

Simultaneity of voice in Orthodox liturgy – a cantor’s musings...

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Clement Greenberg once wrote a review on the work of John Wheelwright, in which he castigated the poet’s inability to distance his work from his personal experience:

The events which gave rise to the poetry are not sufficiently removed from their private contexts in the poet’s mind; they have not been allowed to subside and cool off into art. To make his experience, or what he makes of his experience, available to others, the artist must be dishonest with himself to some extent. [He] was not able or not willing to practice the necessary insincerities of communication; this absolute honesty sanctioned the bewildering, misleading, and seemingly captious items that fill his poems, underneath which the reader will often look in vain for the directive logic, poetic or otherwise, that should organize and sustain them. They seem to be justified by little except the fact that they were of the poet’s mind when the poems took place there. But the *real* poet... should not be too honest. He should have some amount of social expertness, be something of a hypocrite, if only to be good at his craft. Otherwise the intensity and the uniqueness with which he feels will choke him.ⁱ

Seventy years later, Greenberg’s description of the artist as something of a deliberate and measured communicator seems almost quaint when compared to the unalloyed self-intimacy inherent in much of contemporary art. It points to a set of alternative avenues available for the communication of experience, to a series of voices that make up the artist’s palette and the uneven success with which they might be employed. Most importantly, perhaps, it acknowledges the prospect that one’s “self” can be imposed to the detriment of effective and creative communication – one’s “own” voice is, in fact, only one of the many voices with which the artist can choose to speak, and not necessarily the one best suited to the endeavour.

As a cantor in the Orthodox Church, this particular passage has always left me both intrigued and a bit rattled since first reading it. Though the concerns of a church musician are hardly parallel to those of a poet, and even somewhat removed from those of the typical musician – the role of a cantor is necessarily described as “artistic” and employs the same techniques singers use, yet remains unconnected with the realm of “the arts” in practice and output – there are intersections between them that resonate. Greenberg speaks to what I have come to understand as an essential detachment and non-imposition of self in the musical completion I provide for the various texts which are sung liturgically. As I hope to demonstrate, any step towards realizing “self-expression” is undesirable, even antithetical to the task at hand – there is no room for the imposition of one’s “own” voice in the proceedings because it is neither the cantor’s communicable experience nor his identity as a sovereign individual which comprise the content of his work. Much of what transpires musically, in fact, requires a

deliberate stepping outside of oneself in order to assume the voices of others, not in the way an actor does playing a character on stage by donning a mask and engaging in dramatic imitation, but by incarnating and giving acoustic substance to the multiplicity of otherwise silent voices speaking through and in the liturgical texts themselves. This is fundamentally an ecstatic actⁱⁱ, and not at all obvious at first glance.

It is fairly simple and not terribly enlightening to focus a discussion of church music on its aesthetics and execution. Singing technique and repertoire choice – and the extensive historical insight that might be brought into play with both these necessary considerations – address the mechanics of a cantor’s role, and are easily relatable to a broad audience for whom music is even vaguely interesting. When considering his role and identity in the context of Orthodox liturgical worship, however, an interwoven series of far more obscured factors that encompass not only the cantor as a creator of liturgical sound, but also as an interpreter of texts, an artist, a liturgical participant (both as an individual and as part of a wider corporate body of worshippers) as well as a concelebrant need to be taken into account. Add to this mix a diversity of thought regarding how music is created, used and appreciated, not to mention confusion surrounding what a liturgical act actually is and how this colours the above roles and techniques, and what results is something of a morass – as soon as a particular role or identity is established, it cannot but become unseated by reference to another equally important but distinct one. This ambiguity in role and functional voice is, quite frankly, a far more interesting and potentially fruitful direction to explore, but is constrained by a near-universal unfamiliarity with the liturgical sensibilities which previous generations lived and breathed, and specifically those peculiar to the Orthodox Church.ⁱⁱⁱ

