Kendra Stepputat (Ed.)

Performing Arts in Postmodern Bali

Changing Interpretations, Founding Traditions

Grazer Beiträge zur Ethnomusikologie
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KENDRA STEPPUTAT (Ed.)

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Contents

Introduction 1

Lisa Gold
Time and Place Conflated: Zaman dulu (a Bygone Era) and an Ecological Approach to Change in Balinese Shadow Play Music..... 13

Kendra Stepputat
Using Different Keys – Dalang Made Sidia's Contemporary Approach to Traditional Balinese Performing Arts 79

I Wayan Dibia
Topeng Masked Dance Theatre in Globalized Bali 109

Sonja Downing
Strategies of Modernity and Traditionalism in Women's Gamelans..... 139

I Wayan Sudirana
Borrowing, Stealing, Transforming: Cross-cultural Influences in Balinese Neo-Traditional Composition 165

Mashino Ako
Between Classic and Modern: The Aesthetic and Social Evolution of Balinese Arja from the 1990s to the 2010s..... 187

Made Mantle Hood
Finding Your 'Gedig': Revivalism in Balinese Improvised Paired Drumming..... 225

David Harnish
Between Traditionalism and Postmodernism: The Balinese Performing Arts Institution, Çudamani..... 257

Sarah Weiss
Perspectives on Balinese Authenticities:
Sanggar Çudamani's Odalan Bali 279

Christopher J. Miller
A Different Kind of Modernism:
The Sound Exploration of Pande Made Sukerta 309

Andy McGraw
The Ethical-Aesthetics of I Wayan Sadra (1953 – 2011) 335

Michael Bakan
Italian Cinema and the Balinese Sound of Greek Tragedy:
Kecak Contortions and Postmodern Schizophonic Mimesis
in Pasolini and Fellini 363

Contributors to this Volume 389

Michael B. Bakan

Italian Cinema and the Balinese Sound of Greek Tragedy: Kecak Contortions and Postmodern Schizophonic Mimesis in Pasolini and Fellini

Schizophonic mimesis, writes Steven Feld in "The Poetics and Politics of Pygmy Pop," encompasses "a broad spectrum of interactive and extractive processes" that "produce a traffic in new creations and relationships through the use, circulation, and absorption of sound recordings" (Feld 2000:263). Consideration of these processes, observes Feld, compels us to ask "how sound recordings, split from their source through the chain of audio production, circulation, and consumption, stimulate and license renegotiations of identity" (ibid.).

In this essay, I focus on extractive processes of schizophonic mimesis involving the use, circulation, and absorption of a specific sound recording of Balinese *kecak* within the context of radical, postmodern Italian cinematic art of the late 1960s. The recording, produced by Maurice Bitter and bearing the track title of "'*Ketjak' – La Danse des Singes*" ('Kecak' – The Dance of the Monkeys), was originally released by Le Chant du Monde on the LP *Chants et Danses d'Indonésie* circa 1965 (LDX 74402). It features one of the famed early *kecak* troupes of Bona, in the Gianyar regency of Bali, a group that was influential in the development of the genre. Excerpts from this recording were employed in two controversial and innovative Italian films of the latter half of the decade: *Edipo Re* (*Oedipus Rex*, henceforth *Oedipus*), directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1967), and *Fellini Satyricon* (*Satyricon*), directed by Federico Fellini.[1]

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[1] Neither the Le Chant du Monde *kecak* track nor any of the other world music recordings employed in *Oedipus* appears to have been credited in the film. In *Satyricon* , a "Music Effected By" section in the closing credits lists Maurice Bitter, Alain Danielou, John Coast, David Lewiston, and several other ethnomusicologists and ethno-recordists. Another section of the credits titled "With Cooperation Of" lists the record companies Nonesuch, Folkways, Lyrichord, Argo, La Boite á Musique, Ocora, Philips, Le Chant du Monde, Turnabout Vox, Columbia, CBS, and MCA. Unfortunately, the specific source tracks and LPs are not indicated (with the exception of one) and the recordists/producers and record companies are not linked to the specific recordings. Ethical, if not legal, issues arise in connection with the appropriative utilization of

Satyricon (1969), in its employment of the same *kecak* recording used in *Oedipus*, as well as its plunderphonic appropriations of diverse "ethnic music" recordings more broadly (Solomon 1996; see also Shelemay 1991), its barren and windswept desert landscapes, the moral bankruptcy and depravity of its proto-modern characters, and the archaic-arbitrary science fiction-of-the-past cinematic world it invents out of tattered fragments of bizarrely reconfigured classic literature and mythology (Greene 1990:149; Solomon 1996:116), may be regarded at once as an extension of, an homage to, and a dialectically intertextual commentary upon Pasolini's movie of two years prior, which itself defined a novel postmodern idiom for the cinematic treatment of classic literature and mythology.

As Jon Solomon explains in an article published in *The Classical Journal*, Pasolini and Fellini "changed the way Italian films focused on classical antiquity" (1996:115), offering "an alternative view of Greco-Roman antiquity to audiences who had grown utterly weary of pompous trumpet fanfares and shiny marble columns. They both used ethnic music, innovative costumes, and avant-garde sets to expand our vision of antiquity beyond the reasonably authentic recreations of *Quo Vadis?*, *Ben-Hur*, *Spartacus*, *Cleopatra*, and *The Fall of the Roman Empire*. They created a world so different from the thoroughly established Hollywood/Cinecitta stereotype of antiquity that filmgoers were forced to rethink the concepts of antiquity and breathe a different air" (ibid.:116).

My focus here is on the "ethnic music" component of this expanded vision and new conception of antiquity, and more specifically it centers on *kecak* recorded sound and its schizophonic mimesis in the contexts of *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*. My main argument is that the appropriation of *kecak* in these films relies on a radicalized, postmodern process of schizophonic mimesis – one distinct from what I identify as the more modernist process glossed by Feld – and that the signature element that defines this condition *as* postmodern is that it effectively erases, rather than merely renegotiating, the originative identities of its schizophonically detached and rematerialized Balinese voices.

