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**Gendertronics. Toward A 'Lecture Féminine' of  
Emerging Musical Technologies and Their Aesthetics –  
Gerhard Stäbler, Terre Thaemlitz, Miss Kittin**

Joyce Shintani

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**Gendertronics**

***Vers une lecture féminine***

**des esthétiques et des technologies musicales émergentes –**

**Gerhard Stäbler, Terre Thaemlitz, Miss Kittin**

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**Gendertronics. Vers une lecture féminine  
des esthétiques et des technologies musicales émergentes –**

**Gerhard Stäbler, Terre Thaemlitz, Miss Kittin**

par Joyce Shintani (Littératures, Savoirs et Arts (LISAA), EA 3349)

Université Paris-Est, France, 2008

Depuis les années 80, le développement rapide des nouvelles technologies micro-électroniques a donné naissance à une nouvelle génération d'œuvres d'art musicales. Souvent, ces œuvres profitent d'une approche analytique provenant de la théorie des médias. En même temps, de nouveaux courants dans la philosophie ainsi que dans les études culturelles ont engendré une nouvelle notion de genre (anglais : *gender*), qui vient s'établir dans la musicologie anglo-américaine et, de manière plus conscrète, dans la musicologie allemande ; jusqu'ici, elle ne s'établit guère dans la musicologie française. Cette thèse entreprend une investigation théorique d'œuvres d'art électroniques, tout en utilisant la notion de *gender* : *gender* + *electronic* = *gendertronics*.

Pour cette investigation, des notions sont employées dérivant de la *lecture féminine* : une approche pluridisciplinaire associée à l'*écriture féminine* d'Hélène Cixous (\* 1937), écrivain et théoricienne poststructuraliste. Puisque ni la lecture féminine ni la théorie des médias ne prend en compte des éléments musicaux, cette investigation incorpore également des aspects de l'analyse musicale.

Trois artistes sont considérées : Gerhard Stäbler (\*1943), Terre Thaemlitz (\*1968) et Miss Kittin (\*1973). L'investigation trace le développement des notions de « sujet » et de « matériau musical » depuis la théorie poststructuraliste et la musique contemporaine jusqu'à des notions philosophiques émergentes du « corps ». Une considération particulière est le genre musical *electronica*, repérant ses antécédents dans la musique électronique expérimentale en Europe du vingtième siècle et dans les musiques populaires de danse aux Etats-Unis dans les années 80 et 90.

L'investigation cherche à joindre les recherches récentes dans ces domaines. Elle ouvre de nouvelles pistes et propose des nouveaux outils pour explorer plus profondément le domaine émergent des *gendertronics*.

**Mots clés** : Adorno, canon, Cixous, déconstruction, Deleuze, écriture féminine, electro, musique électronique, *electronica*, théorie féministe, *gender*, *gendertronics*, genre, glitch, Guattari, Hervé, lecture féminine, Miss Kittin, matériau musical, poststructuralisme, rave, Stäbler, sujet, techno, Thaemlitz.

**Gendertronics. Toward A *Lecture Féminine***  
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Since the 1980s, rapid development of new micro-electronic technologies has spawned a new generation of musical art works employing electronic means. These artworks are often theoretically approached using media theory. Contemporaneously, new developments in philosophy and in cultural studies have given rise to the new notion of gender, which has since found its way into Anglo-American musicological and, to a more limited degree, into German musicology, though not at all into French. The present work undertakes a *gendered* theoretical investigation of *electronic* art works – gender + electronics = ‘gendertronics’.

For the investigation, notions stemming from *lecture féminine* are employed, a pluralistic reading approach associated with *écriture féminine* of the poststructuralist theorist/writer Hélène Cixous (born 1937). Since neither *lecture féminine* nor above-mentioned media theory takes musical elements into account, this investigation also draws on music analysis.

Aspects of the works of three artists are considered: Gerhard Stäbler (born 1943), Terre Thaemlitz (born 1968), and DJ Miss Kittin (born 1973). The investigation traces the development of the topics ‘Subject’ and ‘musical material’ from poststructuralist and New Music theory of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to emerging new philosophical notions of the body. Particular attention is given to the development of the musical genre ‘electronica’, tracing its antecedents from European experimental electronic music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and from American popular dance music of the 80s and 90s; subgenres treated include rave, glitch, clicks-and-cuts, electroclash, techno, electro, ambient, and house.

The investigation complements recent research addressing lacunae in these areas and offers new paths and tools for future investigation in the emerging area of gendertronics.

**Key words:** Adorno, canon, Cixous, deconstruction, Deleuze, *écriture féminine*, electro, electronic music, electronica, feminist theory, French feminist theory, gender, gendertronics, genre, glitch, Guattari, Hervé, *lecture féminine*, Miss Kittin, musical material, poststructuralism, rave, Stäbler, Subject, techno, Thaemlitz.

To Martin Laliberté,  
Who had the courage of my convictions, when I had lost it.

Journeying through the world

To and fro, to and fro

Cultivating a small field.

– Bashō (1644-1694)



## PREFACE

“One chooses one’s subject of reading; and in doing so, one becomes the author of the reading” – Hélène Cixous<sup>1</sup>

I begin with an anecdotal remark on my personal motivation for selecting this dissertation topic, which may convey in a nutshell the problem it addresses. As a musician and musicologist, I had for years been trained in the theory, analysis and performance of Neue Musik and electronic music. Twenty-five years of conducting in the USA and in Europe had given me with fluency in musical languages, particularly in serial and post-serial music. Or so I thought. For when I was confronted with new works of ‘sound art’ or ‘multimedia art’ in the broadest sense, in which music plays a role alongside visual elements, all the music theory I learned abandoned me, and I stood clueless before these works. What was I to do faced with a work that included a pile of 144 decaying grand pianos, laugh? Was there an analytic reaction that could help me make sense of a piece of music so loud it seemed to split my head, aside from complete rejection? Did a tattooed DJ in a tight dress at a laptop or transgender porno clips have any relevance for music that I might take seriously? In talks with musicians and colleagues in the music industry, I shared my astonishment, but I couldn’t get closer to such works. The music journals I read hadn’t altered their discourses, I could detect no radical upheavals; yet I saw a younger generation drift away from the concert life I grew up with and turn increasingly to new electronic media. I perceived a lack of discussion, a lack of vocabulary, and a lack of channels of communication on topics that had grown dear to me. Where could I find a source of insight that could bring me closer to recent works that combined music and new media, and what might its history be?

The result of my quest is presented in this document, a dissertation in musicology. It is a personal presentation of tools, concepts, and genealogies that seem relevant to facilitating discussion. I’m convinced that if we broaden the boundaries of this discipline, we can construct new tools for regarding the fascinating art of our time. To

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<sup>1</sup> *Lectures de la Différence Sexuelle*, Colloquium Paris 8, October 1990; cited in (Cixous 1991: 188).

supplement the existing tool palette, one particular is in focus: *lecture féminine*. It is to be hoped that, with a bit of good will toward this interloper into the discipline of musicology, a flow of ideas on these topics can be facilitated (and exchanges seem necessary today more than ever). If my search can help others find artistic insight into the works and uses of music that mystified me, then my efforts will not have been in vain.

A word should be said regarding the use of online sources (Wikipedia, YouTube, Flickr, etc.). Since late 2005, the topic of admitting Wikipedia for university assignments has been hotly debated on the American Musicological Society list. The discussion revealed that some professors are convinced that using Wikipedia will only lead to an irremediable 'dumbing-down' of students. Others have started giving their students assignments to write new Wikipedia articles. Recent comparison studies show that in the hard sciences and in unusual themes of topical interest, Wikipedia is equal to or better than traditional encyclopedias, although these maintain their edge in humanities fields. The article on Hélène Cixous on the Stanford university page, for example, is one of the best short introductions to her and her work I have read.<sup>2</sup> The bibliography that is conducted on her by Eddie Yeghiayan at the University of California at Irvine Critical Theory Resource website is the best I have found, on or offline.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the usefulness of online resources for researchers is immense. Since they will continue to expand, I believe they gain most in quality when we participate in working on them. It is important to inform students how to use and judge online media, including learning how to evaluate the editors of pages. Recent assignments I made to three classes reveal that the hurdles for the acceptance of articles in the English Wikipedia are high, and dialogue is constant. As for YouTube, recent political developments in the US (notably the defeat of key Virginia Republican Senate candidate and presidential hopeful George Allen due to his racist remarks spread on YouTube<sup>4</sup>) show how essential this new medium has become. In the areas I have researched, some information is available only on the internet. For all of these reasons, I believe the use of online resources is justified and should be admitted to scholarly research. Still, admitting them in no way means blind acceptance of them. On the contrary, it calls for new methods of evaluation and increased watchfulness of content, not merely relying on so-called 'gatekeepers'. We live in a time in which the role of the gatekeepers of knowledge is

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<sup>2</sup> <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/cixous/> retrieved 17 April 2007.

<sup>3</sup> <http://sun3.lib.uci.edu/~sctr/Wellek/cixous/index.html> retrieved 17 April 2007.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/15/AR2006081501210.html> retrieved 17 April 2007.

changing, a fact that has ontological consequences, as Harvard philosopher David Weinberger has explained<sup>5</sup>. Weinberger describes the impact that real time availability of information online is having on the ontological nature of knowledge, particularly with regard to changing Aristotle's categories and the canons of knowledge. I find his arguments and those of the AMS professors who use Wikipedia convincing and use various online resources here, including links to musical examples (hence no CD).

A few notes on conventions of quoting. **LM** stands for Hélène Cixous' article "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976e; both original and translation are reproduced in the appendix). In quoting Adorno, I have generally indicated the date of first dissemination, – often a lecture – in order to help the reader better follow the chronological development of his ideas; where I have also quoted an English translation, the date of that edition follows. Syntax and punctuation in most quotes have been equalized, except for quotes by Cixous and quotes that employ ghetto syntax. Citations taken from websites are quoted as footnotes; all other quoted references are listed in the bibliography. All translations are by the present author, unless indicated otherwise. All definitions are taken from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition, 2000<sup>6</sup>.

