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What is Temporal Art? A Persistent Question Revisited

John Powell

Abstract

This article examines the fourteen conditions constituting Levinson and Alperson's taxonomy of conditions for temporal arts. It claims that some of the conditions and several of the lists of arts exemplifying them need revision. It recommends adding a new condition concerned with the effects of the passage of time on gardens, environmental sculpture, and outdoor installations. The article concludes that gardens may be a model for understanding and appreciating other arts sharing the same bi-(multi-) modality.

Key Words

gardens, temporal art, time

1. Introduction

In "What Is a Temporal Art?," Jerrold Levinson and Philip Alperson answer the title's question by proposing a list of conditions, one or more of which is sufficient to classify an art work as temporal.^[1] They situate their argument in the context of well-known claims by Gotthold Lessing, Victor Zuckerkandl, and others that some arts, such as music, are temporal and others, such as painting, are not, and they aim "to cover all that might conceivably be meant in predicating temporality of an art form."^[2]

Their article has four sections. Section one is a short introduction. Section two is a descriptive list of thirteen conditions qualifying an art work as temporal. Section three assembles those conditions into object-, experience-, and content-focused groups and, acknowledging the groups' interconnectedness, proposes a fourteenth condition that encompasses the other thirteen. Section four addresses the question of whether one art is the most temporal of all.

In this paper, I first offer a general critique of the intent of Levinson and Alperson's article and the assumptions it involves. Second, I examine critically the fourteen conditions for temporal art to assess the validity and relevance of those individual conditions and the implications for membership, or non-membership, of the category that each condition brings.

After a brief consideration of the questions Levinson and Alperson raise regarding the aesthetic values of different manifestations of time and temporality I suggest, finally, that an understanding of how gardens function may lead to a better understanding and richer experience of works in some other art genres.

2. General critique

I will now clarify what I mean by the word 'time' because my use of that word has a bearing on my analysis of Levinson and Alperson's paper. I adopt the meaning of time from Thomas Clifton in *Music as Heard*^[3] as interpreted by Jonathan

Kramer. This meaning is concise, uses straightforward language, and emphasizes the eventual, processual, and temporal aspects of the art experience with which Levinson and Alpers are concerned. According to Kramer, "[t]ime is a relationship between people and the events they perceive."^[4] Time, therefore, is not a thing that exists independently. It exists only by way of our personal or communal experiencing of objects and events. Nor can time flow. It is, instead, our experiences of objects and events that flow, and in this way an apparent time appears to flow.

Understanding time in this way means that what is commonly thought of as chronological time is "little more than a social convention [for ordering the relationship between people and the events they perceive] agreed to for practical reasons."^[5] Chronological time tells us nothing about the process of the relationship between people and events; it merely allows us to agree when and for how long the process occurred.

The relational process of time encompasses what we perceive and experience happening to, in, and between objects and events before they begin, as they persist, and after they have ceased. In art works that unfold temporally, the process of this relationship is a complex, continuous process of framing, reframing, remembering, and anticipating features of the work that are organized at different hierarchical levels. In music, for example, we pay attention to pitches, rhythms, dynamics, meters, and formal elements organized into phrases, melodies, sections, movements, and entire works. That chronological time is meanwhile passing is irrelevant (although not by all accounts) to the evolving musical piece except as an aid to, say, coordinating our watches to agree about the length of the process, synching tracks in a recording studio, or identifying a historical period when the work was composed or performed in the past. ^[6]

The authors use 'time,' 'temporal,' and 'temporality' in ways that require the words to stand for different concepts in different sections in their article. I refer to this in more detail below. Briefly, in conditions 1, 2, and 6, 'time' refers to something commonly thought of as chronological time. In condition 7 'time' and 'timelessness' refer to something like experiential time; and in condition 9 'time' refers to "a kind of time that is peculiar to the [work]" and is presumably neither chronological nor experiential, in the commonly understood senses of those terms.