For simplicity’s sake, I will attempt to proceed without reference to the musical side of the cantor’s role at all in order to focus on the way he makes present the voices within the liturgical texts.^{iv} (Arguably, the present state of liturgical practices involves a far broader spectrum of liturgical singers than simply a single cantor – including groups of cantors, choirs and attempts at congregational singing – but those situations require a far more involved discussion that would distract from the present concern.) To orient ourselves, it helps first to imagine the cantor in the space in which liturgy is enacted: a church – the particular architectural details of which are irrelevant – in which the congregation stands oriented towards a multi-tiered icon screen at the eastern end of the nave, behind which is the altar and where the clergy spend the majority of the liturgical office. The cantor stands at a lectern in front and off to one side of the icon screen, facing neither the people nor the altar, but towards the centre of the liturgical space – this puts him roughly perpendicular to the otherwise east-facing collection of congregation and clergy running through the length of the church.^v Already, an ambiguity arises in the physical separation of cantor from both the congregation and celebrants, where he is not identifiable as belonging firmly to either group based on his position. A case might be made for inclusion in either camp – a cantor is often formally set apart as a member of the minor orders, emphasized by the wording of the prayer used in his tonsure: the “first degree of the priesthood is that of Reader [Cantor]... prepare yourself for a higher degree... [that you may] be counted worthy of a higher ministry”^{vi}; the formalities of liturgical structure, however, make it

clear that the cantor *responds* to the clergy's intoned utterances and is most certainly excluded from their number functionally with respect to sacramental duties, etc.^{vii}

What makes this even more interesting is that the bulk of liturgical sound in any given service emanates from this strange vantage point off to the side of the nave – one might be forgiven for thinking the clergy were in fact absent during long stretches of the daily Office (which can actually be done in its entirety without clergy, if need be), and even the most involved Eucharistic services are notable for the cantor's dense musical output.

The vast majority of texts employed at these services – psalms, prayers and hymns (both fixed as well as those which change with the day's or season's commemorations) – result in the cantor assuming one of three particular and distinct voices: the entirety of gathered faithful (clergy and laity), that of their instructor, and that of the laity (specifically). In the first instance, where the cantor explicitly acts as the collective exclamatory voice of all those gathered in the church, it is usually with words of praise or of a penitential nature directed towards God or the saints – these can be in either first person singular (“Have mercy on me, O God...”), first person plural (“Let us the faithful praise...”), or sometimes third person plural (“O Lord, save those who honour Thee...”), and are intended to encompass all the faithful simultaneously, both clergy and laity. Distinguishing between the collective “I” and “we” in this situation is unnecessary, given the diverse sources from which these texts are taken: some were compositions by individuals written for private devotion but ultimately deemed desirable to apply to a collective, while some were deliberately written with a collective, liturgical utterance in mind – first person singular or plural makes little functional difference. Second, the cantor may give voice to narrative on a theme (such as the resurrection, the life of a saint, God's mercy, etc.) usually done in the third person, but sometimes also slipping into the voice of a figure mentioned in the hymn (e.g. Thy lamb Anastasia, O Jesus, crieth out to Thee with a loud voice, “I love Thee, my Bridegroom...”). These first two types are hardly exclusive of one another. In fact, they often occupy space within the same text, such that a hymn which begins by describing Christ's human and divine natures in a theologically dense manner might end with something like a hortative first person call for the faithful to repent, or perhaps a short intercessory prayer. More rarely, a third type of utterance involves an actual scripted interaction between clergy and the gathered laity, the latter on whose explicit behalf the cantor responds – these are the typical liturgical exchanges of “Peace be with you”/“And with your spirit” or else instructions “Bow your heads to the Lord”/“To Thee, O Lord,” etc, and often include a physical gesture (in the form of the priest turning around and giving a blessing, or the deacon lowering his head in an instructive/mimetic act) to indicate a departure from the previously communal act of participatory listening, and the emergence of actual dialogue which temporarily demarcates the boundary separating clergy and laity from one another.