I am deeply indebted to Mathias Spahlinger, Gerhard Stäbler, and Terre Thaemlitz, who took time to talk and open their worlds to me. I regret that I could not use more of the information they provided; each composer merits a dissertation of his own, and I have more than a twinge of bad conscience for using their music 'to make a point'. Any inaccuracy or misrepresentation here with regard to them or their work is unintended and my fault. I am grateful to students at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design who brought me closer to many of the ideas presented here. The gender colloquium 'UFO' and the State Library of Baden-Württemberg were unfailing in their support; so, too, was my mother. The understanding and constancy of my husband made this lonely project bearable.

I would like to close with my thanks to Hélène Cixous, whose theory has informed and inspired my research; it provided descriptions that fit music and art that previously eluded me. But I must include an apologia as well: She may not have intended her theory for the interpretation I make of it, and if that is the case, I'm sorry for having misunderstood. Yet Cixous herself wrote, "A feminine practice of writing [...] will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral fig-

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.evident.com/> retrieved 17 April 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Online version accessible at <http://www.bartleby.com/61/>.

Preface

Gendertronics. Toward a *lecture féminine* of Emerging Technologies and their Musical Aesthetics

ures that no authority can ever subjugate” (LM:883). So be it.

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing about music is like dancing about architecture... – Elvis Costello<sup>7</sup>

Attempting to write a dissertation at the beginning of the twenty-first century, a time of transition, three general factors (aside from the particular issue in question) loom up and characterize the endeavor. The first immediately obvious factor for the researching writer is the infinite quantity of resources available in real time on the World Wide Web. As I write, several large-scale projects<sup>8</sup> are digitizing and making available online significant portions of all matter printed to date, from incunabula to computer code, either as scanned images or as text files. Simultaneously, the growth of new university sites as well as personal and professional blogs employing user-generated content made available in real time, whose number is currently estimated from 70 to 150 million doubling every six months<sup>9</sup>, has created a mass of accessible research sources that is no longer assessable. The traditional expectation associated with the endeavor of dissertating, which has for centuries defined the doctoral process – conducting research, summarizing it, analyzing and commenting it, then writing – is put into question, particularly for a contemporary subject like mine: The feasibility of evaluating all pertinent resources is no longer given.

Second, in a time of geo-political globalization and technological convergence, the notion of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary studies has spread into most every area of life and into every academic domain. The thought of treating a single topic

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<sup>7</sup> In an interview by Timothy White entitled "A Man out of Time Beats the Clock," Musician Magazine No. 60 (October 1983) (52); quoted on <http://www.pacifier.com/~ascott/they/tamildaa.htm> retrieved 8 April 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The Google Books Library Project (USA) with partners Oxford, Harvard, Stanford, Michigan and the New York City Public Library; the Internet Archive (USA) with partners Smithsonian Library, Library of Congress and others; the Gutenberg project (Germany), and the European Digital Library (Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

<sup>9</sup> According to the blog aggregator Technorati, quoted on <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000436.html> retrieved 8 April 2007.

without stumbling into a web of interconnections has become risible in our globally networked age, rendering thus the treatment of scholarly topics vastly complex.

Thirdly, the two situations just described are embraced by philosophical currents in our postmodern age, which tell us that every attempt to produce a single, synoptic view of a thing is a chimera. The thing itself can – if at all – only be represented through an infinite multiplicity of points of view, and any grasping of that thing can only take place in differed, not real, time – not *as I read*, but at some later time.

Thus, with these three factors conditioning our each and every endeavor today, the project of writing an ‘introduction’ that presents a unified and succinct view of the subject to be dissertated seems anachronistic and futile. And yet, the academy with its tradition of long evaluation and thoughtful reflection does not evolve as quickly as technology develops and geo-political events occur. This is the transition that needs to be addressed. The researcher spans the uncomfortable gulf between European art history and the academy, on the one hand, and students and artists, on the other hand, who are evolving at the speed of technologies (Moore’s law<sup>10</sup>), much faster than courses can be elaborated that take them into account. Under such circumstances, perhaps a reasonable expectation for the doctoral endeavor might be not the exhaustive examination of a theme, but rather the construction of a *bridge* across the gulf separating these two fronts, through which information might flow. This, then, is my modest goal.

In this introduction, I will first consider the challenges facing my endeavor coming from three areas of music scholarship, and I will note the state of current research including principle authors and relevant sources in each. Then, I will sketch the approach I have chosen for my investigation, I will present the plan used in applying the approach, and I will explain the choice of works. In the following two chapters, I describe *écriture féminine* and its poststructuralist background, seen in relationship to contemporaneous musical thought. Together, the first three chapters describe the elements used to approach the works of art in the remaining four chapters of the dissertation. Each one of those chapters is concerned with discussing and applying a circumscribed number of theoretical aspects deriving from Cixous’ *écriture féminine* to examples drawn from different music artists.

My work draws on developments in three languages areas – French, Anglo/American, and German – that, in the areas of contemporary musicology, do not have substantial intellectual intersections. By way of introduction, therefore, instead of postulating a verifiable state of affairs or defending the primacy of ‘my theory,’ I prefer

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<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore's\\_law](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore's_law), retrieved 1 Feb 2008.

to offer an interpretation of the terms utilized in the dissertation's title. This will serve to make clear the boundaries of the investigation; at the same time, it will bring both the reader and the author rapidly *in media res*. In addition, it will introduce some new terms; for, as is certainly valid for many a dissertation, mine also contains a number of specialized terms that, even for the most trend-following, cutting-edge multidisciplinary reader, are likely to be unfamiliar.

**Gendertronics.** What does this neologism mean? At the time of this writing, no one really knows. The term first appeared in print as the title of the eponymous book published in 2005 by the reputable German publisher Suhrkamp (Jansen 2005); it was the outgrowth of a panel discussion of the same name at the *club transmediale* in 2004<sup>11</sup>. Concerning the origin of the book and the term, I had the opportunity to query its editor, Meike Jansen, whose responses are given here.<sup>12</sup>

JS: How did the book come into being?

MJ: Well, at CTM 04 [*club transmediale* 2004] we had a panel discussion on the topic.<sup>13</sup> We didn't come to any conclusions as to why things are the way they are, but that wasn't our objective. The book was a response, it gathered the ideas afterward.

JS: Where does the word 'Gendertronics' come from? Was it used before you?

MJ: We made it up. We needed a title and, you know, we were sitting around late at night and talking about it, and it just sort of popped up.

JS: What is it supposed to mean?

MJ: I don't know exactly. Well, *gender*, from gender. That's become a mini theme today (while equal rights for women remain a large problem). Its time hasn't really come yet – third-wave feminism is missing in Germany. But only to talk about

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<sup>11</sup> The festival *club transmediale* takes place annually in conjunction with the Transmediale multimedia art festival in Berlin. It sees itself as the "most important meeting for current electronic music in German speaking countries" (*Gendertronics* book cover).

<sup>12</sup> Conversation conducted in German with Meike Jansen held at the Transmediale Festival in the Academy of the Arts, Berlin, 5 February 2006.

<sup>13</sup> The program notes state, "1 February 2004, 20:00 Maria > Hall. [GENDERTRONICS]... Somewhere between bio-adaptor and dance-floor. Implicit in the question, as to whether or not the computer can be considered as an extension of the human body, is the further question, as to whether gender still plays a role in this scenario. And if so, then which? Concepts of the body are prevalent in experimental electronic music – not only as theoretical models. Or is the avant-garde just generally unsexy? Moderation: Pinky Rose (author, SZ, RB, DE); Thomas Meinecke (musician, DJ, author, DE), Karen Wong (studio XX, Montréal, CA/QC), Terre Thaemlitz (musician, author, US), Anne Hilde Neset (editor 'The Wire', curator, GB) (PROGRAMME CTM.04 [Fly Utopia!]. festival for electronic music and related visual arts. 30. jan – 07. feb 2004 | Maria am Ostbahnhof" (4). Also available online <http://www.transmediale.de/04/page/listings/listing.0.club.highlight.1.html#94> retrieved 14 Sep 2007.

women is too limited for our contemporary sense of rights. And *-tronics* from... well, that evokes something highly technological, something fast, like a car – it has speed and moves forward. It's a trend; it comes from the club scene.

JS: It is copyrighted or anything? Can it be freely used by others?

MJ: Sure.

I 'steal' (*voler*) the term Gendertronics here to evoke the areas Meike Jansen described and hope, in so doing, to help establish it within the disciplines of musicology and media theory as meaning a part of electronica music in which gender elements, questions, and theories in addition to others, are used or studied.

**Lecture féminine.** This French term, which means literally 'feminine reading,' hints at the method to be used in this investigation. It derives from the practice of *écriture féminine* (literally, 'feminine writing'), a part of what is currently referred to as French feminist theory. French feminist theory is a poststructuralist intellectual current that draws on literary theory, feminism, linguistics, psychology, and postmodern philosophy. Elaborated in France in the 1970s and 80s, the main exponents of French feminist theory are Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig. As we shall see below, Hélène Cixous' postulation of feminine writing in 1975, although called 'feminine,' was not intended to denote writing done exclusively by women. Paying particular attention to intertextuality, *lecture féminine* involves a close reading of texts or works based on notions stemming from French feminist theory, but not just works by women. Examples Cixous repeatedly cites are by Genet, Rilke, Joyce, and Claire Lispector. 'Feminist' reading should not be confused with French feminist theory<sup>14</sup>, although *lecture féminine* welcomes a multiplicity of approaches and merges well with existing ones, such as certain forms of musical analysis. Above all, *lecture féminine* seeks "not to take possession in order to internalize or manipulate" a text (LM:887), instead, it approaches softly and listens to a text in order to gradually come closer to its meanings (more under "Approach" and "*Lecture féminine*" below).