I believe it is a shortcoming of their article that the authors do not venture any definition of what they mean when they use the terms 'time,' 'temporal,' and 'temporality.' This is perhaps understandable given that the point of the article is to define by way of conditions what everyone means when they use these terms. I hope to show, however, that their unstated biases regarding the meaning of these terms lead to unsatisfactory inclusions and omissions from the lists of art works and genres exemplifying each condition, as well as to other problems. I believe (a) that the authors' use of 'time,' 'temporal,' and 'temporality' to refer to different, unspecified concepts within their article is confusing and (b) that these same terms have meanings other than those implied, meanings that, were they to be recognized and included,

would affect some of the conclusions the authors draw.

Levinson and Alpersen present a taxonomy of thirteen conditions, plus one additional overarching condition, having a bearing on an art work's temporality. Their conditions are presented as sufficient, but it can be argued that some of them, including conditions 1, 2, and 3, are indeed necessary for an art work to be temporal. The taxonomy is presented as a straightforward classificatory tool. The authors say they aim "...to make sense of familiar intuitions about the arts..." and it is therefore reasonable to assume that by using such a taxonomy, we can work out what artists, performers, the public, and even philosophers mean when they use the terms 'time' and 'temporal' in relation to the arts.[\[7\]](#)

Because it is a classificatory taxonomy, the authors generally avoid normative terminology, although 'proper,' 'properly,' and 'centrally' make occasional appearances. They do, however, refer to normative claims made by others, including Susanne Langer, Susan Sontag, Gerald Mast, Victor Zuckerkandl, and Gotthold Lessing.

The authors claim to be interested in the possession and expression of time and temporality by standard or paradigm works in the genres of an art form. And they add further, "... that avant-garde or self-consciously experimental instances of the art might not meet the condition would not count against its adequacy as a characterization of the art form's temporal status."[\[8\]](#) I believe their exclusion of the avant-garde and experimental is problematic for three reasons.

First, few philosophers (including, I imagine, the authors) would consider devising a set of conditions to define art on the grounds that the avant-garde need not be included. For example, Levinson's intentional-historical definition, "... an artwork is a thing that has been seriously intended for regard in any way pre-existing or prior artworks are or were correctly regarded" seems generous in relation to avant-garde genres and objects.[\[9\]](#)

Second, the avant-garde often becomes conventional in time. What was cutting edge when Levinson and Alpersen published their paper is by now old hat and even, in some cases, established. In recent times this has been especially true of progress and possibilities in the fields of computer and video arts, the scale and rate of which developments the authors, to be fair, could not reasonably have foreseen.

Third, their exclusion of the avant-garde and experimental is problematic because some of the most important artistic manifestations of time and temporality are to be found in progressive and avant-garde art. For example, Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* (1913), Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), Dali's *Persistence of Memory* (1931), and Joyce's *Ulysses* (c. 1920) are all works that have progressed from being avant-garde to being classic in the last century. These works were avant-garde because of their temporality, among other elements, and it seems unreasonable to assume that temporality will not continue to be an important, even constitutive element of some avant-garde art.

So while I recognize the authors' qualification about avant-

garde and experimental art, I will refer to such works in this paper because not to do so means that important areas of temporal art will remain unaccounted for.

3. The taxonomy

In this section I quote Levinson and Alperson's fourteen conditions in turn and consider each of them in the paragraph(s) following its quotation.

(i) Objects of the art form require time for their proper aesthetic appreciation or comprehension.

I agree with the authors that this condition is so widely inclusive that it is not useful for their project. I agree with them that all art objects and events, and our experiences of them, have a durational aspect and that "[t]his temporal aspect is ... not likely to be what anyone has in mind in thinking of the temporal arts as a special group."[\[10\]](#) Unlike the authors, however, I believe that this condition usefully describes three nontrivially temporal aspects of what could be considered a "proper aesthetic appreciation or comprehension" of works of art.

First, as already noted, it is generally accepted that activities such as looking at a painting or sculpture are durational activities even though painting and sculpture are not commonly thought of as temporal art forms. Some claim, however, that our experience of all works of art is nontrivially temporal because it inevitably involves our own past and our past experiences of art, including previous experiences of a given work.[\[11\]](#) This particular temporal aspect of our experience enables us to assess, compare, and, potentially, understand better and experience more deeply a given work of art. Moreover, because our experiences of art are to a degree communal, they are in this way open to being constituted not only by our personal past but also by our shared communal past experiences of art and the culture from which it arises.