In contrast to the fairly common misunderstanding, then, that individuals who are set apart to sing in church do so on behalf the *congregation* at all times, it seems that the cantor actually spends most of his time intoning a myriad of texts towards or on behalf of *both* the clergy and the gathered faithful simultaneously, rather than from one to the other, resulting in something more complex than a simple (or, at least, mediated) dialogue between two parties. If the

totality of interactions present in the liturgical space were limited to those described above, then it would be logical to apply the simplest geometry available to connect the three loci – clergy, people and cantor – in a fairly straightforward manner. But triangulation becomes inadequate once the scope of the cantor’s shifting voice is explored further. The simultaneity of voices which he must embody and project becomes far more complex once several other particular liturgical instances are taken into account, and makes pinpointing his identity in the liturgical proceedings all the more problematic. I would offer examples of three very different voices with which the cantor explicitly addresses all those present, each peculiar to a given situation, but which cumulatively muddy the waters sufficiently that they demand attention.

The first takes place at the Divine Liturgy, during which the cantor is referred to more than once and directly as the “angelic voice” during the proceedings.^{viii} At the Anaphora – the central Eucharistic prayer at which not only are the expected gifts of bread and wine consecrated, but an act in which the faithful offer up the entirety of their lives and all creation in the hope of receiving the Holy Spirit – the identity of the cantor’s voice shifts repeatedly over a very brief period of time. He begins by responding explicitly on behalf of the laity in a dialogue with the chief celebrant: “Peace be unto you.”/“And with your spirit.”; “Let us lift up our hearts.”/“We lift them up unto the Lord.” And later, during the entire latter half of the prayer, his responses of “Amen” and the doxology “We praise Thee, we bless Thee...” are clearly meant to be the voiced on behalf of the entire assembly. But right in the middle of this prayer, the following exchange occurs:^{ix}

Priest: ...We give thanks unto thee for this service which thou hast vouchsafed to accept from our hands, even though there stand by thee thousands of Archangels and ten thousands of Angels, Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged, many-eyed, borne aloft on their wings, singing the hymn of victory, shouting, crying and saying:

Cantor: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Priest: With these blessed Powers, we also, O Master, Lover of man, cry and say, Holy art thou and all-holy, thou and thine only-begotten Son, and thy Holy Spirit...

The response “Holy, Holy, Holy...” from Isaiah’s vision of angels singing around the throne of God (Isaiah 6:1-3) is not meant figuratively – in this liturgical act, in this suspended moment of timelessness and placelessness, the cantor’s utterance *is* that of the cherubim (not *like* the cherubim, and not *in imitation of* cherubim). To make perfectly certain that this is the intended voice of the cantor and not a one-off memetic digression open to relativization, a hymn is sung just before the Anaphora which states: “We who in a mystery represent the Cherubim, and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-giving Trinity, let us now lay aside every care of this life. For

we are about to receive the King of all, invisibly escorted by the angelic hosts.”^x This “Cherubic Hymn” is arguably a later (6th century) prefix to the much older prayers of the Anaphora, but nevertheless provides a gloss to the utterance “Holy, Holy, Holy...” that fixes the interpretive dial firmly in place.

The priest’s immediate reaction to this angelic cry distinguishes both him and the gathered faithful from what has just been sung, and by extension the one having done the singing, by employing language of joining: “With these blessed Powers, we also, O Master, Lover of man, cry and say Holy art Thou...” The exhortation to join presumes a degree of separation, a difference in point of reference which must be reconciled through an uplifting of the gathered faithful towards the heavenly to compliment the descent of the angelic to them^{xi} – an already-accomplished descent which makes possible the utterance “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the midst of the earthly congregation. This particular ecstatic vocalization by the cantor *cannot* be that of the gathered faithful, despite the bracketing sections in which he obviously functions in that capacity – it remains apart and other, a voice from a prophetic vision which instructs and guides, but not one which can find its origin in an earthly source.^{xii} Regardless of its brevity and singular occurrence, this unique shift in voice cannot but colour through the hearers’ experiential memory the rest of the cantor’s more commonplace vocalizations.