In addressing "postmodern Bali" from this obtuse angle, my contribution to this volume may be regarded as at once complementing and inverting the book's

recordings in these and other films by Pasolini and Fellini, but these lie beyond the scope of this essay.

larger trajectory. Rather than considering how postmodern practices, values, and modes of textual and artistic discursivity have historically impacted and continue to inform diverse expressions of Balinese musical agency, aesthetics, creative process, performance practice, and place/time construction, I instead focus on how a specific historical artifact of Balinese cultural production – a *kecak* recording – became encompassed within the broad historical sweep of postmodernism's development outside of Bali, agentively, aesthetically, creatively, performatively, geographically, and temporally. I am principally interested, then, not in how postmodernism has shaped Balinese music, but rather in how Balinese music, strategically stripped of all explicit markers of its identity as such, has been used outside of Bali to shape postmodernism.[2]

Myth and Music, Pastiche and Postmodernity, Contamination and Kecak

Classic mythology and literature form the ostensible foundations of both *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*. Pasolini draws principally from the Sophocles telling of the Greek myth of Oedipus, Fellini from Petronius's *Satyricon*. These classical texts, however, serve the filmmakers more as touchstones and springboards for radical, postmodern innovation than as bases for cinematic development as such.

"Taking full advantage of our familiarity with the myths," Naomi Greene explains, "Pasolini radically 'rereads' the Greek texts: consistently telescoping the well-known parts in favor of long 'invented' sequences, he transforms plays in which the word was all-important into almost silent films." Through this process, "the mythic text is turned into a kind of silent and invisible presence supporting the film's imaginary world" (Greene 1990:151).

The audible and visible incarnation of that mythic text in the film *Oedipus* emerges from *pastiche* and "stylistic contamination," terms that Pasolini himself

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2 Several of the essays published in *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*, edited by Mark Slobin (2008), offer related theoretical approaches to their various film music-related topics, contributing to a growing literature in this area. Of additional interest from a different (non-cinematic) perspective is Mervyn Cooke's 1998 essay, "'The East in the West': Evocations of the Gamelan in Western music," published in the edited volume *The Exotic in Western Music* (Bellman 1998), which contains other relevant contributions as well. Born and Hesmondalgh's edited volume *Western Music and Its Others* (2000), which includes Feld's earlier-cited article among other compelling essays, is another important source in this domain of literature.

used in describing his methods as a poet, but which apply equally well to his approach as a filmmaker. "Stylistically I am a *pasticheur*," states Pasolini. "[T]here is always a stylistic contamination in my writings [...]. I am not recognizable as an inventor of a stylistic formula, but for the degree of intensity to which I bring the contamination and mixture of the various styles" (Pasolini 1969:28). Such stylistic contamination and mixture takes manifest form in Pasolini's creative appropriations of diverse "ethnic musics" in *Oedipus*, where not just the recording of *kecak*, but recordings of traditional Japanese, Romanian, and other musics as well, are schizophonically grafted onto the radically rematerialized landscapes and soundscapes of an invented mythic world of antiquity.

With *Satyricon*, Fellini arguably took the Pasolini-esque approach to stylistic mixture and contamination to even higher planes of intensity than Pasolini himself, creating in the process a film about which "the critical world is still filled with awe (and horror)" regarding "its vivid, explicit, and shocking imagery" (Solomon 1996:116). Fellini's point of departure in classics literature was from the start one step removed from classic myth, for Petronius's *Satyricon* itself might be described as a pastiche of contaminated mythic materials and themes. Roger Ebert describes Petronius's book as a kind of proto-novel based on retellings of "degenerate versions of Roman and Greek myth" that was "lost for centuries and found in a fragmented form, which Fellini uses to explain his own fragmented movie" (Ebert 2001).

Notably, Fellini, as a pasticheur and champion of "stylistic contamination" in his own right, roams well beyond Petronius's *Satyricon* in freely absorbing and recasting mythic tales and texts that have no direct relation to that classic book. The scenes in *Satyricon* that suture *kecak* recorded sound to Fellini's brazen re-invention of antiquity, for example, feature a bizarre ceremonial re-enactment of the Greek myth in which Theseus battles the Minotaur in the Labyrinth of Knossos and is subsequently united with Princess Ariadne, the daughter of King Minos of Crete. Fellini's setting of this re-enactment in a desert outpost colony of the Roman Empire during the time of Nero establishes a linkage of time and place to Petronius, but Petronius's *Satyricon* includes no parallel scene. Francesca D'Allesandro Behr suggests that Fellini drew upon another classic text, Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, as his primary source here (Behr n.d.; see also Apuleius 2007:45-54 [Chs. 2.31-3.11]).

The "fantasy Rome suspended between inaccessible antiquity and science fiction" (Borin 1999:101) that Fellini creates through his freewheeling adaptation of Petronius's text bears striking physical, sonic, sexual, and affective similarity to the fantasy world of Oedipus invented by Pasolini. Barbarism, decadence, alienation, fragmentation, perversity and degradation, blistering desert heat and austerity, and the alternate convergence and violent confrontation of obtusely interconnected "primal" and "civilized" peoples form threads of unity and intertextuality that bind the two films.

Recorded Balinese *kecak* sound figured prominently within the array of "ethnic music" that Pasolini and Fellini used to reframe and recast myth and antiquity in such radicalizing terms, igniting at least one spark in a larger revolution of cinematic aesthetics and worldview that would fundamentally transform the art of filmmaking on multiple levels and on a global scale henceforth. This revolution outlined a new terrain of postmodern cinematic sensibilities and values that would resonate forward into the works of filmmakers as wide-ranging in approach as Bernardo Bertolucci, Akira Kurosawa, Woody Allen, Quentin Tarantino, and Joel and Ethan Coen (on the latter, see also Bakan 2009). Specifically, the schizophonic use of *kecak* sound in *Oedipus* and *Satyricon* – and by extension the schizophonic uses of virtually all of the borrowed "ethnic music" source materials employed in these films – exemplified a quintessentially postmodern move, a defiant affront to any semblance of modernist sensibility or decorum where representation of the Other was concerned.