Second, T. S. Eliot described how, when composing a new work, the creative artist responds to and is correctly influenced by an awareness of the implications of the unique temporal location of the new work within its own creative tradition and chronology.[\[12\]](#) And similarly, Eliot argued, an "accurate" experience of a given work requires attention not only to any temporal relationships within that work but also to the temporal relationships between that work and its precursors and successors in the genre.

There is a third way of conceptualizing our experience of all art as nontrivially temporal. According to a view promoted by Hans-Georg Gadamer, all art works, whether commonly regarded as temporal or not, have their own unique "time."[\[13\]](#) Gadamer compared that time to the temporal features and qualities of recurring feasts and festivals. He argued that an ideal encounter with a work of art involves tarrying with the work in its own time world and that, in this way, all (ideal) artistic experience is unavoidably temporal.

None of these three interpretations of Condition 1 is referred to in Levinson and Alperson's article, and I believe the paper is therefore an incomplete survey of what constitutes a temporal

art. That said, the introduction and application of three additional interpretations would have increased the length of the study to something far greater than could be presented in one article. Perhaps their overarching Condition 14, *Objects of the art form are such that their proper appreciation centrally involves understanding of temporal relations within them*, deliberately and retrospectively limits the scope they had envisaged for their article.

(ii) Objects of the art form require a significant interval of time for the mere perception or apprehension of their full extent.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal. The authors, however, omit two arts from their list of qualifying art forms. One omission is minor, and I deal with it first.

Painters sometimes create horizontally or vertically extensive works, or exhibit groups of paintings that are to be “read” as one composite work. In such cases a “significant interval of time” is required merely to absorb them. An example of a composite work is Sidney Nolan’s *Ned Kelly* series, and an example of a horizontally extensive painting is Colin McCahon’s *Walk*, measuring over twelve meters in overall length. (The latter work’s title refers punningly to its content and, possibly, to a desirable way of appreciating it.)

Second, contemporary philosophers have claimed that some gardens can qualify as works of art and that gardens as diverse as André Le Nôtre’s for the palace at Versailles and Martha Schwartz’s suburban *Bagel Garden* are paradigms of such gardens.^[14] Although Levinson and Alperson don’t mention gardens here, or indeed anywhere, in their article, I claim that some gardens are candidates for being the most extensive art works and therefore they make the highest durational demands for the “mere perception or apprehension of their full extent.” Several large gardens exceed in this regard the demands of, say, the cathedrals of Chartres and Notre Dame, which are noted elsewhere in the article for their “extraordinary size and scale.”^[15]

(iii) Objects of the art form require time in presentation, i.e., they require performance or exposition of some sort over an interval of time; the parts of the artwork are not all available at any one moment, but only consecutively.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal. Once again, however, gardens constitute an important omission from their list of conforming arts.^[16] I claim that gardens have a greater potential than any other art form to exhibit noticeable nonaleatory changes while still retaining their ontological identity.^[17] But unlike the other arts the authors refer to, gardens are not performances, as the condition deems alternately necessary, because they do not have performers.^[18] Gardens’ most important constituents are living plants, and plants are not performers; sweet peas do not perform, they simply do what sweet peas do. But the ways in which a garden designer arranges the garden elements result in certain temporal (and visual) events being exposed, juxtaposed, and counterpointed, and in this way the garden can be seen as an exposition, as alternately required

by this condition.

Finally, a garden is never the same; it is always perceivably changing. So, in this additional sense, the time of the "presentation" of the garden is limited only by the garden's initial installation and final destruction.

Similar claims can be made for installations such as Damien Hurst's *Thousand Years* (1990) or his *Let's Eat Outdoors Today* (1990-91), which feature living and decomposing elements, such as items of food, maggots, flies, blood, and a cow's head. Such works require time for their presentation, and not all aspects and stages of the component elements are available for viewing at any one time.

