’33” process through Cage’s meaning or the work of the text, including what Cage intended or otherwise. In many cases, as in the first performance of “4’33”, anger and/or misunderstanding is the reaction, because the performance goes against the satisfaction of expectations. There was nothing for the audience to hold on to. What was the purpose of the audience for Cage with this piece? He did want it to be observed, but not for silence, as we generally cannot escape sound. Cage offered nothing to the audience to be able to understand his purpose, and there is nothing wrong with his avant-garde in “4’33”, yet Cage approaches avant-garde differently than does Penderecki. Penderecki’s incorporation of familiar, accessible modes of musical conveyance, while still maintaining an avant-garde frame and foundation, is the critique: *Now you can hear this. Now you know what I’m saying. Now you can both encounter the music and take the radical avant-garde message.* Penderecki is, in a sense, helping the audience to be able to access reversal and newness in the text by letting the text perform the work he wants it to do.

Penderecki’s use of avant-garde and biblical texts reflect upon his choices (accessibilized musical avant-garde compositional techniques; a biblical text with unbalanced dominant and non-dominant narratives), as well as the acts of interpretation themselves: interpretation of interpretation, as well as that of the avant-garde medium. The critique that the avant-garde provides is constructive, somewhat centered on an increased awareness of the subject matter

⁶¹ Ashton, *The religion of Paul the Apostle*, 29-72.

⁶² Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 24.

⁶³ The most well-known performance is the first, consisting of the pianist sitting at a piano for the timed duration, turning the pages of blank score without playing a note.

being placed in avant-garde form. In addition, because avant-garde is a movement beyond aesthetics (art for art's sake), then one is able to "locate the critical importance of the avant-garde beyond the idea of a promised future utopia."⁶⁴ Ziarek's words counter previous understandings of avant-garde by shifting its purpose beyond a generally primary theme (that of [future] utopia). Critiquing the avant-garde itself is difficult since it is "ahead of and differentiating itself from the presence, identity, and signification to which it has always already submitted itself."⁶⁵ Since avant-garde is outside of the narrative, aiming to be outside of a history of interpretation, critique can very easily point to this as a flaw. Yet there are no set standards for which to judge the avant-garde work. A critique then to add is that the avant-garde only works when the history it is addressing is not forgotten. The history (of biblical interpretation, of musical composition, of poetic contributions, of narrative formations) is the reason for its creation; there would be no need for avant-garde if there were no culmination of these histories. The avant-garde inserts itself when present understandings of a given history are comfortable and comfortably leaving out its non-dominant narratives. The avant-garde must keep account of this, otherwise the purpose is lost. If deriving something new is the only angle without regard to what is old, then avant-garde is not doing its work.

The avant-garde in Luke's text

The avant-garde conveys representations that are new. It does so by radically disrupting expected proportions and patterns. The medium is thereby conveying something about these patterns and disruptions themselves.

The avant-garde is enacting something that the Lukan text intends to narrativize. Luke frames a story in text, while the avant-gardist does so through art. Luke conveys an expected (future) reality, and the avant-garde (re)places forms through art (including texts) to enact such futures. Krzysztof Penderecki himself binds these media in a bundled message. He uses and disrupts musical abstraction to convey his point about this story from the past that points toward a future reality while technically pushing his avant-garde language (also future-focused) to its extreme. He performs the abstraction (in his music, in *Magnificat*), but makes it familiar enough to draw in the observer, while also leaving it alien enough to keep the observer knowing how strange it is.

In the Lukan text, we see something similar. The author provides the audience with a narrative framing, the first part of Luke-Acts details the life of Jesus from before birth to just after his death. Within the first canticle of the infancy narrative, Magnificat explicitly portrays the Lukan reversals that become evident in the remainder of the text. First, those "fearing" god will be given mercy, whereas those who are "arrogant" will be "scattered" (1.50-51). Then rulers and the ruled will switch places (1.52), and the hungry will have good things while the rich will be left without (1.53). The upside-down-ness of these images are reifications of avant-garde themes, a potential understanding of the universalism that Penderecki strove for during this phase of his work, and in some ways even a critique of actualized communism as economic (centralized wealth and extensive poverty) and political (centralized, unshared power) systems. Examples of these reversals are prevalent throughout the Lukan text: the son of god was born of an unwed woman in a feeding trough (2.7); Jesus wins the temptation contest by refusing to do anything (4.1-13); Jesus (as messiah) is rejected at Nazareth in the year of the Jubilee (4.14ff.); the poor will have the kingdom of god, the hungry will (again) be filled, those weeping will

⁶⁴ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 299.