**Emerging musical technologies.** In contrast to the term 'emergence' and 'emergent', which are established technical terms in systems theory, philosophy, and science, I use the word 'emerging' here in its general meaning.<sup>15</sup> The American Herit-

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<sup>14</sup> A short definition of feminist theory: "Feminist theory is a critical epistemology project. [...] To date, two principle methods have been employed to gain critical perspectives on society, politics, and culture; on science, technology, and nature: ideology criticism [critical theory] and deconstruction. [...] It came into being with the new women's movement in the mid-1960s [...] its beginnings reach back to the beginning of early bourgeois thought in the 17<sup>th</sup> century" (Krüger 2001:119).

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, this dissertation has nothing to do with the fascinating new science of 'emergence,' which

age Dictionary defines 'to emerge' as "to come forth from obscurity" or "to come into existence". These nuances of meaning are important for describing new musical technologies, for often, a technology is invented but remains fallow for a period and only later comes out of its obscure shelf-life and into general usage. It is also a convenient catchall for technologies that are being created but not yet named, or for technologies that have various names, none of which has yet established itself. Thus, I use the word 'emerging' to designate those musical technologies which are, at the moment of this writing, either coming into existence or into general usage, but have not yet established themselves in the family of instruments or in the musical and musicological canons. Through its use, I hope to avoid being snared by short-lived or out-dated definitions, from electronic music, acousmatic, media art, multimedia work, installation... ad nauseam. Where possible, I treat works in which music plays a role, but which utilize other media as well.

**Aesthetics.** 'Aesthetics' is probably the term most familiar to the reader, for it has been an established part of philosophy since the eighteenth century (Baumgarten) and of musicology since the nineteenth. Yet even with this term, I propose a caveat. In musicology, works are often considered in light of their *aesthetic* qualities. As for media art, the practice is widespread in German and Anglo-American areas to consider them, instead, in terms of *media theory*. Due to this state of affairs, I prefer to use the term aesthetics in a wide sense, based on the Greek *aisthèsis* meaning sensation, *aisthanesthai* meaning to perceive. In light of recent developments in cognitive and neurosciences, it seems more appropriate to speak of ways of feeling, of perceiving music in works of media art today than it does to restrict the question to the narrow philosophic discipline of aesthetics or music aesthetics.

**Toward.** Finally, the word 'toward' deserves mention. With it, I make reference to the postmodern intellectual position mentioned above, that no definitive explanation is possible. We are in motion in the direction of – toward – an understanding of the *chose* [French for *thing*; German: *Ding*] before us, and I hope to help move us closer to it.

To summarize, the purpose of the present endeavor is as follows: By performing a close 'feminine reading' of works employing emerging musical technologies, and by regarding aesthetic and perceptive considerations of them, I hope to suggest an approach, a bridge, that helps *move toward* insights and understanding of them. Put dif-

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examines how something that, a second ago did not exist, suddenly comes into existence – emerges – like a thought, the next action of an uncoordinated ant-hill, or even... reality.

ferently, with this reading I seek a path toward gaining new epistemological awareness beyond the boundaries of our disciplines as they now exist, to enrich our appreciation of the musical phenomena around us. This, then, might be called ‘gendertronics.’

## A. QUANDARIES, QUESTIONS, SITUATIONS, ISSUES

The issues surrounding dissertating today described above are of a general nature. I now turn to the perplexities specific to the topic of my dissertation. As implied, the problem I treat has several facets. The first is the mere appearance of new works of art using new technologies – this alone presents inherent hermeneutic challenges. Another is the lack of an approach for understanding these new works and for inducting them into the musical or musicological canon. A further problem is the existence of a discipline that does approach multimedia art works, but that does so most often in terms of media theory, not in terms of music. Finally, it is problematic that these two disciplines, media theory and musicology, have virtually no exchange of ideas with each other. In the following sub-sections, I outline these problems.

### i. (New) Musicology and Music Analysis

You, the defenders of ‘theory’, the sacrosanct yes-men of Concept, enthroners of the phallus (but not of the penis): Once more you’ll say that all this smacks of ‘idealism’, or what’s worse, you’ll splutter that I’m a ‘mystic’. (LM:891)

It may seem odd to consider the very discipline of the dissertation as part of the problem. But exactly that was the state of events in 1991, when Susan McClary published her watershed book *Feminine Endings. Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. In it, she held a tirade against the field of musicology with its traditional priorities that had served to shield music against cultural interpretation of any sort, pointing out that over the past two hundred years analysts of Western music concentrated increasingly on structural issues<sup>16</sup>. Her criticism did not come from nowhere. Three years prior to that, no lesser than the doyen of German musicology, Carl Dahlhaus (1928-1989), declared that fundamental music research was suffering from a dearth of methods (1988:105); and just

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. McClary’s retrospective description (in McClary 2002: x).

before that, Joseph Kerman (born 1924) had thrown down the gauntlet to academic musicology with his groundbreaking *Contemplating Music. Challenges to Musicology* (1985). In France, around the same time, while there were no major challenges to musicology in book form (most French musicologists were busy with the reception of Darmstadt and post-serial composers<sup>17</sup>, with documenting Boulez and Ircam, and with applying Bourdieu's fascinating sociological insights to music), the creation of a new course of study at Ircam in 1989 did challenge the academy. Titled *Music and Musicology of the Twentieth Century*, its very name reflected a visionary attempt to break down the barriers separating music from other disciplines; and its curriculum was breathtakingly interdisciplinary, incorporating elements of music management, composition, computer grammar and programming, math and physics, performance, sociology, and philosophy. Sadly, the course was far ahead of its time, as its short lifespan of just four years demonstrated.

Taken together, these critiques and initiatives in many countries in the 1980s present massive evidence of the jejune landscape musicology had become. Is this polemic still of interest today? Is it part of the problem at hand? It is important to understand this situation in musicology in order to gauge the scale of the gigantic reaction that would soon shake it with New Musicology and its poststructuralist approaches, to which *écriture féminine* can be counted. Let us therefore recall a few pithy remarks Kerman made in 1985, culled from the introduction to the book cited above:

Musicology has come to have a constricted meaning, it has come to mean the study of the history of Western music in the high-art tradition. Musicologists are respected for the facts they know about music. They are not admired for their insight into music as aesthetic experience. Theory 'is now understood as principally the study of the structure of music'. And musical analysis as a technical procedure might be thought analogous to parsing, linguistic reduction, and *explication de texte*. There are no generally accepted names for students of Western popular musics such as jazz, rock, or reggae, or for students of European folk music. The ethnomusicologists' alignment is with anthropology; they are likely also to have special sympathies with some nation, 'world', or class other than that of their own origins. Seldom are their articles and reports free of social-scientific apparatus, if not jargon. In fact, nearly all musical thinkers travel at a respectful distance behind the latest chariots (or bandwagons) of intellectual life in general. Semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology are being drawn upon only by some of the boldest of musical studies today. Post-structuralism, deconstruction, and serious

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<sup>17</sup> And still are, with exemplary results, cf. Deliège, C. (2003).

feminism have yet to make their debuts in musicology or music theory (11-17).

These lines were written by an American decrying an American situation, but he might just as well have decried the situation in the other countries mentioned above. Throughout the 80s, German musicology continued to focus on the narrow history of Western music in the high-art tradition; at its most venturesome, it sashayed into contemporary music, where it was occupied with the reception of the serialists, the Darmstadt school, Adorno's Marxist-based philosophy, and aesthetics. It has been argued that as long as the Cold War persisted, the critical intellectual focus in Europe remained on doctrinal differences between communism and capitalism, whereby 'capitalist abstraction' offered a counterpart to 'soviet realism'. Perhaps the most progressive branch of German musicology found an outlet in the outstanding series *Musik-Konzepte*, founded by Heinz-Klaus Metzger and Rainer Riehn in 1977, which reflected their irreverent post-socialist, post-Adornian aesthetics. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the subsequent changes in Eastern Europe, and the resulting crisis in the self-identity of the German (and the French and the Italian) Left affected musicology as well. Broad attention now turned to the post-Adornian Lachenmann (born 1935), then to the 'pluralistic' 'neo-romantic' Rihm (born 1953), but New Musicology did not have a serious impact in Germany until the new millennium.<sup>18</sup> As for France, some aspects of New Musicology are starting to gain a toehold today, but post-colonialism, poststructuralism, and most particularly feminist criticism and gender studies are still treated with derision, if they are recognized at all.

As for the sub-discipline music theory, or music analysis, which is part of the larger discipline of musicology, it creates theories that are used to analyze compositions. 'Theory and analysis' experienced the same immobility of method and constricted field of study that Kerman described above; but due perhaps to their formal, analytic nature, they suffered even more from sclerosis. How did this come to pass?

The grand narrative of musicology, including *Musikwissenschaft* (literally, 'music science', as it is called in German-speaking countries), has developed quite differently in the three areas in question during the last 100 years or so, yet in all areas it shares a

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<sup>18</sup> A new publication by Bärenreiter addressing the difficulties of *Musikwissenschaft* in Germany is just appearing that I could not yet obtain (Lütteken 2007). The announcement for the book declares, "Das Fach Musikwissenschaft ist seit einiger Zeit nicht nur intensiven fachinternen Debatten, sondern auch von außen einem aus verschiedenen Quellen gespeisten Legitimationsdruck ausgesetzt [For some time now, the discipline of musicology has been subject not only to intense internal debate, but also to pressure to justify itself from various external sources]".

common heritage. Musicology has its roots in antiquity, where Pythagorean theories<sup>19</sup>, Plato's ideals, and Aristotle's categories determined givens that were retained practically unquestioned through the Middle Ages and up to the present day. As an empirical science, musicology in all three areas can be said to be the product of the Enlightenment, beginning with Rousseau and the encyclopedists, through Fétis, and leading to Grove, Riemann, Adler, and Schenker. Musicology in all three areas had attained a high level of specialized knowledge in the 1970s, but at a high price. "Tonally moving forms are the sole content and object of music' [wrote Eduard Hanslick in 1854]. This philosophy still regulates much of musicology, blocking all but the most formalistic approaches to criticism" (McClary 1993s).