(iv) Objects of the art form consist of elements or parts arranged in a linear order, with definite direction, from first to last.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal and generally agree with the authors' list of conforming arts.

Although it's not made clear in this condition, I assume that the authors mean to imply that the elements within the work are arranged by its creator in an immutable sequence. If this is the case then, with a small extension to the implied meaning, the condition can also accommodate some established contemporary works with a linear order that start and finish but do not have an invariable sequence of parts or sections within their overarching structure. If the condition's implied meaning is expanded so that the arrangement of elements can be done by the creator, the performer, the recipient, or some combination of these agents, then a number of previously excluded works can be included.

One such work is Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch*.^[19] It is an early example of a literary work in which the reader is free to order the sections as he sees fit or as his fancy takes him. In such works the reader organizes the structure of the narrative for himself. ^[20] This is different from, say, skipping ahead to read the ending of a novel before it appears sequentially according to the author's ordering. In the former case, the ordering of sections constitutes part of the work's aesthetic interest. In the latter case the reordering of sections results merely from the reader's impatience or indifference.

(v) Objects of the art form are properly experienced in the order in which their elements are determinately arranged, and at a rate defined by, or inherent in, the artwork itself or its prescribed mode of presentation or performance.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal and generally agree with the authors' list of conforming arts. I have, however, two comments to make.

First, the authors ignore the fact that poetry is, first and foremost a performance art. Spoken poetry certainly conforms with this condition, but poetry is listed, along with the novel, as an art that is not accommodated by the condition. The authors do, however, admit that the way the poem is written may influence the rate at which a silent reading of it proceeds. Somewhat surprisingly, given their earlier comments

regarding experimental art, they support this latter claim by referring to the work of the (then) experimental Québécoise poet Nicole Broissard.

Second, just as in the case of Condition 4, a small alteration of intent in the text of the condition allows the accommodation of established contemporary works. The authors' qualification "determinately arranged" means, I assume, "arranged by the creator of the work."[\[21\]](#) If the intent can be broadened to mean "arranged by the creator or performer of the work," then a significant group of other works can be included.

An example of such a work is Karlheinz Stockhausen's 1956 "Piano Piece XI," in which the ordering and the manner of performance of the composed sound segments are at the same time free in their sequencing and highly determined in their articulation. The performer is free to choose the sequence of sound segments, each of which finishes with a meticulously specified set of written instructions about how to play the next segment, which will be the segment, in the extra-large musical score, on which the pianist's eyes next light.[\[22\]](#) This work is one example of aleatory and quasi-aleatory music that appeared during the third quarter of the twentieth century. While much of it proved ephemeral in its appeal, some, like the Stockhausen piece, have endured and are now considered classics.

(vi) Objects of the art form are such that non-temporally extended parts of the object do not count as aesthetically significant units of it. That is to say, such parts are not isolatable for study in a way that contributes significantly to the full experience of the object.

I do not consider this condition useful in achieving what I take to be the authors' aim of distinguishing between two different genres of temporal art. They compare music and films and decide that music is temporal in a way that film is not, explaining that music is not divisible into small units "isolatable for study in a way that contributes significantly to the full experience of the object," whereas film is. [\[23\]](#)

The authors' comparison of "freeze-framing" a film or video and "pausing" a music CD is unhelpful. Their claim that you get a complete but brief sense unit when you freeze a film and nothing when you pause a CD is, of course, true. But while the claim does tell us how the two arts and their modes of reproduction are differently constructed, it tells us nothing about how the arts (a) can be similarly experienced and (b) have similar content with respect to this condition.