This postmodern turn on the part of Pasolini and Fellini, beyond its own inherent interest as a node of articulation for conceptualizing and problematizing Balinese music and identity in the discursive spaces of cosmopolitan postmodernity, may also have relevance as a historical trace in the evolution of attitudes and effects linked to the identity politics and experimental aesthetics of contemporary Balinese music itself relative to its own antiquity and its own modernity, most specifically in relation to *musik kontemporer* (see also McGraw 2009, in press). Moreover, a precedent to this same postmodern turn may be inferred from a critical reading of *kecak's* own fascinating history as a kind of proto-postmodern phenomenon of 20th-century Balinese glocalization (McKean 1979, Bakan 2009, Stepputat 2010 and 2011). While these issues are largely beyond the scope of the present essay, I will return to them briefly in the conclusion, and it is my hope that readers will engage with them more broadly as

points of departure for intertextual readings of the present essay in relation to others in this volume.

Schizophonic Mimesis, Modern and Postmodern

If the films *Oedipus* and *Satyricon* exhibit a particularly postmodern process of schizophonic mimesis relative to *kecak,* as I suggest they do, then it is important to delineate how this process differs from what I view as the contrastingly modernist strain of schizophonic mimesis described by Feld in his earlier-cited article on pygmy pop. Feld claims that the "renegotiations of identity" stimulated and licensed by schizophonic mimesis are generative of "new possibilities whereby a place and people can be recontextualized, rematerialized, and thus thoroughly reinvented," but he also proposes that the cultural products yielded by such processes ". . . *of course* retain a certain indexical relationship to the place [e.g., Central Africa] and people [e.g., 'pygmies'] they both contain and circulate" (Feld 2000:263 – emphasis mine). My contention is that to perceive the retention of an indexical relationship between the "thoroughly reinvented" places and peoples that emerge through schizophonic mimesis and the actual, "original" places and people that prefigured them is to retain a baseline modernist sensibility relative to the process of schizophonia as a whole. The retention of such indexicality is not self-evident – there is no "of course" about it – and the identity voids or elisions left, or created, in its absence constitute what I will gloss here as a postmodern condition of schizophonic mimesis.

In such a condition, schizophonic mimesis constitutes an obliteration rather than a renegotiation of identity; it fashions an *erasure* of all sense of place and personhood formerly anchored physically and/or semiotically to the voices, musics, sounds, bodies, and cultures that have been inscribed into recorded sound and thereby rendered detachable from their sources of origin. It is precisely through this process – this postmodern process – that Pasolini and Fellini activate *kecak* sound for their own postmodern, agentive purposes in the artistic deconstruction of modernist cinematic tropes. Balinese identity is an issue that does not even arise within these films or in the discursive spaces that animate and surround them. As the audible but invisible, disembodied and unidentified voices of a recorded Balinese *kecak* troupe are sutured to the

thoroughly reinvented places and people that emerge out of schizophonic rupture in *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*, the very idea that identity "starts somewhere" and is somehow retained in its movement elsewhere is itself ruptured, and in the process schizophonic mimesis becomes postmodern. In these films, *kecak* sound is utilized as a free-floating sonic signifier completely devoid of any indexical link to its Balinese origin, and indeed devoid of any indexical links even to much broader prospective indexical rubrics such as "Asia" or "the East." It comes to be wedged in place diegetically in a process that gives rhythmic and ritual voice to "barbarian" inhabitants of the films' imagined, pre-civilized realms of the ancient past.

The functional utility of *kecak* in this regard – as of much of the other "ethnic music" incorporated into the *Oedipus* and *Satyricon* soundtracks – is its assumed geographic/cultural anonymity. Pasolini and Fellini presumed that their film audiences would *not* recognize this music in relation to any particular place or people, or even to any more generically identifiable conventionalizing frame (e.g., "Oriental," "exotic"). *Kecak* enters into the cinematic worlds of their films as a music of nowhere and nobody in particular, which is precisely what enables it to emerge as the voiced manifestation of persons inhabiting fantastical spaces of recreated mythic antiquity fueled by the aesthetics and subversive priorities of a postmodern imaginary in which time and history are suspended and upended. In key scenes of both films, *kecak* sound gives voice to the bodies of "imaginary barbaric, or archaic, civilizations" conceived as polar opposites of a detestable modern world (Greene 1990:129).

Neither Pasolini nor Fellini spoke to this issue with specific reference to *kecak*, but Pasolini did provide a clear articulation of his "ethnic music" use strategy relative to another musicultural tradition that figures prominently in *Oedipus*, Romanian (Rumanian) folk song. "Initially I thought of shooting *Oedipus* in Rumania," explains Pasolini, "so I did a trip there to look for locations. But it was not suitable; Rumania is a modern country; the countryside is in the middle of an industrial revolution; all the old wood villages are being destroyed, there's nothing old left. So I gave up the idea of doing it there, but in recompense I found some folk-tunes which I liked a lot because they are extremely ambiguous: they are half-way between Slav, Greek and Arab songs, they are indefinable: it is unlikely that anyone who didn't have specialized knowledge could locate them; they are a bit outside history. As I wanted to make

Oedipus a myth, I wanted music which was a-historical, a-temporal" (Pasolini 1969:126).