The development of methodological tools over the centuries – rationalism, encyclopedias, scientific categorization and systematization, harmonic analysis – became weighty with age. The discipline narrowed its focus to the point of a pin, concentrating exclusively on artifacts. Inertia followed. (In this aspect, musicology mirrored the contemporaneous situation in Western European music composition.) With common roots in antiquity, the creation of its own grand narrative, typical canonizing, and gatekeeper institutions – musicology participates fully in the Western European intellectual tradition. As such, it is susceptible to the deconstructive discourses of postmodernism, from Foucault to Derrida and Cixous, as we shall see in the following chapters.

Although the first German-language treatises on music in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Quantz, Mozart) dealt explicitly with performance, through the formalization of the discipline came the restriction to study only the written. For musicology, the object of research had generally become the written artifact (score, treatise, sketch, letter...); in *Musikwissenschaft*, *only* the score was valid (Dahlhaus). After the invention of recording technology throughout the twentieth century, this problem grew. The 'study' and criticism of performances was relegated to music journalism.

If musicology was in a methodological quandary, music theory faced an even greater predicament after the advent of electronic music in the 1940s. Beginning in 1941 in America, Walter Piston had undertaken a loosening of functional harmony with a "wider view of the scope of a tonal center, needed for an approach to the study of harmony as used by composers of the twentieth century" in his canonic *Harmony* (Piston 1962:vii), while German *Musikwissenschaft* didn't manage even that step. Nonetheless, Piston remained totally caught up in the Pythagorean system: "The unit of harmony is the interval" (3). In the 1960s, Cage and Fluxus once again put perfor-

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<sup>19</sup> The theory of frequency relationships or the division of the octave into a scale of half-steps, for example.

mance as a new quality of work center stage, but *Musikwissenschaft* had become so ossified as practically to ignore it. Yet another hindrance to the analysis of such works lies in the delayed reception of New Musicology in *Musikwissenschaft* – that “*verspätete Disziplin*”, the “discipline with the delay” (Gerhard 2000) – and the resulting reticence in developing new analytic tools. Thus, one of the main impediments to analyzing multimedia and performance works is the lack of tools for analysis of such works in the musical canon. Added to that is the stumbling block of an encrusted New Music hierarchy laden with an ossified concept of philosophy (Gottwald 1991:39), unable to put itself into question and open itself up to new ideas.

I have painted a bleak picture, but already in the 70s and early 80s, new analytic methods and tools were emerging, for example the critique of Narmour (1977), the approach of Lerdahl and Jackendoff (1983), and the beginning use of sonograms for analysis. Yet, all of these accepted unquestioningly a concept of the autonomous work of music or of the score as artifact that had long out-lived its relevance as a sole notion of the work of art. It was up to New Musicology with its antecedents in cultural studies to explode the bubble isolating musicology and music analysis. By the mid-90s, “the intellectual force of the new musicological challenge to music theory was such that, even if they remained deeply skeptical, they [music theorists] were compelled to begin thinking about fresh ways of practicing music theory that would escape the limitations of formalism” (Agawu 2000).

Did musicology see the wave coming that broke over it with New Musicology? There were some indicators developing concurrently with the social upheavals around 1968. In “A Few Canonic Variations”, Kerman quotes pioneering ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood, who said in his seminar, “We are looking at skeletons” (Kerman 1983:108); that is, awareness was growing in the academic community that musicology had acquired necrophilic aspects. And on an anecdotal level, when I first studied ‘dusty old’ musicology in 1973, music happenings had begun to disrupt the quiet academic quotidian, and weird electronic music ensembles were springing up – something was going on.<sup>20</sup> As Kerman pointed out (1985:13), in the States ethnomusicology was breaking away from musicology, promulgating a study of music that, instead of being historically oriented, was more ethnocentric, i.e., centered on human activity, rather than on an artifact (score). These were all foretastes – recognized or not – of what would burst onto the scene with New Musicology.

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<sup>20</sup> Since I wrote these lines, my inspiring professor of counterpoint and organizer of happenings, Allen Strange, passed away (2008) too young.

New Musicology is a term applied to a wide body of work that brings insights from the (new) disciplines of feminism, gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, queer theory, postcolonial studies, new historicism, ethnomusicology, and sociology in the study and analysis of traditional music within musicology; but New Musicology didn't appear as such. It appeared as a series of sorties into the hallowed halls of musicology, first from feminist critics, then from gay and lesbian groups, and so on. Only in retrospect did it come to be generally referred to as 'New Musicology', a term that is still debated today. It represents an opening and a widening of the 'good ole' discipline of musicology with an increased focus on the *cultural* study, analysis, and criticism of music. In the context of my work here on *écriture féminine*, I find it important to emphasize that New Musicology is a panoply of rich new tools adopted by musicology, not merely a confluence of feminist criticism and musicology. What was the academic groundwork that enabled the adoption of so many new terms changing the focus of study from the artifact to cultural processes in general?

The 70s and 80s saw the explosion of a new discipline, 'cultural studies', in Anglo-American areas, whence musicology has gathered new impetus since the early 90s. The term was coined by Richard Hoggart in 1964, when he founded the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies or CCCS. Many cultural studies scholars employed Marxist methods of analysis. With the rise of pop and later punk culture, the decline of the Labour Party and the rise of the Conservative Party, great shifts in class, politics, and culture in the United Kingdom were taking place. In order to understand them, scholars at the CCCS turned to the work of the Frankfurt School and to Antonio Gramsci, who saw culture as a key instrument of political and social control. "In this view, capitalists use not only brute force (police, prisons, repression, and the military) to maintain control, but also penetrate the everyday culture of working people. Thus, the key rubric for Gramsci and for cultural studies is that of *cultural hegemony*"<sup>21</sup>. In the 80s, with Pierre Bourdieu (among other figures like Guy Debord...) and the adoption of cultural studies at American universities, production and consumption were considered theoretical equals, and the acquisition of products came into the center of attention. In contrast to the Frankfurt School, which saw consumers as duped masses, cultural studies emphasized consumers' creative use of cultural objects.

In my view, and for my work, it is the *sum* of new notions coming from cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_studies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_studies), retrieved 27 Dec 2007.

studies that has relevance<sup>22</sup>, and the present work builds on the achievements of New Musicology. My work builds on *écriture féminine*, feminist criticism, and cultural studies, and tries to take their combined insights a step further. A case in point is how the transgender artist, Terre Thaemlitz, uses a 'waste product' of the music industry, the 'glitch', as a cultural lever with which he creates music to defy the musical canon and the economy; this, he calls 'genrecide'. Without cultural studies and New Musicology, a consideration of these disparate aspects would have been hard pressed to find a niche in academic panels.

Thus, what was going on 'behind the scenes' academically, facilitated the entrance of feminist criticism and poststructuralism into musicology. Within the short span of five years, a spate of books appeared that filled the void described above, upturning the whole appplecart of musicology, books that now belong to history. Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) applied feminist criticism to music; Ruth Solie's *Musicology and Difference* (1993) applied the difference-philosophy of the French (feminist) theorists to musicology; the volume edited by Phillip Brett et al. *Queering the Pitch* (1994) extended McClary's gender discourse in music and added to it Judith Butler's performative theory and queer theory (indeed, Butler's *Gender Trouble* of 1990 may be seen as precursor to this slew of books); and the second of Rose Rosengard Subotnik's two essay volumes, *Deconstructing Variations* (1996) is informed by Derrida's deconstruction.<sup>23</sup>

Like the Berlin wall in Germany, Old Musicology fell in the US, but the solutions to the problems both caused are still being elaborated. While musicology's narrow course 20 years ago has now turned around 180 degrees, the solutions found have not spread rapidly. A key stumbling block is the fact that none of the works mentioned here has been translated into German or French (with the exception of Butler). At the same time, technological developments are now the drivers of art, and works are being created in new media that present fresh challenges to the venerable old discipline of musicology, er... to New Musicology. As media critic Andreas Broeckmann put it recently, "We are all working in fields whose names don't even exist yet"<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The debate within cultural studies as to whether it represents a rejection or refutation of measurable scientific results supporting theories, or whether it reveals the non-validity of scientific results (through the possibility of manipulation of data) is a question that should not be ignored, particularly as it applies to such multi-person based theories like deconstruction and *lecture féminine*, although a treatment of this question exceeds the scope of this work.

<sup>23</sup> It was musicology's moment, and it must have been electrifying. To my great personal dismay, I was only 'there' before and after this moment.

<sup>24</sup> At the *re:place* conference, Berlin, 15 Nov 2007.

The different directions of New Musicology are steadily making their way into German Musikwissenschaft. A refreshing ‘outsider’s’ view of German “Musicology’s Problem of Legitimation” is presented by the Korean musicologist living in Cologne, Jin Hyun Kim (2004). Within the German Society for Musicology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Musikforschung), a group of women has taken up the gender flag with the foundation of a gender studies group (MuWiGen); the publication of a handbook on music and gender is in progress. More importantly, two music gender institutes (Hamburg, Hannover) and even a gender professorship have been founded in the last few years. In the recently published volume *Musik mit Methode. Neue kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* [Music with Method. New Cultural Studies Perspectives] (Herr and Woitas 2006), musicology researcher Christa Bürstle thinks that “perhaps today is the time to start using ‘postmodern’ theories and their adaptation more sensibly, not the least in order better to counter neo-positivist and neo-conservative tendencies”. Indeed, that volume offers a wide variety of uses of different interdisciplinary approaches.