Both film and music require the perceiver to combine and organize discrete sensory inputs into larger sense units. In the former case, because its technology limits it to a fast-moving succession of mechanically presented, discrete images, a film can be dissected to expose one or more of the constituent discrete sensory inputs. In the latter case, music, as perceived when it is performed or heard live, is not experientially separable into a series of discrete, minute, isolated phenomena in the way that, analogously, film is when it is projected.[\[24\]](#) But this does not mean that a temporal slice of music is either inaudible or not "isolatable for

study.”[25] A single chord, for example, can certainly be an “aesthetically significant unit” of a musical composition.[26]

The first 136 bars of the prelude to Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* are built on a single chord (harmony) introduced gradually at the start, and that chord’s varied appearances in, for example, bars 1, 5, and 11 could well serve as aesthetically significant units isolatable for study. And further, to reintroduce the avant-garde, Stockhausen’s “Piano Piece IX” begins with 184 repetitions of a single chord. Individual chords taken appropriately from these two examples surely constitute aesthetically significant units. Likewise, in poetry a single monosyllabic word, or in dance a frozen movement or gesture, or in a garden a “frozen” view may all be aesthetically significant units. That “sound bites” of music, poetry, dance, and gardens are not, like film, convenient segments, mechanically extractable at the rate of twenty-four divisions per second seems irrelevant. Furthermore, a sound bite taken from an instance of these arts may also reasonably be any (shortish) length, it need not necessarily equate to the length of a single frame of film. It would be difficult to argue that such extracts “are not isolatable for study in a way that contributes significantly to the full experience of the object.”

(vii) Objects of the art form are about time, or our experience thereof, in some significant way.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal, but I claim that music, some minor exceptions notwithstanding, should not, for the reason I now introduce, feature on the authors’ list of conforming genres.

If the preposition *about* in the condition is taken to mean something like “having as its subject” or “concerning,” then the paintings and film they cite are nicely accommodated by the condition. Although they do not cite a novel, Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* or Joyce’s *Ulysses* would be appropriate examples. These works are all representational. We know they are dealing with time because the words or images they contain make this clear. Thus they are about time or our experience of it. But the same cannot be said of music, which is not representational in this way. Although I claim that music cannot be about these things, an ideal experience of listening to music may entail a particular temporal encounter that is triggered by the music, or by the title of a piece. For example, “Regard du Temps,” from Messiaen’s *Vingt Regards sur l’enfant Jésus*, may suggest that that piece has a temporal content. I return to this claim under Condition 9 below.

It is possible that the preposition *about* in the condition references Arthur Danto’s notion of “aboutness”- that is, the quality of an object or event that distinguishes it as an art work from other things. If this is the case, then music, and theoretically any other art, potentially conforms to Condition 7.

(viii) Objects of the art form use time as a material, or as an important structural feature.

It is hard to know what the authors intend with the wording of this condition. I agree with them that, in a weaker sense, all art making, performing, and reception are unavoidably temporal, but, that said, it is not clear why this condition,

even in its stronger sense, needs to exist at all. It overlaps with Conditions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7, and I'm not convinced that it accommodates or excludes any genres or combinations of genres that the other conditions don't accommodate or exclude.

Another problem is that the authors here link novels with four performance arts to make up the primary list of arts conforming with this condition while, at the same time, they fail to acknowledge that a novel's approach to temporality differs fundamentally from that of the performance arts. In whatever way they conceptualize "time," its presence in a novel is quite different from its presence in a performance art.

If the condition is to be retained, then I think its stronger claim can be better served by rewriting it as follows: "Objects of the art form use change, including rate(s) of change, which we necessarily perceive and attend to, in temporal successions, as a material or as an important structural feature." This new formulation sidesteps the problem caused by the authors' not defining "time" and by that concept's notorious slipperiness.

Finally, the authors name architecture as a genre that may fit this condition on the basis of what they claim to be the durational and sequential aspects of our experience of large buildings such as, in their examples, Notre Dame and Chartres cathedrals.

Their claim is only partially true because our temporal experience of such architecture is structured and formed by us primarily and by the building only secondarily.

(ix) Objects of the art form generate a kind of time that is peculiar to them, that exists for a perceiver only in and through experience of the work.

I am interested that this condition appears in the taxonomy because it seems to be in conflict with Alperson's earlier position. In his excellent paper of 1980, "'Musical Time' and Music as an 'Art of Time,'" he concludes "...that the use of the phrase 'musical time' to delineate a special kind of time created by music is a mistake."[\[27\]](#) By itself, this earlier comment does not mean that the particular condition should not be included in the taxonomy. It is simply evidence that there can be confusion about these matters and that working definitions of time and temporality might have been included in the paper and been useful in explaining the apparent *volte-face*. While Condition 9 may be taken to apply to a range of temporal arts, I would now like to pursue it further simply in relation to music and Alperson's quoted comment.