This same presumed a-historical, a-temporal, indefinable quality of identity attaches equally to *kecak* in both Pasolini's and Fellini's renderings, and to a host of recordings of Japanese, Javanese, African, and other world musics from which they drew liberally and with unbridled imagination in the radical mythic recreations of their films as well. In the case of *kecak* specifically, the music's Balinese sound, assumed to be privy as such only to those with specialized knowledge, lands quite seamlessly and well-fitted into the archaic-arbitrary, imagined realms of mythic a-history – or mythic "meta-history" (ibid.:127) – invented in *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*. Recorded *kecak* sound, schizophonically dispossessed of its Balinese bearings, becomes the proxy collective voice of "barbaric" peoples voyeuristically engaged with pagan rites of sexual passage in both films.[3]

Sex, Myth, Kecak, and the Eternal Return

According to Oswald Stack (in Pasolini 1969:9), "associating sex with pagan mythology" was central to Pasolini's cinematic, and in turn ideological, project, and "the groundwork for this was achieved in *Oedipus Rex*," in which vital sexual energy, enlivened in one of the film's key scenes by the sound of *kecak*, plays directly into a broader idealization of pre-rational barbarism at the expense of rational modernity. The "savagery and barbarism that [Pasolini] locates at the heart of cinema," writes Greene, "inform not only the hypothetical '*monstrum*' behind each film but the narrative itself – a narrative propelled by dark and savage impulses that well up from the unconscious of individuals and from mankind's archaic past. History gives way to myth as the linear time of

3 In the event that Pasolini or Fellini may have been familiar with metadata relating to *kecak*, such as documentary films or album liner notes, these likely would have only reinforced their sense of associative coherence in linking *kecak* sound to the primeval, barbaric/archaic worlds of their films. For example, Stepputat (2011:43) quotes from the narration track of a *National Geographic* documentary on Bali in which *kecak* is depicted as follows: "On the island of Bali, man becomes the animal of its origins – this is the famous monkey dance called the *kecak*. Over a hundred men portray an army of chattering apes from the Hindu epic poem Ramayana. There is no orchestra, only the primeval sounds of the chorus."

Christianity is eclipsed by what Mircea Eliade – the famous ethnologist much admired by Pasolini – calls the 'eternal return' of earlier religions" (Greene 1990:127).

In Pasolini's view, these dark and savage impulses of humankind's archaic past and of the so-called earlier religions, replete with an abundance of "monstrum," define the ideal of humanity rather than its opposite. "In my films," Pasolini explains, "barbarism is always symbolic: it represents the ideal moment of mankind" (Pasolini, quoted in Greene 1990:129). Virile, visceral, and often violent sexuality emerges as an iconic frame for the realization of this idealistic construction of the barbaric.

Savagery, barbarism, and monstrum are likewise located at the heart of Fellini's mythic cinematic vision, as represented most audaciously by *Satyricon*.[4] Here, too, the association of sex, pagan mythology, and ritual embodiment is central, and *kecak* sound functions as an index of pre-civilized sexual vitality, virility, masculinity, and naturalness. In both films, a failure to perform in contexts of ritualized sexual opportunity (and in *Satyricon*, in ritualized armed combat as well) marks the alienated, proto-modern protagonists – Oedipus and Encolpius (Encolpio), respectively – as deficient, impotent persons, as embodiments of ensuing modernity's destructive and contaminating impact on the natural state of human being. In both instances, too, it is the dis- and re-embodied "barbaric" sound of *kecak* that sonically animates the scene, initially as an enigmatic, mysterious, distorting, and menacing presence of unknown source; subsequently as a unified and synchronized collective voice inviting and encouraging the protagonists to return to the communitas and vitality (albeit savage vitality) of their ostensibly natural, pre-civilized states of being; and finally as a sonic encoding of disappointment and derision, an alternately resigned, hostile, or taunting commentary on the desecration of vital humanity by forces of reason, rational detachment, and decadence that come to be symbolized by the sexual impotence – actual or implied – of Oedipus and Encolpius in these pivotal, *kecak* sound-imbued cinematic episodes.

In Fellini's work, there is perhaps less of a clear-cut bifurcation of idealized barbarism to disparaged modernity (and/or mythic proto-modernity) than in Pasolini's, but the highlighting of barbarism's vitality and urgency in contrast to

4 See also Bakan 2009.

modernity's decadence and futility are no less marked. Comparing ancient Rome in the time of Nero, the film's setting, to his own world of late 1960s Italy (and modern societies generally), Fellini observed that, "Then as now we find ourselves confronting a society at the height of its splendor but revealing already the signs of a progressive dissolution ... a society in which all beliefs – religious, philosophical, ideological, and social – have crumbled, and been replaced by a sick, wild, and impotent eclecticism" (quoted in Behr n.d.). The manifestation of Greco/Roman proto-modernity in all of its eclectic impotence is contrasted to the relative purity and naturalism of barbaric, pre-civilized societies in the imaginary desert landscapes of *Satyricon*. In the process, it becomes analogous to contemporary modernity's own impotent state and to the degradation of human vitality, if not virtue.

We now turn to a closer analysis of the particular scenes of *Oedipus* and *Satyricon* that recruit anonymized, recorded voices of Balinese *kecak* performers in the service of first Pasolini's and then Fellini's postmodern cinematic vision. For interested readers, both films are readily available on DVD and in other formats (see filmography); moreover, at the time of this writing, all or portions of the specific scenes discussed were accessible on YouTube.[5]

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Kecak Sound in *Oedipus Rex*

The initial emergence of *kecak* sound in *Oedipus Rex* is abrupt and unexpected. During a foreboding encounter with the Oracle of Delphi earlier in the film, Oedipus has been told that it is his destiny to kill his father and make love to his mother. He is instructed to "go away" and not "infect people with [his] presence" (see Winkler 2005:389). Shaken and bewildered, he does not return home to Corinth, but rather descends into self-imposed exile and wanders aimlessly through the desert (the film was shot in Morocco). Whenever he

5 The full scene of *Oedipus Rex (Edipo Re)* discussed below may be found at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e-BX2Sz0xk; the portion described in the text commences at 1:27 of the clip, with the emergence of *kecak* sound commencing at 1:58. Portions of the sequence of scenes in *Satyricon* discussed below may be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPbYzw-sTeI; that clip begins at the point where Encolpius first encounters the Minotaur/gladiator and ends after Encolpius is defeated in armed combat. It does not include the described ritualized sexual encounter with "Ariadne."

reaches a crossroad, he "puts his hands over his eyes and whirls round. By this random method, he chooses the direction of Thebes" every time (MacKinnon 1995:115), moving ever closer to the fulfillment of his tragic fate: the killing of his father, his incestuous relationship with his mother, the destruction of the kingdom of Thebes that he comes to rule, and his own self-blinding.