Ironically, in France, home of French feminist theory, the situation is bleak, a , situation that Hélène Cixous herself openly decries<sup>25</sup>. Aside from Cixous’ center and the foundation in 2006 of the Institut Emilie du Châtelet<sup>26</sup>, there seems to be next to no gender studies activity and certainly none in music. Although Catherine Clément, who collaborated with Cixous on *La jeune née* (1975), has been called the “second European to influence American [feminist] musicology” (McClary 1993:410), and despite her work *Opéra, ou la défaite des femmes*, her output on music and gender remains low. Florence Launay’s recent volume (2006) on French women composers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century uses traditional music-historical – not gender – methods.

Approaching the challenge from the ‘music analysis’ side, Berger, in his work on *Metal, Rock, and Jazz* (1999), approaches his subject from the disciplinary angles of perception, phenomenology, performance practice theory, and ethnomusicology, while Burns and Lafrance combine music analysis and cultural studies in *Disruptive Divas* (2002). Butler, in his excellent approach to electronic dance music (2006), sees analysis as a “social process” and allows room for his own voice, not claiming any “singular authority” to speak about music (16). Two imaginative analysis books by women emphasize the traditional analysis of particular works, but the analytic approaches employed are extraordinarily inventive. In her look at four American women composers,

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<sup>25</sup> Conference at Schloß Solitude (Stuttgart) in 2008.

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.mnhn.fr/museum/foffice/science/science/Recherche/rub-dep1/som-dpt/fichedep.jsp?ARTICLE\\_ARTICLE\\_ID=10587&ID=381&idx=2&nav=liste](http://www.mnhn.fr/museum/foffice/science/science/Recherche/rub-dep1/som-dpt/fichedep.jsp?ARTICLE_ARTICLE_ID=10587&ID=381&idx=2&nav=liste)

Hisama (2001) also includes cultural elements. Simoni (2006) explores new *Analytical Methods of Electroacoustic Music*, and while her book does not examine cultural contexts, the freedom with which she approaches the representation of music in difficult musical terrain electroacoustics is inspiring.

Themes investigated recently by music sociology and the social psychology of music, not traditionally parts of musicology but today infused with cultural studies and aesthetics, might, in light of the postmodern convergence of disciplines be fruitful for musicology in future. North and Hargreaves (1997) deal with experimental aesthetics in everyday music listening and compositional style; in *The Auditory Culture Reader* (Bull and Back 2003) explores relationships between music and sound, sound environments, and sound alterity; and De Nora (2003) aims to “connect Adorno with action-oriented, grounded music sociology”, while Scott (2000) treats just about everything. (Frith 1996 and Washburne 2006 are treated elsewhere in these pages.)

In comparison to such innovative approaches, French musicology seems to be stuck in a time warp of debates dating from the 60s, 70s, and 80s (for example, Chouvel 2002 and 2006). Even *On the Difference of the Arts* (Lauxerois and Szendy 1997), in spite of its promising title, is more concerned with the *difference* between artistic genres (a third of the book is devoted to Adorno, a third to Bob Wilson and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*) than with ‘*différence*’ in the French feminist or deconstructive sense. A rare exception is Clara Maïda’s “...a crit a crit a crit a...” [...it writes it writes it writes it...] in the recent volume of the musicological journal *Filigrane* (2007)<sup>27</sup>, which however basically also retains a Lacanian perspective. What might elucidate this strange lack of reception of the autochthonous postmodern philosophy? I am at a loss for explanations, except to point out that the prophet is never recognized in his native land...

I follow Kerman in his challenges to musicology and welcome the reactions of New Musicology. I register with satisfaction that his remarks of 20 years ago are no longer accurate. No longer do “musical thinkers travel at a respectful distance behind the latest chariots (or bandwagons) of intellectual life in general”; semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology are no longer restricted to “the boldest of musical studies today”; and poststructuralism, deconstruction, and serious feminism have not only “made their debuts in musicology or music theory”, in the United States they are mainstream. Indeed, authors today are going even further and *Rethinking Music* itself: “Music may

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<sup>27</sup> Website [http://revuefiligrane.free.fr/numeros/revue6/revue6\\_gb.htm](http://revuefiligrane.free.fr/numeros/revue6/revue6_gb.htm) retrieved 29 Dec 2007.

be what we think it is; it may not be” (Cook and Everist 1999:17)<sup>28</sup>. They are opening up exciting new vistas of research, forging new paths *Beyond Structural Listening* (Dell’Antonio 2004)<sup>29</sup>. In addition, as the above examples demonstrate, even popular music is gradually being integrated into the mainstream, also in Europe, as recent scholarly conferences in Germany, Italy, UK, and elsewhere attest.

I do have one caveat with regard to the explosion of New Musicological writings. I sometimes get the impression that the New topics are written on from the standpoint of the Old. It is a tricky trap, that Cixous saw and warned of:

Luring them with flashy signifiers, the demon of interpretation – oblique, decked out in modernity – sells them the same old handcuffs, baubles, and chains (LM:892).

As far as the topic of multimedia is concerned, although the latest in musical cultural studies (e.g., *The Cultural Study of Music*, Clayton et al. 2003), “revisits musical autonomy” (Clarke, Ch. 13) and tackles “Music as Performance” (Cook, Ch. 17), without neglecting “Music and the Market” (Laing, Ch. 26), the latest essays still stop short of dealing with musical multimedia works. With the exception of Cook (1998; cf. the next section below), most musicological treatments stop short of works like music installations or works encountered outside of concert venues. The consciousness is awakened to the fact that more sounds can be considered and treated as ‘music’ than ever before, but researchers are slow in finding their way out of traditional venues of music to new. So many expanding hermeneutic possibilities – here I hope to make a contribution in Europe to the logical ‘next step’ of integrating ‘other musics’, including multimedia, into the mainstream, contemplated from ‘other’ standpoints, including the feminine.

## ii. Music Aesthetics and Media Theory

In his lecture “Art and the Arts” held at the Berlin Academy of the Arts in 1966 shortly

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<sup>28</sup> Williams (2001) attacks musicology from a deconstructive viewpoint, while Clayton et al. (2003) carry New Musicology to new heights with the new tools of cultural studies. Korsyn (2003), somewhat belatedly, sees the humanities in crisis, and music (scholarship) along with it; Solie (2003) refutes his view, seeing the crisis as ten years old and peacefully resolved.

<sup>29</sup> Thereby picking up where Subotnik (1996) left off in chapter 3, “Toward a Deconstruction of Structural Listening: A Critique of Schoenberg, Adorno, and Stravinsky.”

before his death, Adorno did justice to emerging multimedia art: “In der jüngsten Entwicklung fließen die Grenzen zwischen den Kunstgattungen in einander oder, genauer: ihre Demarkationslinien verfransen sich”.<sup>30</sup> In this remarkable, prescient late work, Adorno discusses the consequences for music and aesthetics of the fraying, the unraveling of the boundaries between art genres, that happenings and the like entailed. Today, the observations in Adorno’s essay again attract attention: for example, a philosophical reflection on the unity and difference of art genres from the underground electronic music enclave Ircam (including the first French translation of “Art and the Arts” in Szendy 1997), or a dialogue between “Adorno’s Social Philosophy Of Art and Contemporary Discourses On the Postmodern” from Brazil (Duraó 2003) that draws on the same essay. It is clear that in the intervening 40 years, multimedia art has moved at top speed to the edges, to the fringes [*Fransen*] of the autonomous work of art; or, seen differently, that technology has pushed art there. In Anglo-American areas, aesthetic theories treating this phenomenon have forged ahead<sup>31</sup>, but *Musikwissenschaft* in Germany has lagged behind:

An aesthetic theory of electronic music has not yet been written, and it is debatable whether this can be done independently of an aesthetic theory of New Music in general. First encounters with electronic sound-production constituted anyhow a challenge to musical aesthetics, the conceptual apparatus of which was here thrown into crisis more clearly than elsewhere (Borio 1991:77).<sup>32</sup>

Borio recognized that an aesthetic theory of electronic music (that could form the basis for electronic *multimedia* works) would need to merge with the aesthetic theory of New Music; but the weight of that undertaking was and is overpowering.

But the seeds of resolution to the crisis may be germinating, and the recent inclusion of various sound installations at Germany’s New Music Walhallas Darmstadt and Donaueschingen are encouraging signs. However, writing as recently as 2005, Rolf Großmann still chafes at *Musikwissenschaft*’s resistance to accepting new media: “Tatsächlich werden Fragen über Fragen an die Musikwissenschaft gestellt. Doch wer

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<sup>30</sup> “In the most recent developments, the borders between art genres run into each other or, more exactly: the lines of demarcation have become unraveled” [*verfranst, verfransen*, to fray, unravel; from Ger. *Fransen*: fringe, valence; from French *frange*: fringe.]

<sup>31</sup> “The second half of our century has witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in philosophical speculation centering on the fine arts. Not since the flowering of German Romanticism have so many philosophers of the first rank taken aesthetics and the philosophy of art as an area of special interest,” attests Rutgers philosopher Peter Kivy (in the Foreword to Carroll 2001). A new area of *feminist aesthetics* has developed since the early 1990s (Worth 2001). At a future date, it might be fruitful to investigate the paths of *écriture féminine*, feminist criticism, aesthetics, and gender, taking account of mutual and exclusive notions.

