

have been considered effeminate. I didn't like masculine clothes. The Western version of masculinity opposes rational man against intuitive woman. The part of my being that interests me has always been my intuition ... I don't bother to question my intuition. If I feel like doing something, I do it, and figure that I'll understand it later. If I had questioned my intuition, I would probably be a bank clerk. In any person's life, the most important decisions are indefensible.<sup>22</sup>

Paradoxically, Eno's visual persona changed from "feminine" to "masculine" during the same period around 1975 that his musical style underwent a marked shift from "masculine" to "feminine" values. Since that period he has kept his thinning hair relatively short, and has been photographed in utterly "male" jeans and slacks, T-shirts and sneakers or sandals. His disarmingly normal appearance may be indeed motivated, as one writer has suggested, by a desire "to enjoy the thrill of anonymity."<sup>23</sup> But whereas his work with Roxy Music and on his first three solo albums utilized, at least to a considerable extent, the arguably masculine musical qualities of a thrusting, pulsating rock beat, and a dynamic level that was frequently aggressive and even strident, since his 1975 album *Discreet Music* Eno's solo music has embraced and embodied the feminine qualities of containment, being, and spaciousness.

Eno has been explicitly aware of the change. An interviewer asked him in 1981 whether he thought *Discreet Music*, *Music for Airports*, and *Music for Healing* (an album that was never released) contained "unmasculine music." He responded, "I think it's pretty bisexual, that's what I think." The interviewer pressed on: "Do you feel like you're moving even further into the feminine area?" Eno said:

These are interesting questions. My own perspective on what I do is that my work started out as being very distinctively masculine. My look was ahead of the music. Then the music moved away from that position. I'm now working in the opposite direction of just cramming the song with thrills, sharp or harsh things. I'm trying to get *rid* of things now. Every event either obscures another event or obscures silence, so you may as well leave as much out of everything as you can.<sup>24</sup>

## Politics

Eno has never been a political musician in the sense of someone who believes in and tries to put across in music a certain specific program for social change. Even his solo album *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)*, which is loosely based on a set of picture-postcards of a Chinese revolutionary drama, is not so much a political statement as it is an aesthetic response to a strange, exotic culture – reminiscent of Debussy's pentatonic *chinoiserie* in "Pagodas" and other works. As we have seen, Eno was attracted to Cardew's experimental piece "The Great

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<sup>22</sup> Lubow, "Eno, Before and After Roxy," 72.

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<sup>24</sup> Howell, "Strangers Evening with Eno," n.p.