The *leitmotif* for Oedipus's wandering journey through the desert is a recorded piece of music featuring high-pitched flutes accompanied by percussion instruments. The texture is sparse, the tonality (to unfamiliar Western ears) dissonant. This music was in fact extracted from a recording of traditional Japanese *gagaku* (*bugaku*) music included on a UNESCO Collection/Bärenreiter-Musicaphon release from the 1960s: *A Musical Anthology of the Orient*.[6] As with the Balinese musical identity of the extracted *kecak* recording in the film, the Japanese musical identity of this extracted recording of *gagaku* is presumed to be unknown to the viewer, who is expected (by Pasolini) to locate this musical sound and all that it evokes not in relation to Japan or any other existent location or culture, but rather within the mythic, a-temporal, meta-historical space of antiquity conjured by the film. As Pasolini explains, this music was "chosen for the same reason" that the aforementioned Romanian folk songs were (Pasolini 1969:127) (and by inference, the *kecak* recording as well), namely, on account of its purported "ambiguity," its "indefinable" identity for anyone lacking specialized knowledge of its tradition (ibid.:126). In its schizophonic reconfiguration, this "old Japanese music," as Pasolini describes it, serves in the film as "… a kind of evocation of the primitive, of [Oedipus's] origins" (Pasolini 1969:129).

This Japanese-cum-"primitive" music accompanies Oedipus as he comes upon a rustic village of eroding, red earthen stone walls and open-roofed structures. Labyrinthine towers and enclosures press against the foothills of a mountain range rising up behind the village under the desert sun's blistering heat. An abrupt camera cut takes us from a long shot of Oedipus approaching the village to our first view of its crumbling, outermost walls, in front of which stands a white donkey. As the camera pans rightward from the edge of the village toward its center, the *gagaku* track is cut short mid-stream and is

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6 My thanks to Dale Olsen and Jay Keister for assisting me with the identification of this recording, and to Aaron Bittel of the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive for his assistance in identifying the Le Chant du Monde *kecak* recording discussed in this essay as well.

immediately supplanted by the intense sound and interlocking rhythmic energy of a *kecak* (*cak*) chorus. For the ensuing one minute and forty seconds, during which the entire scene plays out, *kecak* is the *only* sound of any kind that we hear. It is the exclusive soundtrack element of an otherwise "silent film" episode. Its status is initially acousmatic, that is, of "a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen" (Ryan-Scheutz 2007:63; cf. Chion 1998:18-19). The jarring shift from slow-moving *gagaku* to fast and intense *kecak* creates a sense of apprehension and surprise, even shock, in the viewer: What is this strange sound? Where is it coming from? What does it mean? What is about to happen?

As the camera pans quickly rightward, some of these questions, at least, are answered within a matter of seconds. The acousmatic sound becomes diegetic (see Chion 1998:18-19; Stilwell 2007) as an old, bald, nearly toothless man wearing dark robes and performing a whirling dance comes into view, framed in his dancing by a group of bare-chested boys wearing loincloths (with the exception of one who wears a *kain*-like wraparound skirt) and by three other bald men in robes. Suddenly, the formerly un-locatable and indefinable sound of *kecak* has been implanted into the bodies of this rag-tag group of young boys and old men, giving rhythmic and musical voice and accompaniment to their "barbaric" rite.

As the old man dances, the boys stand stationary in a line to his right, bending rhythmically at the knees in quasi-synchronized, interlocking fashion (not in unison) in a manner that generates a collective choreographic counterpoint to their elder's robust and soloistic circular motions. The other three robed men, stationed to the rear of the main dancer, clap their hands, one standing and moving about a bit, the other two resting on their haunches. To the observant viewer (let alone to the viewer familiar with *kecak*), there are several disconnects between this on-screen group of characters and the musical sounds that they are purportedly generating. Most obviously, we see people clapping but hear no hand claps; additionally, this group of seven boys and four men could not possibly produce the dense texture of sound produced by a full-force *kecak* chorus such as the one featured on the recording. Nonetheless, the graft of Balinese *kecak* voices onto the cinematic landscape of this barbaric, communal dance of ecstasy is quite effective and surprisingly "realistic." Suspension of disbelief regarding the plausibility of this group performing what we hear on the soundtrack is not so difficult to achieve, and the synchrony of the on-screen

action and the actual source recording is at times remarkably precise: the illusion of a diegetic relationship between image and sound succeeds despite its empirical impossibility.

Oedipus, keeping some distance between himself and the dancing, "*kecak*-ing" group, kneels down and takes in the scene with interest. The camera pans momentarily to him and then back to the dancers. From behind the earthen walls to their rear, a teenage boy emerges and joins two others standing next to a second donkey not far from the dancers. He appears to be very pleased with himself. He and the two other teenagers exchange (inaudible) excited remarks and walk off together with buoyant energy. Clearly, something worth talking about has gone on behind those walls.

There is, indeed, an air of palpable excitement permeating the entire environment, with the sound of *kecak* and the energy of the dancers contributing to a testosterone-driven atmosphere of visceral drive. The camera zooms in on the line of boy dancers. They are seen looking directly at the stranger, Oedipus, with irrepressible expressions of encouragement and excitement. One of the boys points animatedly at the entrance to the maze of walls and enclosures from which the ebullient teenage boy has recently emerged, gesturing for Oedipus to enter and partake of whatever mysterious pleasures lie within.

Oedipus is energized. He stands up and walks briskly toward the entrance. The whirling lead dancer moves toward and then runs alongside of him. He "speaks" to Oedipus in a weird but effective pantomime of the dramatic voice of the narrator heard on the *kecak* recording, and as he does so he gestures wildly and urgently while ushering Oedipus toward the entrance before returning to dance with the group.

Now Oedipus is alone, walking through seemingly endless, maze-like corridors of decaying stone walls into a vacant village of roofless structures. The sound of *kecak* accompanies him as he marches quickly forward with a sense of strong determination toward some as yet unknown but profoundly enticing destination.