<sup>32</sup> Borio also explores the phenomenon of ‘Verfransung’ in New Music in his excellent book (1993).

antwortet? Die Cultural Studies, die Kulturwissenschaften, die Medienwissenschaften, die Soziologie, die Marktforschung und neben vielen anderen neuerdings sogar die Medieninformatik....” – just not musicology. Großmann, a musicologist who left the academy years ago to carve out a niche in media arts at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg, articulates the essential consequence: “Es gilt zunächst, die Theorie der Musik zu befreien aus der Isolation einer falsch verstandenen musikalischen Autonomie. Wird Musik grundsätzlich als Teil eines Geflechts kultureller Zeichenprozesse gedacht, so verliert auch die offen als ‚unselbständig‘ auftretende Musik den Makel eines ästhetischen Mangels. [...] Die Befreiung der Musik von Autonomie-Postulaten bedeutet also hier ihre Befreiung aus der Rolle einer multimedialen Nebensache”.<sup>33</sup>

Nicholas Cook, like his German colleagues, addressed the same question in 1998:

“Analysing musical multimedia? What does that mean? Music videos, films, television commercials, CD-ROMs? Yes, all these things: but also songs, operas, ballet. But then why this book? Haven’t people been analysing songs, operas, and ballets for years? Of course, they have. But they have been *analysing them in substantial isolation from one another*: there has been little cross-fertilization between the analysis of song and that of opera, and neither offers much of a model for analysing music videos or film. In other words, *there exists virtually nothing in the way of a general theory of multimedia*, such as one might expect to provide the explanatory backdrop, the terminological regulation, for analyses of its various – and diverse – genres. (Cook 1998:v; my emphasis)

The first emphasized phrase above, “analyzing them in substantial isolation from one another”, shifts the focal point of the problem to fit today’s situation. Not only is the analysis of individual music *genres* often undertaken separately from each other, but separate *disciplines* also analyze in splendid isolation. The result is a lack of channels of communication as well as a lack of common vocabulary. The second phrase emphasized above concerning the non-existence of a theory of multimedia may be true for musical disciplines (cf. Borio’s remark). But, if the curricula at design universities and the content at multimedia festivals are any indicator, such general explanations for mul-

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<sup>33</sup> “Indeed, Musikwissenschaft is plagued by one question after another. But who’s answering? Cultural studies, cultural sciences, media sciences, sociology, market research, and most recently media IT, in addition to many others... The first step necessary is to liberate music theory from the isolation of a falsely understood notion of musical autonomy. If we consider music fundamentally as part of a tapestry of cultural sign processes, then it appears openly as ‘dependent’ music and is thus rid of the blemish of an aesthetic defect. The liberation of music from dictates of autonomy means, in this case, the liberation from its role as a multimedia bagatelle” (22). Großmann is founder and director since 1997 of the Center ((audio)) Aesthetic Strategies.

timedia works have been sought for years now in *media theory*.

From the first festival in Europe for art and technology, the *ars electronica* in Linz (founded in 1979) to the web initiative *Media Art Net* ([www.medienkunstnetz.de](http://www.medienkunstnetz.de)) to the *re:place conference* in Berlin 2007<sup>34</sup>, media art has drawn heavily on communication theory, information theory and cultural criticism (Flusser, Baudrillard, Luhmann, Régis Debray<sup>35</sup> ...). From Marshall McLuhan's 'hot' medium to Donna Haraway's 'cyborg body' and Don Ihde's 'whole-body perception'<sup>36</sup>: media art theory and its antecedents have been often more concerned with the bodily experience of the various media than with an autonomous work. As the Dutch media theorist Arjen Mulder puts it, "All media are directed at our bodies. Media theory endeavors to discover how our bodies react to media..." (Mulder 2004). Media art, media theory – new art, new theory. Perhaps due to the parallelism of their coming into existence, it was natural to invent both afresh, unlike music, which struggles along with its 2400 year-old metaphysical history. Media theory books are a hot commodity in German: Kloock and Spahr (2000), Faulstich (2002), Leschke (2003); or anthologies, like Pias, et al. (1999).

How can disciplines incorporate the ramifications of the technology explosion in day-to-day life into theory and philosophy? This is the global challenge for cultural areas like music that will occupy generations to come. How much body and how much *Geist*? A quandary, but also a facile binary opposition that arises when attempting analysis of multimedia performance works. I will seek to show how *lecture féminine* might respond to this conundrum in the course of this work.

How can this gap be bridged? Certainly, academic exchanges such as the above mentioned *re:place* in November 2007 will help. Another possibility is opening the viewpoint to philosophical traditions outside of traditional music aesthetics. Carl Dahlhaus (1984) did this by pointing to Roman Ingarden (1893-1970) and his phenomenological approach to art (and music) criticism, "a triumph for phenomenology".<sup>37</sup>

Von größter Wichtigkeit ist der letzte Paragraph der Abhandlung: „Das Problem der Identität des musikalischen Werkes.“ Die lückenhafte, nur schematische Festlegung des Werkes in der Partitur – die den Vorteil hat, die wichtigen Züge am Werk hervorzuheben, die unwichtigeren dem Ausführenden anheim zu stellen –

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<sup>34</sup> <http://tamtam.mi2.hr/replace/> April 19 2007. Transmediale director Andreas Broekmann's latest pet topic is how to win a place for media art in the art (history) canon.

<sup>35</sup> The tradition of progressive (leftist) cultural and art criticism continues with Roberto Barbanti (2000).

<sup>36</sup> Ihde 2002. American post-phenomenological philosopher Don Ihde (born 1934), whose *Technics and Praxis* (1979) is often identified as the first North American work on the philosophy of technology.

<sup>37</sup> Ingarden (1962), quoted as the final entry in (Dahlhaus, 1984: 443-457).

erlaubt scheinbar eine Veränderung des Werkes in der Zeit. Diese Veränderung schlägt sich nieder in einer Aufführungs- und Auffassungstradition, die sich wandelt. Dabei ist es aber nicht das Musikwerk selbst, das sich wandelt, sondern es ist „in Wirklichkeit nur ein Prozess des Entdeckens und Aktualisierens immer neuer Möglichkeiten der zu dem Werkschema gehörigen potentiellen Gestalten des Werkes“ (S. 134). So zeigt sich, dass das musikalische Kunstwerk in seiner vollen Konkretion gar nicht das Werk eines einzelnen (des Komponisten) ist, sondern eine soziale Institution und eine Herausforderung, es immer wieder neu für uns zu entdecken (457).<sup>38</sup>

Through the lens of Ingarden's phenomenological consideration, Dahlhaus points us away from the autonomous work and opens up the notion of the work as social institution with myriad performance possibilities: from unique, autonomous artifact to one that has an endless number of faces. It is path that leads from the unique work with its aura, past the reproduced work and points to the future. It is the same path we just saw musicology take through cultural studies. It is the path the song takes, with its single author, to the 'track' – open for endless remixes, all made by persons who are simultaneously hearer and creator. It is a path many authors will take, who will also bring the body and its physical responses to center stage of the aesthetic experience, changing the musical canon.

### iii. The Musical Canon

Western music has always had a canon, a belief that there is a 'proper' mode of musical conduct. [...] If one wished to be understood, to avoid speaking musical nonsense, one had to conform to these [constructive] principles. (Morgan 1992:45-46)

To here, I have addressed problems emanating from different fields of musical research or from their isolation from other disciplines. A further problem is how the works and methods enter into the group recognized by given fields or disciplines, into the canon (Greek *kann*, measuring rod, rule), in the first place. Most of us are aware that

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<sup>38</sup> “Of great importance is the last paragraph of the treatise, ‘The Problem of the Identity of the Musical Work.’ The incomplete, mere schematic fixation of the work in a score – which calls attention to the most important characteristics of the work while leaving the less important ones to the discretion of the interpreter – would seem to allow changing the work in the course of time. These changes accumulate in performance practices and traditions that adapt. But, it is not the work itself that changes, it is ‘in reality a process of discovering and updating endless new possibilities in the potential gestalt of the work, inherent in the work’s scheme’ (134). It thus becomes evident that the musical work of art in its full concretion is indeed not the work of a single person (the composer); rather, it is a social institution and a challenge to discover it for ourselves ever anew” (457).

the Western Catholic Church canonizes its saints, that there is a long, official procedure through which the Holy See in Rome authoritatively recognizes holy persons as saints. Compared to the structured procedure of the church, the way artistic canons are formed is much less visible. How do artists gain their status? How are masterworks canonized? Who are the canonizers? Who is a candidate? A recent example may elucidate. A few months ago, Grandmaster Flash (born 1958) and the Furious Five were inducted into the US Rock and Roll Hall of Fame<sup>39</sup>. The music form, rap, which is acknowledged to exert more influence today than any other genre, was finally given access. Are there aspects of this process of induction relevant to the present investigation? Induction into the Hall of Fame means that the artists and their works are recognized and visible to all; it means they will find their places in books and studies – and sales reports. As Furious Five group member Mele Mel put it, “People try to separate hip-hop music like it stands alone, but it really doesn't. We're in with all the great groups in the history of music. It further legitimizes hip-hop.”<sup>40</sup> In sum, it is an example of building a canon that makes evident many of the procedural steps.

As for musicology's hall of fame, how does induction work? Who votes? Who even defines what music is? Accordingly, who decides what *music - ology* should study? Does it still matter today? If we want to investigate what institutions are qualified to 'canonize' and what means are used to do so, then yes. If we want to analyze the discourses that accompany this procedure, then yes. If we are concerned with whether or not music is given credence alongside multimedia works (and not made into a bagatelle, as Großmann feared), if we are not content to turn their consideration over completely to media theory, then the answer is definitely, yes.

The question of canon emerged explicitly in the humanities in the 60s and 70s; it is a question pointedly posed by postcolonial studies and the exclusion of 'the Other' (see under Chapter 2 below). Musicology began interrogating its own canon in the 80s. Joseph Kerman's essay “A Few Canonic Variations” (1983) was one of the first significant explorations of musical canonicity, and Bergeron and Bohlman (1992) took the investigation many steps further. Finally, Marcia Citron's *Gender and the Musical Canon* (1993) queried the role played by gender in the creation of the musical canon.

Citron's examination raises several important considerations relevant to my study, and I will later build on the background she provides. While her study particularly

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<sup>39</sup> Founded in 1983; today located in Cleveland, Ohio. Cf. <http://www.rockhall.com/>.