⁶⁵ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 299.

laugh, those who are hated are blessed, the rich and those in good social standing are in for trouble, the full will be hungry, and those laughing will be mourning and weeping (6.20-26); and a woman who was a sinner was forgiven of her sins (by Jesus) while Pharisees who invited Jesus to dinner were not (7.36-50). The theme is evident in many of the parables, and the ultimate reversal in the text is that the gentiles become the inner circle.

In history or the present, the hungry (collective) have not been filled, the rulers (collective) have not been dethroned, the rich (collective) have not lost all, and the only scattering of the arrogant (collective) is throughout the world. The images that are evoked by both the Lukan author and the avant-garde have not come to pass. Their purpose (for now) is to provide the vision for a paradigm shift. Penderecki's audience expected his *Magnificat* to convey joy that is evident in the words being sung, but it did not. Penderecki's avant-garde and focus within the piece, especially on the reversals of power, allows the music to bring these other possible events and experiences into focus. Initially one might suspect that he is foreshadowing the future suffering and death of the main actor's (Mary) future child (Jesus), but it is more likely that the tone of the work reflects the so-far failed appearance of the promised reversals and newness.

Avant-garde for Narrative Formation

Luke was constructed to be familiar. Palmer Bonz theorizes that the text was composed with "characteristics of the Septuagint"⁶⁶ as well as "elements of Greco-Roman epic structure and dramatic presentation," and intended to be the foundational epic for the then-burgeoning community.⁶⁷ If the genre was already familiar (in works such as *Aeneid*) then the radical content of Luke would become more accessible to the Lukan audience. Messages within Luke's text contain avant-garde themes, themes of newness that—should they come to fruition—are new. This being the case, the literary genre acted as a carrier for the message(s), which was necessary in order to make the radical message more accessible.

In the same way that avant-garde poetry is writing poetry about (the process of) writing poetry, the Lukan author is, in part, writing about writing and narrativizing about narrativizing.⁶⁸ The avant-garde pushes the audience beyond what has or could be classified as normative and/or comfortable. The audience listened to (or read) the story, and was able to do so because of its familiarity—not just because of the familiar themes contained within the text, those evident in the Hebrew Bible and other traditions, but also because of the familiar genre: that of foundational epic. Contemporary audiences read (or listen to) the story because of its familiarity in their given social and cultural contexts. These contexts provided relevance for Penderecki's choice of the Lukan text. Furthermore, the text's familiarity created a greater ease for the audience in accepting an avant-garde setting.

The avant-garde can be important as a tool for formative or interpretive events because of its ability to examine formation and interpretation as they are happening: to critically examine formation and to interpret interpretation; to expose the acts of formation and interpretation; to

⁶⁶ Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible.

⁶⁷ Bonz, Marianne Palmer. *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000, p. 29.

⁶⁸ If the author is in fact copying the literary genre of one such as *Aeneid*, then the author is writing (an epic) about writing (an epic), although the Lukan author was not necessarily writing with that explicit purpose.

separate the subject matter from dominant threads in its history of interpretation; to capture the events of formation and interpretation for examination; to provide possibilities of *reformation* of interpretation; to provide a *re*interpretation of both the subject matter *and* the events of formation and interpretation themselves; and to release the events of formation and interpretation to continue their work. Interpretation through the avant-garde separates the Lukan text from its history of interpretation; likewise, Penderecki's musical language and formation through the avant-garde separates *Magnificat* from its own history of interpretation.

The avant-garde aids in creating an experience in which an event (formation, interpretation) can exceed the bounds of representational thinking (such as traditional Euro-American versions [systematic or otherwise] of interpretation).⁶⁹ The experience of that event (the processes of formation and interpretation) goes beyond what it is to interpret a biblical text or other narrative, leaving that process to be less defined by words (which are, along with the processes of formation and interpretation, trapped by the history of narrative) and more open to a reconsideration of the process and not necessarily just the event.