I claimed earlier that "[t]ime is the relationship between people and the events they perceive."[\[28\]](#) If this is the case, then music cannot on its own be said to generate time, and the condition should be modified to reflect this. We could choose to say instead that music offers sonic events tailor-made for our relating to it and that in this way music generates opportunities for temporal experiences. Now, if this is the case, then it may be reasonable to claim that certain compositions present sonic structures, events, and patterns in ways that manipulate our reactions and relationships to them.

And in this particular limited but important sense, we might say that something akin to musical time does exist.

(x) Objects of the art form represent a series of events in time distinct from the series of events constituting the art object.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal, and I agree that film, novels, and theater are strong examples of genres conforming with it. Still it is unclear, however, why the authors have omitted poetry from their list, given that it shares with the listed arts the same characteristics in relation to this condition.

The authors have here chosen to restrict the meaning of 'represent' (and, later in the text, 'representation') to a version of what might be called manipulated mimesis. According to this view, a sequence of, say, a car chase can (a) be more or less realistically represented in text or on film and (b) proceed differently from the sequence of, and take more or less time than, the time the actual or imagined car chase takes. The authors fairly claim that such temporal dislocation and "distemporization" is a hallmark of the novel and film in particular.

If they were to broaden the range of meaning of 'representation' then one further art would appear to become exemplary of the condition. They quote Susanne Langer in support of their Condition 9, and, if they are to take her and others espousing similar positions, such as Leonard Meyer, at their word, then music might be said to "represent a series of events in time distinct from the series of events constituting the art object."[\[29\]](#) According to this view, a suitably qualified listener reacts to music's elements in a way that involves re-enacting emotional, psychical events from her "real" life.

Music, therefore, might be said to represent psychical events in a sequence and time distinct from the way those events occurred in real life and without reference to the agents and events that triggered the psychical events. This would be in accord with Langer's view that music represents or implies dynamic inner states in our "real" lives and that we are able to re-experience the emotions of those events without experiencing the events themselves. Thus music, too, might be exemplary of Condition 10.

Plausible as this notion of representation may seem, however, I claim that it is in fact not representation but re-stimulation or re-presentation of emotion that is involved in the case of music. A listener is not aware of any process or representation occurring. Instead, emotions are stimulated in the absence of any representation of or reference to the generating events because music cannot represent or refer in these ways. So, tempting as it might be to think of Langer's view of music as in some way involving representation, this is not the case; and therefore the view of music's potential that I rejected in connection with Condition 7, that is, that music can be said to be about something or to have something as its subject, is confirmed.

(xi) Objects of the art form are created in the act of presentation, so that the time of creation, time

of presentation and (usually) time of reception all coincide.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal and agree that improvisatory works are exemplary of it. At the same time, I suggest that *re-creation* be offered as an alternative to *creation* in the condition in order to (a) give greater weight to the role of the interpretive performer of nonimprovisational works and (b) allow for certain musical activities, including continuo realizing and cadenza playing, in which spontaneous or rehearsed improvisation is part of an otherwise notated work.

(xii) Objects of the art form require presentation in a time lived through and by the presenters.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal and agree that live performances and improvisations are exemplary of it.

(xiii) Objects of the art form lack relatively fixed identities over time, but are rather mutable and shifting.

I accept this condition to describe a work as temporal and agree that some folk arts with only oral traditions of transmission are exemplary of it.

The authors offer a final, fourteenth condition that, they claim, straddles the previous conditions and the implications of their grouping of them into the three sub-groups referred to earlier. It reads:

(xiv) Objects of the art form are such that their proper appreciation centrally involves understanding of temporal relations within them.