<sup>40</sup> “Hip-hop finally gets its foot in the door”, Larry McShane, *Chicago Sun-Times*, 11 March 2007. Seen at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-03/07/content\\_5813967.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-03/07/content_5813967.htm) retrieved 16 April 2007.

treats the relationship of women and gender to the musical canon, the descriptions and history she supplies on canonicity have equal validity for all *outsiders*, for all 'Others' excluded from the canon. I summarize here the salient points of Citron's work, unfortunately not widely available in Europe. To begin, Citron conceptualizes canon:

In the sense of a specified body of works in a given field, canons exert tremendous power. By setting standards, they represent what is considered worthy of inclusion. Works that do not measure up are excluded, either in the sense of deliberately omitted or ignored and hence forgotten. Canons are therefore exclusive. They represent certain sets of values or ideologies, which in turn represent certain segments of society. Canons self-perpetuate. As models to be emulated, they replicate their encoded values in subsequent exemplars. As canonic values become entrenched over time, the prescriptive and normative powers of canons become even greater. Their tenacity and authority create the ideology that they are timeless. As such, it is assumed that they do not change. In practice, however, the social values encoded in a given canon may change – not daily or monthly but over some larger period of time, perhaps every ten or fifteen years (15).

Next, Citron describes what might belong to the canon of a particular discipline:

This refers to goals, methodologies, research conventions, institutions, social structures, belief systems, underlying theories, audience, language, subjects for study, and various other parameters that shape and define a discipline's self-view of what is standard, acceptable, and even desirable. But who decides what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in canons – or more colloquially, what is in and what is out? The process of the formation of a canon involves a lengthy historical process that engages many cultural variables for canons simultaneously reflect, instigate, and perpetuate value systems (19).

We have seen how the canon can exclude the artist. What are the ramifications of the canon for the public?

The public seems to look to canons for setting standards of taste. If the work is in the canon, assumes a layperson, it must be good. 'Canonically correct' knowledge confers a kind of moral imprimatur on its possessor. One not only feels ennobled but also identifies with a particular segment of the culture. In the case of Western art music the link is with a European heritage and its elitist cachet. The canon, and especially the standard repertoire, serves as a means of preserving that connection (31).

While these norms are more applicable to written than oral transmissions, we recall that for centuries and until very recently, the Western music canon has recognized only the written artifacts. What does this tell us about our canon?

Canons have a great affinity for a written tradition. The material basis of canons [is] most pertinent to cultures or sub-cultures in which writing and literacy are fundamental. This suggests an obvious class bias in favor of the educated, at least in the Western sense. An oral tradition propagates works that lack a strongly defined sense of an *individual* creator (38-39).

A final issue with great relevance for the present study is the power that the concept of canonicity exerts over creativity. In conjunction with this, Citron unfurls a genealogy of gendered notions of creativity, starting with God the Father, tracing the historical backdrop against which Cixous also posits her theory of *écriture féminine*. Here, Citron locates *logos*, the “paradigm of male creativity” that “has sustained those structures that shape and govern Western society, and it is arguably the main vehicle for exercising cultural power. This takes in artistic creativity, but could also include the various modalities of expression that are to be found in music, for example performing, speaking about one’s own music, or writing about other music” (53).

Canons embody the value systems of a dominant cultural group, but Citron allows that they do change. In the years since Citron wrote, the developments described above in the American musicological canon dramatically demonstrate this fact. In *écriture féminine*, feminine writing, I see a model for ‘re-writing’ the canon. Citron raises questions concerning the “vagueness and impracticality” of *écriture féminine* (54), but I do see in it – perhaps even in feminine reading – the possibility for writing oneself and one’s own history anew, which is why I have chosen it as my approach (method).

## **B. APPROACH (METHOD)**

[R]ather than mastery coinciding with knowledge, I would say that, with few exceptions, knowledge is constantly caught up in, is entrapped by a will for power. I know which people conveying knowledge don’t seem to be dealing with the exercise of power. There are very few. (Cixous and Clément 1986:144).

In a ‘deconstructed’ theoretical world, there are as many ways to view a situation as there are viewers. (Music) analysis, the usual term for what I attempt here, has acquired through its use in science a connotation of a *method*, “in which a known truth is sought as a consequence of reasoning from the thing to be proved”. Leaving the scientific definition to the scientists, I prefer the word’s Greek roots, which open up new meaning. (Let us not be trapped in an analysis still encumbered by the old ‘automatists’, as Cixous put it.) *Analusis*, a releasing, comes from *analuein*, to undo; *ana-*

back + *luein*, to loosen: a loosening of elements, a releasing of recognition, an *ap-proach* to knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

Like the musicologists described above who are trying to get beyond structural listening, which is taught as integral part of the music canon (Subotnik, dell'Antonio, et al.), I too feel the necessity to find new ways of listening to and approaching art. More to the point, I think many of us feel the necessity to complement the wonderful ability of hearing structures in music with additional, less structured ways of hearing; for the music we are listening to has become less structured, sometimes demonstratively so. But using only structural listening and 'analytic' techniques, we sense we are not getting as close as we would like to the point some composers are making with their music; or, in the case of multimedia works, with their sound.

The specific theoretical approach I have chosen to loosen the elements of recognition is '*lecture féminine*', which generically speaking is a form of discourse analysis, specifically as developed by Hélène Cixous based on *écriture féminine*. It is important to specify that, in spite of the presence of the word 'feminine' in the term, the approach differs from critical feminist theory and gender theory as used in literary or musicological analysis. I will explain the historical background for this in Chapter 2 below; suffice it to say here, that the two main thematic areas of those theories are a) how gender roles have come to be, are attributed, or are performed (or the question, "what is feminine"); and b) systematic research on the life and work of women in the field of music. These areas are not treated here.

On the contrary, discourse analysis, essentially a postmodern tool, does not so much provide a particular method, as it characterizes a way of approaching and thinking about a problem; it is a manner of questioning the basic assumptions of quantitative and qualitative research methods.<sup>42</sup> It aims not to find a tangible answer to a problem based on scientific research; rather, it enables access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a project, a statement, etc. Historian Philipp Sarasin wanted to understand whether and how one could work with the poststructuralist concept of discourse, "weil ich verstehen wollte, ob und wie sich mit dem poststrukturalistischen Konzept des Diskurses arbeiten lässt". His conclusion: "Diskursanalyse beziehungsweise Diskurstheorie ist keine Methode, die man ‚lernen‘ könnte, sondern sie erscheint

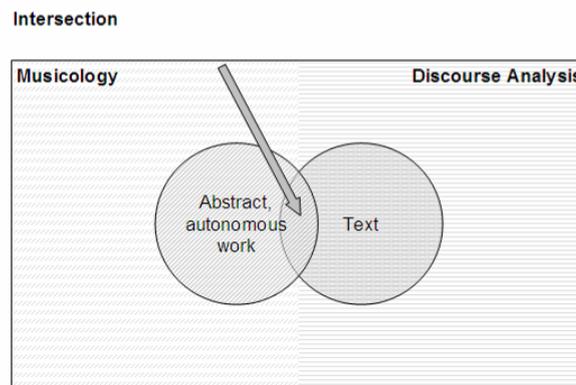
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<sup>41</sup> Ian Bent (1994) lists a "multitude of terms [...] in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by means of which those who subjected musical fabrics, configurations, structures and styles to close scrutiny [...] in French, *décomposer*, *dégager*, *expliquer*; in German, *auffassen*, *betrachten*, *beurteilen*, *entdecken*, *enttätseln*, *erklären*, *erläutern*, *phrasieren*, *zergliedern*, *zerlegen* – to mention only a few" (xii).

<sup>42</sup> To be distinguished from 'critical discourse analysis,' which focuses on the way discourse reproduces (or resists) social and political inequality, power abuse or domination.

mir eher als eine theoretische, vielleicht sogar philosophische Haltung".<sup>43</sup> We note here Sarasin's refusal to call it a method.

Crucial are the application of critical thought to social situations and the unveiling of hidden – or not so hidden – politics within the socially dominant discourses. Whereas earlier studies of discourse, for instance in text linguistics, often focused on the abstract structures of (written) texts, many contemporary approaches favor a more dynamic study of (spoken, oral) talk-in-interaction. They view language as social interaction and are concerned with the social contexts in which discourse is embedded. This extension of discourse analysis away from the texts and in the direction of social contexts is important for my undertaking, for I am seeking to extend Cixous' *lecture féminine* away from a purely textual focus into an examination of the social contexts of the discourses. At the same time, I seek to take music out of its purely abstract, autonomous form and move the examination to include its social contexts. I am working at the intersection of methods, trying to enlarge the range for exploration of the social and perceptual values underlying musical works, in the sense of cultural studies described above.



**Figure 1 - Intersection of Methods**

In the illustration above, we see Old Musicology again on the left, working on the abstract autonomous work. On the right, we see discourse analysis – or Cixous' form of it, *lecture féminine* – working on the words with words, the text, around the work. My aim is to treat the intersection of these two, to try to 'read' the works in an intertextual way.

Hélène Cixous' *lecture féminine* offers several characteristics not offered by other poststructuralist approaches. First, Cixous is the author not only of theoretical

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<sup>43</sup> "Because I wanted to understand whether and how one could work with the poststructuralist concept of discourse." "Discourse analysis, or discourse theory, isn't a method that one could 'learn'; rather, it seems to me to be a theoretical, perhaps even a philosophical stance" (Sarasin 2003: 8). For more on discourse analysis cf. "doing" it with Gee (1999) and extensive further references on his p. 98; more theoretical is Blommaert (2005).

works, but also of novels, poems and works for theater<sup>44</sup>, and her works, including the theoretical ones, are poetic. They admit great flexibility of interpretation and accord special attention to the associative/evocative (rather than purely critical) possibilities of intertextuality; they are therefore amenable for artistic application. This multifaceted aspect opens numerous points of correlation with musical formulation and offers great potential for musical analysis. Cixous works on literature and language, and many approaches to language have applicability for musical syntax. Being herself a writer and not an academician, Cixous has a manner of theorizing that is many-sided and open. Even when polemic, she strives to leave her work open to multiple interpretations, and it thus represents a flexible tool for art analysis.