Consistent with its faux-diegetic locus of origination, the volume level of *kecak* sound diminishes progressively as Oedipus penetrates more and more deeply into the village walls. A sense of realism is imposed on the artifice of "true" relation between sound and image throughout: we are hearing through Oedipus's ears. Even as the sound of *kecak* gets smaller, ultimately reaching a point of near-silence, the vitality and intensity of its rhythm gives a special

urgency to Oedipus's quest to discover and avail himself of whatever awaits him within these strange walls. This is a new Oedipus, a very different man than the one we have seen up to this point. He is now strong, focused, motivated, the antithesis of the eyes-covered, somnambulistic, circumambulating Oedipus of the crossroads who cannot even make up his own mind regarding what road to travel, leaving the decision to chance every time. The sound of *kecak* becomes indexical to this virile incarnation of Oedipus. It sonically encodes what appears to be his return to a primal selfhood, to the communitas of a pre-rational, vibrant humanity that has formerly eluded him; it forecasts "the eternal return."

Finally, Oedipus reaches his destination. There, standing enframed by walls on three sides and shining radiant in the sun's harsh light, is a beautiful, bare-breasted young woman, her shapely torso adorned by an ornate, "primitive" necklace of amulets, shells, and stones. She "comports herself with the air of one expectantly awaiting an inevitable visitor" (Snyder 1980:90), staring directly at Oedipus with no apparent self-consciousness. The moment she comes into view, the voice of the *kecak* narrator enters boldly, dominating the soundscape. For the viewer, this narrator's voice has already been mapped onto the bald, old man leading the ritual dance beyond the walls. The volume of the *kecak* is now very low, coming from afar and out of view, yet with the narrator's vocal entrance, the viewer again feels the old man's presence as Oedipus and the young woman are coaxed toward a sexual union that seems inevitable.

That union does not materialize, however. Oedipus, upon seeing the woman, stops dead in his tracks. He steps back, suddenly looking terrified, but then regroups and takes an assertive step forward. There is a fleeting moment wherein consummation of the destined sexual rite of passage anticipated – perhaps this is a pagan fertility ritual into which Oedipus has been serendipitously inserted – seems imminent, but in an instant that moment is gone.

Oedipus steps back again, thrusting his knuckles into his mouth in an infantile, nervous gesture. He gnaws away anxiously. The sound of *kecak*, infinitesimally small now but still full of robust, "barbaric" energy, awkwardly occupies the vacuum of silence and space that grows between Oedipus and the woman. That vacuum becomes even more expansive as the camera suddenly shifts from Oedipus's face to a view of the back of his head, beyond which we see the woman, still registering the same expression of expectant calm, still looking directly at him.

Now Oedipus turns and stares away from her, looking partially backward so that his profile is captured, almost frozen, in the camera's lens. He looks panicked, claustrophobic. Distant *kecak* sound still looms far off in the background, its incessant and irrepressible vitality now a stark and mocking contrast to Oedipus's deflated manhood. This world will go on without him; his failure to penetrate it, to become a part of it, to actualize himself in relation to it, seals another nail in the coffin confirming the Oracle's telling of his tragic fate and denying the possibility of his eternal return.

The camera cuts jarringly from the image of Oedipus's fear-frozen profile to the by-now familiar image of him spinning in circles with eyes covered at yet another crossroad, leaving his fate to the randomness of chance once more. The sound of *kecak* is cut off; the leitmotif of *gagaku*, "music that could be defined in one word as decadent," according to Pasolini (1969:129), immediately resumes. Oedipus predictably follows the road to Thebes, unwittingly and without agency pursuing the path to his inevitable, tragic demise.

Several times in the film, notes Martin Winkler, Oedipus, as he does here, "places his hand[s] or arm over his eyes. The rising curve of *eleos* and *phobos* that Aristotle postulated for the catharsis of tragedy in his *Poetics* (ch. 6.2) commences here. The sequence effectively illustrates Oedipus' bewilderment, his intellectual incomprehension, and his sense of abandonment" (Winkler 2005:389). He is as ill equipped to live among the barbarians as he is to fully embrace and invest in an emerging modern world guided by rationality and intellection. His liminality seals his fate as the memory trace of *kecak* sound becomes a potent symbol and reminder of his disenfranchised vitality.

Blunted Sword: *Kecak* Sound in *Satyricon*

In *Satyricon*, Fellini, building upon the postmodern precedent of radicalized schizophonic mimesis pioneered by Pasolini in *Oedipus*, expands its scope to epic proportions. The sonic presence of *kecak* in *Oedipus*, though significant and pivotal, occupies a relatively small space in the overall arc of the film: the entire scene has a duration of less than two minutes. Contrastingly, *kecak's* presence in *Satyricon* is the basis of grand spectacle, underpinning two consecutive, long scenes that rank among the most memorable and affective in the entire, macabre production.

Pasolini's influence on Fellini is evident not just in the choice of *kecak* recording, but in many aspects of its employment as well. Like Pasolini, Fellini enlists *kecak* sound in a postmodern process of schizophonic mimesis that effectively erases all explicit traces of Balinese identity. Additionally, Fellini adopts Pasolini's strategy of introducing the sound of *kecak* acousmatically before revealing its faux-diegetic attachment to voiced bodies of a postmodern barbaric imaginary. Here, however, rather than using Bitter's Bona *kecak* recording to give rhythmic and energetic voice to just a small group, Fellini uses it to give collective voice to a veritable mob of sex- and blood-lusting "savages."

The effect is stunning, and brilliant. The translocated, de- and re-contextualized sound and energy of *kecak*'s *gamelan suara* ("voice gamelan"[7]) texture serve alternately to taunt, inspire, ridicule, motivate, and ultimately condemn the protagonist, Encolpius, during a violent, sexually charged ritual drama. As noted, the drama re-enacts Theseus's mythic battle with the Minotaur, a monstrous creature with the head of a bull and the body of a man, in the Labyrinth of Knossos. But for the assembled crowd, comprising a small cohort of Roman imperial soldiers and gentry surrounded on all sides by legions of desert outpost barbarians, the drama, with the unwitting Encolpius starring in the role of Theseus, plays out as a kind of comic, reality-show exercise in voyeuristic titillation. It all ends up to be a big prank, with Encolpius as the butt of the joke. His Theseus is a tragicomic figure, forced into futile battle with a giant, Minotaur-disguised gladiator and then into an ill-fated ritual sexual encounter with the cast's designated Ariadne love interest.

