

“The places we have known do not belong solely to the world of space in which we situate them for our greater conveniences. They were only a thin slice among contiguous impressions which formed our life at that time; the memory of a certain image is but regret for a certain moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fleeting, alas, as the years.”

Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

Morton Feldman's *Crippled Symmetry* is a ~90-minute work for piano, celeste, flutes, and percussion. It takes its title from Feldman's interest in Anatolian rugs. “The detail of an Anatolian symmetrical image was never mechanical,” Feldman writes, “but idiomatically drawn.” Feldman explores this question of symmetry through his manipulation of stasis, scale, and pattern: short, fractured materials are repeated at various rhythms over irregular lengths of time, and often return in familiar, though contrasting patterns throughout the course of the piece. This floating feeling is further exacerbated by the fact that the players' material is not required (nor encouraged) to align. Each player is their own unique agent in an environment that shapes them as much as they shape it. The question of “idiom” vs. “mechanic” resurfaces through the slight, constantly shifting alignments of their material.

Feldman's musical structures reflect on memory, image, and place much the same way that Proust's houses and roads do. We become presented with chords, rhythms, and intervals that we have heard before, yet they sound irretrievably different each time we hear them. This difference lies partially in the time and musical environment in which they resurface and transform, but more importantly lies in the ears of the listener, for whom they become like photographs of the same place at different times: simultaneously present and lost.