The avant-garde, when used as a critique of interpretation, captures the interpretive event for, among others, three purposes before releasing it. The first is to provide investigation of that event for the purpose of understanding. What it is, why it is being done, in what manner it is being done, identification and appearance of one's biases, how one's sociocultural and political locations affect interpretation, how and in what manner one's interpretation might affect their immediate positionality: essentially, finding awareness of what is being enacted and for which purpose(s). This initial purpose of the avant-garde as critique of interpretive events is a challenge to the audience (and even the work's creator), and one that may never be actualized. Biases and positionalities are unconscious, and the right kind of work is required for a person to be able to even momentarily disrupt their learned thinking and worldview to become aware of an unconscious bias or positionality. For the avant-garde, working toward but not achieving actualization of this first purpose might be satisfactory. The second purpose is to allow for the *reformation* of the interpretation. Just as the avant-garde is, in itself, a radical revision of experience, and the element of reversal in the Lukan text is a radical revision of experience, the notion of *re-forming* one's understanding of interpretation becomes a radical revision of the interpretive process. Identifying previously unconscious biases allows one to begin to restructure previous understandings. The third purpose is to allow for the *re*interpretation of the event of interpretation, which constitutes *re*interpretation of the subject matter itself or, at least, furthered explanation as to how such an interpretation was reached. After identifying a previously unconscious bias and restructuring the understanding, one gains awareness of how previous interpretations were formed and is able to resume and repeat interpretive processes.

In doing these things, the avant-garde provides novel templates to constructively critique biblical and other narrative interpretations, but also provides an example for the kind of scholarship that can and should be performed: scholarship that takes into account historical and present circumstances in order to allow for power revisions around formation and interpretation of events.

Relevance in today's world?

My discussion of the historical moment of Luke's text and Penderecki's *Magnificat* moves through my viewpoint from the twenty-first century United States. While I have not

⁶⁹ I acknowledge that avant-garde fits within Euro-American approach to interpretation. While doing so, it simultaneously creates space and allows for any framing or interpretation that exceeds Euro-American approaches.

intended to place twenty-first century values upon understanding the first century and 1974 narratives, there are perhaps implications from these works that can be brought forward. Penderecki held motivations for *Magnificat* and his other early work in humanism, which generally overlooked its own non-dominant narratives regarding equality. I am drawn to this project not with a “treat everyone equally” view often seen in health and bioethics but because the acceptability of and propriety about many non-dominant narratives do not allow for equal treatment and worth. Historical and existing structural inequities demand more attention directed toward “the lowly” and “the hungry” than toward “the rich” and “the rulers.”

Both Luke and Penderecki appear to use familiar and unfamiliar techniques to deliver narratives outside the bounds of dominant power structures. Dominant power structures in twenty-first century United States and other parts of the world have been unchanged for centuries, creating social learning about valid, extant narratives. *Magnificat* includes almost violent imagery of how these narratives can or will change. Penderecki’s music and structuring in *Magnificat* seemingly disregards historical narratives to present its own.

The first two decades of the twenty-first century in the United States essentially follows its previous history: dominant narratives calling for collective unity against external threats while posturing as exceptional across the world, while at the same time part of the population rejects the narrative as incompatible with their lived experiences. People of color in the United States (and the land before the country was established) have not been equals in its dominant narratives, nor have those who are not men, have any chronic condition including disabilities, lack access to education, or are not economically privileged.

The avant-garde, while not exclusive to, is a product of and has primarily been a tool of those who are or at least exist within dominant structures. Reversal is a desired end, and the Lukan text does not disappoint with the idea that the rulers (dominant structures and narratives) can be “brought down” and the lowly (non-dominant narratives) can be “raised up” (Luke 1.52). Non-dominant narratives, however, are often rejected outright by dominant structures. Examples of this include structural white supremacy in the United States, with whiteness and white privilege as constructs that support white supremacy, and its accompanying non-dominant narratives exemplified by the Black Lives Matter movement. Those supporting dominant narratives in the United States have little or no understanding of nor ability to contextualize about, for example, the lived experiences of people of color. Other examples include experiences of indigenous populations versus the descendants of colonizers,⁷⁰ experiences of disabled versus abled persons,⁷¹ experiences of those with sexual orientations and gender identities that do not align to heterosexual and cis-binary gender.⁷² The narrative does not make sense to them, which, while not explicitly invalidating non-dominant narratives, and is thus discarded. The problem is that it cannot make sense to those supporting dominant structures that have been in place for

⁷⁰ Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.