The scene begins with Encolpius, for reasons that are never made entirely (or even partially) clear in the fragmented narrative of the film, being prodded down a giant hill of dirt by spear-wielding Roman sentries. He is equipped with two crude weapons – a burning spear and a large, spike-studded leather glove – and

7 The phrase *gamelan suara*, usually translated as "voice gamelan" or "vocal gamelan," refers to a distinctive type of Balinese ensemble (essentially a chorus) in which the sounds and textures of Balinese gamelan instruments – metallophones, gongs, drums, cymbals – are rendered exclusively with voices. The instrumental sounds are represented onomatopoeically, for example, the largest gongs are intoned using the syllables "sirrr" and "girrr" on low pitches while the smaller gongs *kempur* and *kemong* are sounded with the syllables "pur" and "mong" using mid-range and high-pitched tones, respectively. The *kecak* dance-drama is the iconic Balinese medium for *gamelan suara* performance.

ushered, terrified, into the labyrinth to do battle with the as-yet unseen Minotaur/gladiator.

At first, all we hear is an ominous desert wind rushing through the labyrinth. Then, very suddenly, a loud and aggressive burst of coordinated vocal sound erupts out of the silence. It is the sound of *kecak*, but to Encolpius, and presumably the viewer as well, the source of this sonic explosion is as yet invisible and unknown: acousmatic, taunting, and threatening.

A startled Encolpius looks upward to the tops of the high labyrinth walls, trying to locate the source of the foreboding sound, but without success. Bursts of *kecak* erupt sporadically and unpredictably over the droning sound of the wind, exacerbating Encolpius's already heightened state of terror. The interlocking rhythmic texture of the *kecak* vocals and the invisibility of its source serve to amplify the aggressive, menacing intensity of the scene and to poignantly capture the anxious, desperate internal psychological state of Encolpius himself.

Finally, Encolpius comes upon the gladiator, his head completely concealed by a huge, horned Minotaur headdress. This Minotaur-gladiator emerges out of the shadows of a blackened corner of the labyrinth bearing a long, thick, blunt staff as a weapon. He is a beast of a man, with the mask of a beast to match. He proceeds toward the terrified Encolpius slowly, methodically, without even a hint of fear or apprehension. The only sounds are those of the wind and Encolpius's hyperventilating breaths.

The Minotaur attacks. Encolpius tries to defend himself initially but quickly determines that this is futile. He attempts to run away. But there is nowhere to hide. The harsh sun illuminates Encolpius as he runs desperately through the labyrinth, and as soon as the sun's light is cast upon him, the sound of *kecak*, now louder and more intense than before, kicks in again. The scene cuts away to show a sweaty mob of hundreds of dirt-covered, half-naked barbarians assembled atop huge, earthen walls that offer views down into the labyrinth. The visual and sonic imprints of Pasolini's parallel scene in *Oedipus* are unmistakable, but the scale is magnified exponentially. The barbarian mob cheers on the fight in coordinated rhythmic chant, giving diegetic body and visual presence to the schizophonically rematerialized and formerly acousmatic sound of *kecak* as they spur on the savage spectacle of gladiatorial combat to which they bear witness with rapacious glee, seemingly mocking, cheering, and jeering the overmatched Encolpius all at once.

Encolpius eventually finds his way out of the labyrinth, followed by the Minotaur. They continue to fight, with the *kecak*-chanting mob now in close proximity. Encolpius is finally struck to the ground. He surrenders. The *kecak* chanting stops immediately, leaving only the sound of the wind. Encolpius, in defeat, now offers himself to the giant gladiator as a love slave. He pleads for his life and proclaims that he is just a student and a poet, that he is no Theseus. He protests that he should never have been the victim of this cruel joke and implores the Minotaur-masked gladiator to reveal his true identity. The gladiator ultimately obliges, removing his mask and appealing to the Roman proconsul presiding over the whole sordid affair to not just spare Encoplius's life, but to actually reward him for having been such a good sport in this comically uneven ritual battle.

Encolpius goes from victimized to vindicated in an instant. A proxy Ariadne is seen being ritually prepared for seduction by Encolpius's Theseus. The proconsul instructs Encolpius to go to her. Alas, his sexual potency, prodigious earlier on in the film in encounters with women and men (and boys) alike, has disappeared. Like Oedipus, he comes up short in his defining moment of potential sexual initiation and salvation, but he does so in the coalface of mass public scrutiny and under the gaze of the barbarian desert hordes and the imperial Roman soldiers and gentry alike. This is public humiliation on a grand scale.

Fellini uses *kecak* sound to capture the ups and downs of Encolpius's roller coaster ride of sexual annihilation with deft skill. As in *Oedipus*, *kecak*'s diegetic materialization in the sphere of mythic barbarianism functions to sonically embody the virility, vitality, and titillation of the spectator mob in their anticipation and encouragement of a good show of ritualized sexual conquest. Energetic *kecak* music commences the moment that Encolpius mounts "Ariadne." It continues as the camera pans to her face, which first registers arousal and then disgust as Encolpius goes soft. The sound of *kecak* fades away and disappears, as anticipated virility is replaced by disappointing impotence.