A second radical departure from the accustomed identities which the cantor’s voice must flesh out is a step even further removed from the last, in that it requires speaking in God’s voice. This doesn’t seem all that odd at first glance, given the frequency with which scripture is quoted and the words of Christ and the Father appear therein; however, whether in sung or spoken prayers or in readings from scripture, the use of God’s words in first person are nearly always couched within a strict narrative framework that maintains a separation between the Speaker and the one actually uttering the words. Even with as simple an introductory gesture as “The Lord said...”, the identity of the one who says “I am the true vine,” or “This is my beloved Son,” becomes apparent, and it is certainly not the voice of the person standing in the church creating the sound (either clergy or cantor) – the latter does so in a gesture of repetition, the act being diluted by a simultaneous and explicit dissociation through contextualization.^{xiii} If one looks to even the most obvious place where the words of Christ might be uttered in an ecstatic way – the culmination of the Anaphora prayers by the clergy, the words of institution at the Eucharist – even there, Christ’s instructions of “Take, eat, this is my body...” are prefaced by the distancing third person narrative “...He took bread in his holy and immaculate and blameless hands, and when he had given thanks, and blessed it, and hallowed, it, and broken it, he gave it to his holy disciples and apostles, saying – Take, eat, this is my body...”

But there are rare occasions where the cantor is required, without preamble and sometimes even without warning based on the liturgical actions taking place, to speak in God’s voice, unqualified by any bracketing narrative or distancing contextualizing caveat. For example, in the middle of a many-versed hymn sung at funerals and memorial services (the *Evlogitaria*), the cantor jumps right into the third stanza with the voice of Jesus: “All you that in this life have trod the narrow way of grief, having taken up the cross as a yoke and followed Me in faith: Come, delight in the honours and heavenly crowns that I have prepared for you.” And

at the matins service for Good Friday there are several hymns along the lines of: “I gave my back to scourging; I did not turn away My face from spitting; I stood before the judgement-seat of Pilate, and endured the Cross for the salvation of the world.” And again, a number of hymns from the Canon at matins for Holy Saturday proceed in this manner: “Weep not for Me, O Mother, beholding in the sepulchre the Son whom thou hast conceived without seed in thy womb. For I shall arise and shall be glorified, and as God I shall exalt in everlasting glory those who magnify thee with faith and love.”

Of note, these utterances are not mere quotes or pastiches excerpted from scripture and jazzed up by the cantor’s musical ministrations for good effect, but rather involved textual compositions that, as intimated earlier, far surpass in audacity his giving voice to the cherubic cry “Holy, Holy Holy...” These are words – new words, written by poets and hymnographers in what can only be described as an ecstatic, mystical^{xiv} gesture (because who dares speak for God?) sculpted by experiential theology and rhetoric – that have no other place in which they can be voiced than from without, from the periphery of the gathered people of God rather than from within their midst. Authors of texts like this do not appeal to the authoritative structures of the Church for guidance or justification, but to the very voice of God which has somehow become unheard or misunderstood.^{xv} Nevertheless, their work has often been embraced and even pressed into official liturgical use. The cantor’s role in giving these words audible substance is challenging, but strangely – despite being the most commonly heard voice during the services – his is the only position already capable (even sanctioned) to utter such things from the margins of the congregation.^{xvi}

The third highly unusual way in which the church cantor must address both the laity and clergy in a most intimate and sobering fashion takes place at funerals, where he must assume the voice of the departed one and sing to them as the deceased – not on *behalf* of the dead, mind you, but in the first person and with shocking candor, with the casket opened and everyone gathered around it.