I agree with the authors that "... when an art form is described as "temporal," without any further specification of what is meant, then [Condition 14] ... provides the best overall default construal."[\[30\]](#) In the condition, however, the word 'centrally' creates a problem. Does it equate to 'significantly,' or 'principally,' or 'is required to?' The problem is seen most clearly in the case of arts that have temporal aspects that constitute their aesthetic appeal and value, aspects that are not the only or the strongest or necessarily the most obvious claimants to that role in the work. Gardens and environmental sculptures provide good examples of arts in which aesthetic appeal and value derive from both temporal and pictorial (spatial) features of the works. I do not mean to suggest, however, that we can consider or quantify the visual and temporal aspects of such arts as if they are discrete, independent aspects of a work. They are complexly interwoven, and I believe the condition would be improved were this complexity to be acknowledged.

4. A new condition

There exists one inescapably important temporal feature that is not considered anywhere in the taxonomy. This feature affects some architecture and installations, all gardens, and some environmental sculpture, and might be reflected in a new condition reading as follows:

(xv) Objects of the art form are aesthetically dependent to varying degrees on the transitions, movements, actions, and patterns of biological, diurnal, seasonal, climatic, and sometimes geological changes, most of which occur in temporally experienced sequences.

I claim that this proposed condition is of fundamental importance to the art of gardens. The proposed "condition xv," and the content of Section 5 that follows, owe a significant debt to the important pioneering work in the philosophy of art gardens carried out by Mara Miller and Stephanie Ross, and by later writers who have developed similar or related accounts of gardens.[\[31\]](#)

5. Four-dimensional works of art

In their conclusion, Levinson and Aplerson suggest that their work could be extended by responding to two questions: First, which art is the "most" temporal, and on what basis might that be determined? And, second, do some of their conditions for temporality carry with them more aesthetic significance than others?

I agree with the authors that an Oscars-style response, where the winner is the one with the most votes, would be an unenlightening response to the first question, unless some agreed value was attributed to each aspect of temporality making up their taxonomy. I further agree with them that to be minimally useful any such ascription of value would need to be couched in the context of a single, higher-level conception of art.

I believe their second question is a much more apt one. But, as I suggest in relation to Condition 14, ensuring that the weighing process produces useful results is not as straightforward as Levinson and Alperson seem to believe.

There are two reasons why the weighing process is more complex than the authors acknowledge. First, some art genres, such as gardens, environmental sculpture, and some installations and architecture, are at the same time significantly temporal and significantly pictorial. They therefore pose the problem of how their temporality is to be weighed. Is it to be weighed as a discrete quality or is it to be weighed as some sort of composite quality? And then, is it a temporal-*pictorial* quality or is it a pictorial-*temporal* quality? Or is it something else again?

And, second, even if and when the weighing parameters are clarified, there remains a bigger question to address: Is it possible to make useful and insightful claims about the aesthetic weight of manifestations of temporality in art works in general without regard to the weight or significance of temporality in a specific genre and even in a specific work?

My answer to this question is a qualified yes, and, in particular, I propose that the way temporality is manifested in gardens may have interesting implications for the way we understand the temporal nature of some other arts. To this end I will now restate claims I have made earlier, here and elsewhere, about the complex nature of gardens, and I will do

so using as a framework Levinson and Alperson's tripartite distinction of object-, experience-, and content-based conditions.^[32]

As objects, gardens typically display both pictorial (spatial) and temporal qualities and features. They can be conceptualized as two-dimensional pictures, as three-dimensional sculptures, and as four-dimensional environments. Gardens are also richly endowed with opportunities for olfactory, kinesthetic, and tactile experiences.^[33] Because of this complexity I claim that gardens are, *pace* Kant, more than "a kind of painting" with nature's "products," and an adequate understanding of them ought to acknowledge their modal complexity.^[34]

As vehicles for experiences based on a viewer's awareness of formal qualities and features, gardens offer aesthetic encounters commonly associated with the visual arts as well as with the temporal art of music.^[35] Any adequate account of gardens ought to acknowledge their capacity for providing these two different but interconnected types of experience(s).