Rattled but determined, Encolpius begs the seductress for another chance. He thrusts forward onto her again, reanimating the *kecak*-chanting crowd, but the result is the same and the *kecak* fades out once more. This time she curses him, spits on him, and kicks him into the ditch that has been dug around her ritual love altar. As the proconsul, his entourage, and the barbarian masses vacate the ceremonial ground hastily, some angry "savages" run toward the ditch to throw

stones at Encolpius. The sound of *kecak* reemerges to underscore their hostile rage and Encolpius's fearful anguish, then dissipates once again, leaving Encolpius accompanied only by the sound of the wind and his sometime ally, sometime adversary, Ascyltus (Ascylto), as he lies injured and distraught in the ditch. "My sword is blunted," Encolpius whines to Ascyltus, who laughs derisively at him in response to this latest humiliation.[8]

Kecak, the Barbaric, the Modern, and the Postmodern in *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*

In both *Oedipus* and *Satyricon*, the schizophonically rematerialized sound of Balinese *kecak* is used to give voice to vital, sexual, and powerful "barbarian" bodies of an ancient, imaginary, mythic past. Implicit in the films' idealized manifestations of a barbarian body politic is a corollary chastising critique of the sick, wild, and impotent eclecticism of modernity, which is hinged metaphorically to the proto-modernity of Greco/Roman mythic antiquity.

As proto-modern beings cast into exile and caught in liminal spaces of identity crisis that inevitably lead to tragic ends, the protagonists of these films, Oedipus and Encolpius, are given opportunities to claim (or reclaim) their essential, primal humanity through rites of sexual initiation. Both fail to achieve the desired ends and are thereby relegated to cruel fates.

Kecak sound, in its attachment to the idealized barbarian body, becomes a sonic ground upon which the manhood of Oedipus and Encolpius – and in turn their vital human force – is tested and found wanting. In the end, this same sound becomes a sonic exclamation point foretelling their tragic destinies as its own vital force, its latent potency, eludes their grasp. In *kecak*, dispossessed of the integrity of its Balinese identity and repossessed in the postmodern imaginings of mythic antiquity, Pasolini and Fellini found fertile sonic ground upon which to build edifices of their own aesthetic and ideological leanings in the cinematic negotiation and renegotiation of pre-modern, modern, and postmodern ontologies, sensibilities, and epistemologies.

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8 For an alternate interpretation of the episodes of *Satyricon* described here, see Burke (1996:168-179). See also Burke and Waller 2002 and Bondanella 2002 on related matters of Fellini interpretation.

Conclusion: Schizophonic Kecak, Postmodern Cinema, and Postmodern Bali

In its consideration of *kecak* sound as an unhinged, signifying sonic object subjected to radicalizing, postmodern processes of schizophonic mimesis in two Italian films of the late 1960s, Pasolini's *Oedipus Rex* and Fellini's *Satyricon*, this essay has been less concerned with "postmodern Bali" or Balineseness per se than with the unwitting contribution of anonymized, invisible-ized Balinese musicians (i.e., *kecak* performers) to the construction of European postmodernity at a critical and transformative juncture in cinematic history.

The genre of *kecak*, as both a "local" Balinese phenomenon and the product of myriad historical and contemporary processes of globalization and glocalization, is ripe with opportunities for investigating postmodernism through diverse lenses of Balinese experience, performance, agency, and creative process. Indeed, such investigation has already yielded several publications (McKean 1979, Bakan 2009, Stepputat 2010 and 2011[9]) and holds the potential for much fruitful future research as well.

Here, however, I have consciously limited my discussion to an address of how *kecak*, as an artifact of sound art effectively stripped of any orienting Balinese identity-based frame of reference, contributed to the artistic development of postmodern consciousness and production not in Bali, but rather elsewhere. I have argued, moreover, that the capacity of *kecak* to do this transcultural work on behalf of postmodernism's Italian-cum-international efflorescence essentially demanded the erasure of its identity relative to any sense or senses of Balinese place, time, personhood, or history. To invoke Pasolini once again, *kecak* sound had to be rendered a-temporal, a-historical, meta-historical, in order to qualify for inclusion in the mythic worlds of postmodern antiquity that he and Fellini invented in their films.

Through the films discussed in this chapter and through their work of the late 1960s more generally, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Federico Fellini contributed to a revolutionary turn toward postmodern practices and values of artistic creation and production that would henceforth prove deeply impactful on a global scale, including in Bali itself. In the domain of Balinese *musik kontemporer* especially,

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9 For descriptive, analytical, and historic accounts of the Balinese *kecak*, see also Dibia 1996, Bandem/deBoer 1998, and de Zoete/Spies 1939.

one may infer powerful resonances of the postmodern aesthetic and identity politics of Pasolini and Fellini, whether directly or indirectly. The persona of the pasticheur, as portrayed autobiographically by Pasolini and developed in his and Fellini's films, is very much in evidence in the personalities and musical works of *kontemporer* composers such as Wayan Yudane and Gede Arsana (McGraw 2009, in press). So too is the privileging of "stylistic contamination" as a generative creative and adaptive process, which in the *musik kontemporer* case engages dialectically with Bali's own mythic and classical past in the Balinese-transcultural-metacultural postmodern present.

This is not to claim lineages of influence on *musik kontemporer* issuing directly from Pasolini or Fellini, let alone from *Oedipus Rex* or *Satyricon* specifically (although I suspect that further research could indeed reveal such links, at least in the case of some *kontemporer* composers). Rather, it is to suggest that these two iconic Italian filmmakers, availing themselves of Balinese sonic resources among a plethora of others, effected renegotiations, rematerializations, and complete erasures of identity that contributed decisively to the shaping of the postmodern world as such, and in the process to all that such a world may be seen, or heard, to contain.

Kecak, as a form of sound art dispossessed of its "real" identity and rematerialized in the literal and figurative spaces of the postmodern imaginary, represents a small but substantive piece of this intricate puzzle: Bitter's recording of a Balinese *kecak* troupe from Bona, released around 1965 on a Le Chant du Monde Balinese music compilation LP, has followed an incongruous yet significant schizophonic path in placing its uniquely Balinese audio stamp on the envelope of the history of postmodernity broadly conceived, with *musik kontemporer* arguably representing a return address, or an eternal return, in the delivery process. In the context of this essay, then, "postmodern Bali" might ultimately be seen as a Bali obliterated and rendered invisible, yet one that nonetheless retains an audible presence in the postmodern bricolage of worlds, real and imaginary, from which it partially emerged and to which it has in some sense partially returned.

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