⁷¹ Disability Visibility Project. “About - Disability Visibility Project.” 2018, accessed August 8, 2018, <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/about/>; Lariviere-Bastien, Danaë, Annette Majnemer, Michael Shevell, and Eric Racine. “Perspectives of Adolescents and Young Adults with Cerebral Palsy on the Ethical and Social Challenges Encountered in Healthcare Services.” *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 43-54.

⁷² Harvey, Vickie L., and Teresa Heinz Housel. *Health Care Disparities and the LGBT Population*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

centuries.

Penderecki's hope for avant-garde was a universal, utopian end, which he later understood to be an unattainable myth.⁷³ Yet Ziarek maintains that a purpose of avant-garde is this possibility for "unconcealment" (apocalypse).⁷⁴ Non-dominant narratives exist and are concealed from and by dominant structures, making them known yet simultaneously veiled. Penderecki's alterations to the avant-garde—while packaged with a sympathetic text—shaped the accessibility of his music, bringing pieces of at least two non-dominant narratives to a wider social consciousness. How this might play out for those non-dominant narratives present today is not the primary focus of this paper, though it is my hope that this paper will contribute to moving those discussions forward.

Conclusion

Krzysztof Penderecki describes some of the theory behind the writing of his music by saying:

I have never been interested in the sound for the sound's sake which saved me from the illness of avant-gardism, the barren emptiness and boredom of formal solutions. The need for synthesis characterizes the whole modern epoch. This is the answer to the poignant feeling of our world's decline. The synthesis cannot consist in the mechanical combination of elements, but it must stem from the uniting experience.⁷⁵

This project's "uniting experience" is between those encountering alternate realities in the *next* world and those who exist in *this* world. The next world includes the shaman, the artists, and the messengers. This world—the world of the dominant narrative—includes when the shaman is not a shaman, when the artist is not creating, and those to whom the messages are being addressed. This is not something easily done within oneself (shamans, artists). To white people in the United States, the lived experience of a person of color is an alternate reality.⁷⁶ To care providers, the lived experiences of patients, especially those with chronic conditions, are also very often alternate realities.⁷⁷ To any able-bodied person, a wheelchair user standing or walking is an alternate reality. These alternate realities are non-dominant narratives. The white people, the care providers, and the able-bodied are those to whom the messages are being addressed.

Non-dominant narratives are hidden, but not by choice. Received tradition, interpretation, and structure help social narrative dominance feel comfortable. They also reinforce the

⁷³ Penderecki and Robinson, *Labyrinth of time*, 15.

⁷⁴ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 4.

⁷⁵ Chłopicka, Regina. "Extra-Musical Inspirations in the Early Work of Krzysztof Penderecki." Translated by Władysław Chłopicki. In *Studies in Penderecki. Volume 2. Penderecki and the Avant Garde*, edited by Ray Robinson and Regina Chłopicka, 257-72. Princeton, NJ: Prestige Publications, 2003, p. 269.

⁷⁶ An example of this is in the response of a manager of a dozen Starbucks stores in midtown Manhattan, who, after receiving racial bias training and hearing narratives about the lived experience of persons of color, said, "That made me just go 'wow, that's heavy.' And that's a lot to carry around. It first made me sad, and then it made me realize I'm not aware of that. And I don't realize what impact that has on you, to constantly be feeling that way." Rose, Joel. "'I'm Not Aware of That': Starbucks Employees Receive Racial Bias Training." *National Public Radio*, May 29, 2018, www.npr.org.