Behold, my beloved brethren, I lie amid you all, silent and voiceless. My mouth is stopped, my tongue is stilled, and my lips are curbed; my hands are bound and my feet are fettered; my visage is changed, my eyes are extinguished and see not them that lament, my ears receive not the cry of them that mourn, my nose smells not the fragrance of the incense. But, in no way is true love put to death. Therefore, I beseech all my acquaintances and friends: commemorate me before the Lord, that, in the day of Judgement, I may find mercy before that dread Judgement-seat.^{xvii}

And when it comes time to actually approach and touch the body and physically give the departed a final parting kiss, his voice rings out:

Beholding me voiceless and deprived of breath, weep for me, O brethren and friends, kinsmen and acquaintances. For yesterday I conversed with you, and suddenly the dread hour of death came upon me. But come, all you that love me, and kiss me with the last kiss. For no more will I walk with you...^{xviii}

And at a child's funeral, that most emotionally fraught of gatherings, the cantor comforts the grieving parents and family and friends not only with the child's voice, but with its praise to God: "Now I am at rest and have found great release, for I have been translated from corruption, and have passed over unto Life. O Lord, glory to Thee."^{xix} Again, these liturgical utterances occur without any sort of distancing narrative context embedded within the texts themselves – the funerary setting is already so laden with heightened emotion and awareness that it often takes several moments for the words of these hymns to register with the hearer. They have such power to shock that even the cantor is sometimes hard pressed to maintain composure while giving them voice.

Appropriating these three rarely used but nevertheless highly charged identities – the Cherubim, God and the departed – puts the cantor in a very tenuous position, quite firmly apart from the rest of the gathered faithful in the church. Already he must shift from narrator-*to*-the-people, to speaker-*for*-the-people to God, to responder-on-behalf-of-the-laity to the clergy – seamlessly and unflinchingly switching from one role to the next, from "I" to "we," from beseecher to pedagogue and back again is confusing enough without having also to juggle the "I" of God, the "I" of the departed and the "I" of the angels. In this frenzy of words filling the church and surrounding the clergy and laity, nowhere is the cantor's personal "I" to be found in the texts, as his identity as an individual is completely subsumed by any one of these frenetically shifting loci, some of which are, quite frankly, alien and unknowable. The more pedestrian texts he sings cannot but contain echoes of these other ecstatic voices within them – it is still the same, single human instrument which must give voice to them all – and the seeming distinction of the voices he employs becomes less so, their individuality blurred and dulled by the simultaneity effected by their emergence from this single source of sound. One might point out the depth of theological fruit such interpenetration of voices can produce, since the entirety of the human condition is present alongside the entirety of what we can say about the divine: the voice of the penitent mingles with the voices of the angels, and the dead child finds unexpected harmony with the crucified Lord.

I have spoken in intentionally vague terms regarding the act or form of singing through which the cantor gives life to all these voices in the liturgical texts – once they cease to be mute, printed words on a page, once deliberate and organized sound is crafted around them, what emerges always struggles to conform to the ideal of the evanescent cantor. One must acknowledge that an interpretive musical act almost invites the introduction of "self" into the proceedings, and that such an injection can overwhelm the otherwise carefully orchestrated removal of the cantor's "I" from liturgy. From this realization are born musical modes and styles of sound production – repertoire and technique – which respond to the need for some small part of a cantor's "self" to be manifested through the work of singing, but within rigorous

constraints that limit his presence to an aesthetic incarnation which should have a minimally disruptive effect.^{xx} This is how musical traditions in the Church come to be refined and passed on within the confines of various cultural circles – what has been found to work by one generation in a particular place is put to good use by the next, and what fails to work is usually discarded. This does, of course, ignore the question of the emergence (and canonization) of a musical tradition in the first place, and certainly questions the validity of any novelty that may have arisen once it was established – of the first little can be said other than that humans and music seem to be inseparable, historically, so it makes sense that some sort of system should have evolved. But we do have copious examples of successful (and utterly unsuccessful) attempts at musical innovation within the Church which ultimately depended on the creative input of individual musicians – both composers and cantors, since they are often one and the same – many of whom we know by name.