As conveyors of content, gardens can be about visual qualities such as beauty and grace, they can represent mimetically, they can in other ways represent concepts such as attitudes to nature or power and dominion, and they can both be about and instantiate time and its passage. ^[36]

In summary, gardens resist neat categorization as a pictorial or temporal art. Gardens are both, separately, but they function as more, or something different again, when considered as simultaneously pictorial and temporal. Perhaps this feature of (art) gardens can provide a key to understanding the complex interplay of temporal and other aesthetic modes in different art genres where the interplay is significantly present.

A study that builds on Levinson and Alperson's, while addressing the issues raised above, could investigate more complex problems and provide more revealing solutions than the original paper managed to do.^[37]

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Endnotes

^[1] Jerrold Levinson and Philip Alperson, "What Is a Temporal Art?," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 16 (1991), 439-50.

^[2] Levinson and Alperson, p. 447.

[3] Jonathan D. Kramer, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (London, New York: Schirmer Books, 1988).

[4] Kramer, p. 5.

[5] Kramer.

[6] Jeff Pressing, "Relations between Musical and Scientific Properties of Time," *Contemporary Music Review* 7, no. 2 (1993).

[7] Levinson and Alperson, p. 441.

[8] Levinson and Alperson, p. 440.

[9] Levinson's definition is quoted in Thomas Adajian, "The Definition of Art," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2012).

[10] Levinson and Alperson p. 441.

[11] Gregory Currie, *An Ontology of Art* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989).

[12] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919)," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975).

[13] See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: University of Cambridge Press, 1986).

[14] The concept of garden *qua* art is explored extensively in Mara Miller, *The Garden as an Art* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); and Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[15] Levinson and Alperson p. 444.

[16] For expositions of temporality in gardens, see Ismay Barwell and John Powell, "Gardens, Music, and Time," in *Gardening-Philosophy for Everyone- Cultivating Wisdom*, ed. Dan O'Brien (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); and Mara Miller, "Time and Temporality in the Garden," in the same volume.

[17] They also involve significant aleatory changes, but this is not of interest here.

[18] For a thought-provoking presentation of an opposing view, see Mateusz Salwa, "The Garden as a Performance," *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* 5 (2013).

[19] Julio Cortazar, *Hopscotch*, trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Pantheon, 1966).

[20] This structural device is also commonplace in video- and computer game- art genres.

[21] Levinson and Alperson p. 442.

[22] The freedom that "Piano Piece XI" exemplifies is different from the total absence of restraint found in the work of John Cage and others. Cage's work is aleatory, whereas

Stockhausen's is aleatory *and* "determinately arranged."

[23] Levinson and Alperson p. 443.

[24] For some possibly unintended support of my claim, see Jerrold Levinson, *Music in the Moment* (Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

[25] Levinson and Alperson p. 443.

[26] Levinson and Alperson.

[27] Philip Alperson, "'Musical Time' and Music as an 'Art of Time,'" *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism*, 38, 4 (1980), 407.

[28] Kramer, p. 5.

[29] Levinson and Alperson, p. 444. See also, Leonard B Meyer, *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

[30] Levinson and Alperson, p. 447.

[31] See Jan Kenneth Birksted, "Landscape History and Theory: From Subject Matter to Analytic Tool," *Landscape Review*, 8, 2 (2003); Miller, *The Garden as an Art*; Ross, *What Gardens Mean*; and Salwa, "The Garden as a Performance."

[32] Levinson and Alperson, p. 446.

[33] For accounts of gardens' olfactory dimension, see Miller, *The Garden as an Art*, p. 32; and Marta Tafalla, "Smell and Anosmia in the Appreciation of Gardens," *Contemporary Aesthetics*, 12 (2014).

[34] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), §51.

[35] For example, see Barwell and Powell, "Gardens, Music, and Time."

[36] For examples of mimesis, see Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, chapters 4-5. For "nonmimetic" representation, see, for example Ann Kuttner, "Delight and Danger in the Roman Water Garden: Sperlonga and Tivoli," in *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion*, ed. M. Conan (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003).

[37] I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer at *Contemporary Aesthetics* and reviewers at another publication for their helpful comments.