⁷⁷ For examples, see Frank, Arthur W. *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*. Second ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

hiddenness of non-dominant narratives. At the beginning of this paper I asked if non-dominant narratives can be made more accessible and seen as acceptable to those who dominate broader social narratives. Penderecki's example, without obscuring realities, brings home the message encapsulated in Mary's speech: non-dominant narratives (of "the lowly" and "the hungry") can be presented to those living dominant narratives, although the latter may not like the message. Penderecki's audience (who are riding the dominant narrative) does not necessarily like to listen to messages different from what they're used to. They are not comfortable with *Magnificat* as something other than a song of joy and praise, the thought that they might be "brought down" or "sent away", or with avant-garde itself. Penderecki's accessibilized avant-garde construction of the musical text creates "questions [of] the representations of the everyday [the audience's expected *Magnificat*] within ordinary language practices [accessibilized music] and common knowledge."⁷⁸

Penderecki's successful approach is not a roadmap, *per se*, but there is something that we can take from it. The processes he used in *Magnificat*'s composition encapsulate possibilities: severing the subject from its history of interpretation and examining what is being done during formation and interpretation, to re-imagine the act of interpretation in the context of one's present. Penderecki made the texts do *for him* the work that he wanted *from them*. Our task is more difficult. Who or what holds responsibility for oppression that is sanctioned and reinforced at structural levels? And what about when those structures are received and thus constitute what is normal? Removing structural oppression is not normal, but it can be normalized. Understanding non-dominant narratives is not normal, but that task can be normalized. Unconcealment is not easy nor comfortable, but it can be done by those existing within narrative dominance.

What Penderecki did with *Magnificat* and avant-garde in 1974 was to reform dominant narratives such that the non-dominant narratives could be made apparent to those who only see the dominant. Non-dominant narratives aren't seen as real by those living in dominant narratives—as if they are too abstract or fantasy or make-believe or even just too dangerous—even when they are painfully real to those living non-dominant narratives. Social upheaval isn't new to the United States, even though it feels new to many at the time I write this. What is new are the multiple and varied glimpses of unconcealment about non-dominant narratives. Penderecki created a sustained window between the dominant and non-dominant narratives held in *Magnificat*, available for those open and ready to engage. I work toward a potential future where narratives can be repackaged (with or without avant-garde) to favor understanding across the dominant/non-dominant divide. The latter is what makes Penderecki's example with *Magnificat* relevant to non-dominant narratives today. My project here shows how *Magnificat* did bridge that divide; while awaiting approaches on "how to bridge the divide," I take this example into my bioethics. How can white people come to understand the lived experience of people of color in the United States? How can able-bodied persons come to understand that accessibility is not an option? How can governing and medical bodies come to understand that women may not want to become pregnant? The questions aren't new, yet new approaches are needed to find understanding that straddles the fences of narrative dominance, accessibility, and accepted content.

⁷⁸ Ziarek, *Historicity of experience*, 6.

Appendix

Primary Texts

Luke 1.46-55, my translation

- 1.46 And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the lord,
1.47 and my spirit exceedingly rejoiced upon god my savior,
1.48 because he looked upon the low condition of his servant.
For behold from now on all the generations will bless me,
1.49 since the mighty one did great things for me, and holy is his name;
1.50 and his mercy is for those fearing him from generation to generation.
1.51 He made strength in his arm; he scattered the arrogant in the thought of their hearts.
1.52 He brought down the rulers from thrones and raised up the lowly.
1.53 He fills the hungry ones with good things and sent the rich away empty.
1.54 He assists his servant Israel, to remember mercy,
1.55 Just as he said to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants into eternity.”

Penderecki’s Latin

- 1.46 [Et ait Maria] Magnificat anima mea Dominum.
1.47 Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo.
1.48 Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae :
ecce enim, ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.
1.49 Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est : et sanctum nomen eius.
1.50 Et misericordia eius a progenie in progenies timentibus eum.
1.51 Fecit potentiam in brachio suo :
dispersit superbos mente cordis sui.
1.52 Deposuit potentes de sede, et exaltavit humiles.
1.53 Esurientes implevit bonis : et divites dimisit inanes.
1.54 Suscepit Israel puerum suum, recordatus misericordiae suae;
1.55 Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, Abraham,
Et semini eius in saecula.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.