Greenberg's insistence that there is a certain "dishonesty" of communication inherent in a successful artist's work applies here, though not quite with his sense of avoiding a too-personal outpouring that can betray the effective rendering of the artist's (perceived) experience. The imposition of a church musician's "self" in the act of composition takes the form of crafting music without enough reference to the tradition within which he works, clearly a disruptive influence if it deviates too far from the expectations delineated by that tradition. A balance between novelty and the received tradition is achieved through two forms of what might be termed "insincerity." The first requires a critical appraisal of quite how far removed from the tradition a new work is situated and dampening one's desire for increased distance for the *sake* of novelty – this is, in effect, an ego-restraining exercise which can feel rather insincere to one's "vision," but results in a much better chance for success in terms of liturgical functionality. The second is somewhat more devious: it requires, after the first criterion has been met, a wholehearted conviction that this new thing exists entirely within the tradition, in fact, and not outside it at all – it does not speak with a new and strange voice, but with the same old and familiar one (perhaps sporting a new frock, if some concession must be made to a critical observer). Over time – and it does take time for new creations to settle and an adjusted equilibrium to emerge within a tradition – the indication of success comes not from how often one finds this new work reproduced in manuscripts and hymn books, but how seamlessly it can be incorporated into the web of interconnected voices woven by the cantor during the course of a service.

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ⁱ Greenberg, Clement. "Review of *Selected Poems* by John Wheelwright." *The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Vol 1. Ed. John O'Brien. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 76-7. (Originally appeared in *The Nation* 30 August 1941.)

ⁱⁱ The word "ecstatic" is laden with all sorts of emotional and rapturous connotations in modern parlance, but I mean by its use in the context of liturgical utterances to indicate rather narrowly words which cannot possibly be one's own, words which require the singer to "stand apart from oneself" in order to voice – instances of prophetic speech, God's words, angelic utterances, etc. are obviously included this category, but less obvious are the equally ecstatic acts of speaking on behalf of another, or even communicating a narrative someone else has written.

ⁱⁱⁱ There are two aspects to Orthodox liturgy that should be touched upon before proceeding, if only to dispel some of the more fanciful notions that "liturgy" evokes in a modern context. First, the very word, derived from "laos"/people + "ergon"/work, implies that the entirety of the gathered faithful, clergy and singers are actively involved in the work of the proceedings – there are no performers or spectators, however relatively engaged or passive various participants may appear. More importantly, this work of praise and worship is not an event isolated from the rest of our lives, since we gather together as the Church at appointed times to do collectively what it is we strive to do at all times as individuals outside the confines of the

church building. Second, Orthodox liturgy is a highly scripted affair with very little room for extemporaneous or personal expression, a deliberate structure designed to simultaneously focus the collective attention on what it is we should be praying for as well as minimize the influence particularly charismatic leaders may exert. The level of sobriety and gravitas such heavily rubricized liturgy makes possible is difficult to describe – suffice it to say that far from being a stilted and rigid affair, it makes possible a level of rhetorical and iconological refinement impossible in other liturgical settings where improvisation is the guiding principle.

^{iv} However obvious it may seem, it should be stated at least once that for a liturgical event to take place, there must be a coming together of the faithful, an order of service, and someone to turn the printed words on the page into *sound* – collective silent reading of a liturgical text does not constitute liturgy. And Orthodox services are performed *a capella*, with only occasional bell ringing as background instrumentation.

^v The precise placement of the cantors has varied, historically, but they have always had a place somewhere between the people and the clergy, until the advent of the “balcony” choir.

^{vi} *The Great Book of Needs*. Vol 1. South Canaan: St Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2000. 242

^{vii} I do not mean to overstate the divide between the laity and the clergy in terms of a hierarchical structure with this comparison – a difference between them exists, but essentially as a functional distinction based on liturgical roles rather than a difference in status.

^{viii} It is important from the outset to bear in mind the place this particular liturgical act holds in the broader scheme of Orthodox liturgy. The celebration of the Eucharist is not part of the daily cycle of services - the components of which are all held at fixed times during the day and night - but is rather conceived of as existing outside a normal sense of temporality and location. It is understood to participate in the eternal and unending heavenly liturgy - participating in, rather than reenacting or offering a mimetic equivalent of, that perpetual and uncircumscribed act. The visible and audible service which is performed simultaneously elevates the participants into the reality of the heavenly act, while inviting the ranks of angels and saints to descend and participate unseen in its earthly expression.

^{ix} *The Priest’s Service Book*. Trans. Most Rev. Dimitri, Archbishop of Dallas. Dallas: Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America, 2003. 144-5

^x *The Divine Liturgy of our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. 22

^{xi} “Above, the hosts of angels sing praise; below, men form choirs in the churches and imitate them by singing the same doxology. Above, the Seraphim cry out in the Tersanctus (*trisagion hymn*); below, the human throng sends up the same cry. The inhabitants of heaven and earth are brought together in a common solemn assembly; there is one thanksgiving, one shout of delight, one joyful chorus.” *Homilia I in Oziam seu de Seraphinis I; Patrologiae cursus completes, series graeca*. Ed. J.P. Migne. Paris:1857-66. Vol lvi. 97 (as quoted in *Music in early Christian literature*. Ed. James McKinnon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. 89.)

^{xii} It may certainly be argued that the broader context of this particular utterance is, in fact, meant to encompass the entirety of the gathered faithful – the collective Eucharistic act which excludes no one, the unchanging textual regularity of the response, even the plural “Let us who mystically represent the cherubim” – but it is the shifting voice of the cantor which is being examined, and this is particularly poignant in a contemporary setting where communal singing

is generally absent and even a non-participatory mentality of going to church to “witness” or “hear” the services has crept in. Functionally, the singer is no less a member of the gathered faithful, but may well be the sole voice actually giving life to the words – as one who leads the singing, it might be said that the faithful join in *his* reply, if they join in at all.

^{xiii} For a survey of how damaging to an otherwise well-constructed liturgical structure this lack of contextualization and explicit demarcation of singing in God’s voice can be, see Chapter 5 “Ego Renewal” of Thomas Day’s *Why Catholics Can’t Sing – The Culture of Catholicism and the Triumph of Bad Taste*. New York: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1990. 50-76

^{xiv} Again, like the word “ecstatic,” the word “mystical” has many contradictory meanings in modern usage, but in the context of Christian liturgy merely refers to a sacred/divine significance that transcends a natural human ability to apprehend.

^{xv} “Since the Speaking Word *must* exist even though it may become inaudible, [the mystic] temporarily substitutes his speaking *I* for the inaccessible divine *I*. He makes this *I* into the representation of what is missing – a representation that marks the place of what it does not replace. Contradictory in nature, therefore, the speaking *I* (or writer) takes up the illocutionary function, but in the name of the Other. Like the position (also contradictory) of ‘author,’ the mystic sustains the question that cannot be forgotten but cannot be resolved either: that of the speaking subject. He ‘holds’ this void in suspense.” de Certeau, Michel. *The Mystic Fable*, Vol. I. Trans. Michael B. Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 188.

^{xvi} Importantly, the clergy are absolutely excluded from addressing the congregation in this ecstatic manner, perhaps to avoid the confusion that would result from suspending their role as pastor, however temporarily, in order to speak with another’s voice.

^{xvii} *The Great Book of Needs*. Vol III. South Canaan: St Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2000. 308. (from the funeral for a departed priest)

^{xviii} *Ibid.* 211 (from the funeral for a layman)

^{xix} *Ibid.* 172 (from the funeral for a child)

^{xx} Too much of the cantor’s “self” expressed musically in this context has more than an aura of melodrama, a sort of kitsch that cannot co-exist with the sobriety and gravitas of liturgy done well.