The second reason is temporal propinquity. The French feminists began developing their thought in the 70s and have continued up to the present; the same is true of the first figure I treat, Stäbler. Thus, in choosing one of the French feminists, I have the possibility of tracing a strand of thought whose development was contemporaneous with his.

Finally, Cixous' theory stems to a large degree from her own experience in the creative act of writing, and due to this proximity, the topics she raises are particularly relevant to the creative act, thus also, to composition. In sum, I find this approach very well suited for accessing and discussing artistic content; for, the more one attempts to pin down artistic content with some semblance of scientific accuracy, the more it tends to slip away. It seems to me, paradoxically, that you can get closer when you are not trying to.

In choosing *lecture féminine*, I have chosen not a method, but a starting point. And I seek explicitly to *interpret* it in a personal way. In making my intent clear to *interpret*, I follow the poststructuralist thought that there is no one, single Truth, there is only the interaction of different interpretations. Consequently, starting from my understanding of *écriture féminine*, I strive to communicate to the reader a sense of what *écriture féminine* can be, to sensitize the reader to its themes, and to how it can work. From there, I develop the notion of ***lecture féminine***. It is my goal to give the reader the means to read the works presented from the standpoint of a *lecture féminine*.

How do I hope to use *lecture féminine* in my own way? First, in order to treat multimedia works, it is necessary to expand it for use looking at technology. Second, while not uniquely a 'gender' approach, it has its origins in a gendered discourse and

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<sup>44</sup> Indeed, her great friend Jacques Derrida called her the greatest writer in the French language (in Cixous, 1993b).

considers gender as one discourse among several to query, as will be seen. This represents for me a sort of middle path among strongly gendered approaches, such as those named above like feminist criticism or queer theory, neutral approaches like post-phenomenology, or outright disregard for gender, as is the case with music analysis with its notion of the 'autonomous' work of art. Third, being a trained musical performer, I have deep appreciation for the subtleties of meaning that oral tradition can convey. Hélène Cixous still holds her seminars in Paris, and I was able to visit them for a year and thereby participate in her practice of *lecture féminine*. Through these visits – sitting through the six hours of seminar, listening to the intonation of her voice, following her oral long arguments, seeing her body movements – I was able to gain knowledge in a way I could not have accessed through writings alone. In addition, I was able to conduct interviews with all of the artists covered, excluding Miss Kittin.

But how shall I use *lecture féminine* – and try to remain true to its principles – in a dissertation? I shall offer historical background and spotlight a number of particular aspects. Then, we will 'read for' a number of 'topics', which Cixous elaborates in her writings on *écriture féminine*, for as we shall see, the *choice* of what we read is almost as important as *how* we read. To this end, texts have been quoted liberally. The topics form the different viewpoints from which we will then contemplate the music works. This, I hope, will give the reader the means to perform a sort of guided, personal *lecture féminine* of the works later presented here, as far as that is possible.

While the history and background of *lecture féminine* will be detailed below in the chapter on Hélène Cixous, perhaps already here I can illustrate what *lecture féminine* might be with an example taken from this year's Venice Biennale. There, in the French pavilion, Sophie Calle created the extensive multimedia installation, *Take Care of Yourself*, based on the following proposition: She "received an email telling me it was over. I didn't know how to respond. It ended with the words, 'Take care of yourself'. And so I did. I asked 107 women, chosen for their profession or skills, to interpret this letter. To analyze it, comment on it, dance it, sing it. Exhaust it."<sup>45</sup> In the installation, 107 women all interpret the email text, banal and easily understandable as it was. Calle sought out almost every kind of profession imaginable, including Talmudic exegete, psychoanalyst, clown, judge, proofreader, translator, cartoonist, sexologist, police captain, schoolgirl, chess player, and no lesser than DJ vocalist Miss Kitten. Most wrote

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<sup>45</sup> From the program booklet for *Take Care of Yourself* (2007) obtained at the pavilion, Paris: Commissariat General Culturesfrance. More images available at [http://www.designboom.com/snapshot/gallery.php?SNAPSHOT\\_ID=8&GALLERY\\_ID=289](http://www.designboom.com/snapshot/gallery.php?SNAPSHOT_ID=8&GALLERY_ID=289) retrieved 27 Sep 2007.



Once again, it must be emphasized that what is feminine about this work is *not* the simple fact that the work is by a woman, that it deals with a ‘woman’s topic’, or that it contains the viewpoints of 107 other women. From my understanding, just as Cixous offered examples by male writers, this example could have been created by a man and could have contained the interpretations of 107 men. I hope that what makes Calle’s work an example of *lecture féminine* will be made clear in the course of this work.

To facilitate the interaction of viewpoints, I will present in each instance not only my viewpoint, but I will also accord other writers ample space. This will put an interaction of topics and thoughts into play concerning the works to be treated that will, with luck, permit the reader insights into the works themselves. Through this process, I hope to provide the reader with a rudimentary *lecture féminine* and, thus, evidence of the usefulness of as a complement to the music analyst’s hermeneutic toolbox.

In closing, I mention a final aspect of ‘discourse analysis’. The word ‘discourse’ does not imply text or *logos* (as does, for example, the word *dialogue* with its root *logos*). ‘Discourse’ comes from Middle English *discours*, process of reasoning, from Medieval Latin *discursus*, from Latin, a running about, from past participle of *discurrere*, to run about. This recalls the image of building a **bridge** I invoked as the goal of my efforts – a bridge for ideas to run across. Understanding entails going back and forth, from one area to another, using various tools, exchanging results. The specific semantic challenges in taking discourse analysis into the area of music and performance will be examined as they arise in the examples investigated in this work. Throughout, I have tried to keep my main objective in sight: demonstrating the usefulness Cixous’ *lecture féminine* can have, alongside other methods, for opening new paths of epistemological investigation of multimedia works.

### C. CHOICE OF WORKS AND PRESENTATION PLAN

I propose a *lecture féminine* here of three artists who live in the period from 1947 to the present.<sup>46</sup> Each is involved with music and with emerging technologies; each has taken an unusual path of development. There is a national diversity in areas I am familiar

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<sup>46</sup> Originally, I had intended to include the work of Maryanne Amacher, born 1943. For reasons of concise theme development and for reasons of time, I decided to dedicate a separate monograph to her.

with: one American man, one French woman, and one German man. In their national diversity, they speak to different theoretical traditions, thus allowing ample room for theoretical synthesis. There is sexual/gender diversity: There is one woman; and of the men, one is transgender, the other is homosexual; thus, each has had a development that elicited unusual gender standpoints. (Only one of them, Terre Thaemlitz, has made gender an overt theme in his artistic program.) The artists represent as large a chronological span for living artists as I could obtain, given the other criteria, being born over a period of 25 years. The artists are:

- Gerhard Stäbler, German, born 1947
- Terre Thaemlitz, American, born 1963, and
- DJ Miss Kittin (Caroline Hervé), French, born 1973.

In the selection of pieces I have not sought out obscure works as examples; the works selected are representative of the artists' work in general.

My primary concern is demonstrating where the notions of *écriture féminine*, which have been found through a *lecture féminine*, can be encountered in multimedia music works; therefore, I have taken pains to choose works where they are visible and evident.

My secondary concern is with discerning possible lines of development (like the juncture of electronic and electronica, the shift of the notion of Subject, or changes in the musical canon, to take three examples) along the paths of the artists treated. This made the selection somewhat more difficult, since the paths of change also had to fit.

In order to make perceiving these paths easier for the reader, I have chosen to present the artists in chronological order. If, on the contrary, presentation of the concepts of *lecture féminine* had been my primary concern, I would have felt the necessity to choose an order in their presentation, such as 'importance' of concept, frequency of quotation, logical development of ideas, order of exposition by Cixous, etc., and that would have entailed creating a hierarchy, which runs contrary to the notion of *écriture féminine*. Presenting the artists in chronological order has the additional advantage of sparing me the necessity of making that choice.

There is yet another reason for presenting the concepts like this. Cixous' *écriture féminine* is a complex of notions, which she developed in different writings over the course of years. In her writing, they are not presented in a clearly structured manner. They are jumbled up together, constantly appearing, disappearing, and reappearing, sometimes in the foreground of a discussion, sometimes in the background, sometimes merely alluded to. Women writing "take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking

them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down” (LM:887). In order to try to do justice to the notions, and in order to benefit from intertextual references to the artistic works in the discussion of these notions, I have chosen to expose them one by one. Each concept is considered using a specific example from the work of one of the artists. By putting the artists’ works in my presentation in the spotlight, I can bundle Cixous’ various statements and arrange them around the works.

Each artist has certain elements in his or her *œuvre*, which of themselves make reference to particular elements of the theory of *écriture féminine*. For ease of reference of the reader, I present a schema of the topics and their presentation:

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Artist</b>
Changing concept of the Subject	Stäbler
Changing concept of musical material	Stäbler
Interstices of gender	Thaemlitz
Sex as weapon	Thaemlitz
Appropriation of means of production	Thaemlitz
(Bi-)sexuality	Thaemlitz
Rhizome subject	Thaemlitz
Corporeal electronics	Miss Kittin
Writing the body	Miss Kittin

**Figure 4 - Concepts of *Écriture féminine***

From a formal point of view, the first two composers treated have dense compact work catalogues and refer to the greatest number of Cixousian concepts. The last artist, Miss Kitten, has the least number of works; logically so, for she is also the youngest. At the same time, the single concept I will treat with her – the body – is the one that most *cognoscenti* would describe as central to Cixous’ *écriture féminine*. Saving this major theme for the last allows me to ‘clear out’ other concepts beforehand, allowing allow a more lucid treatment of this central concept, so deeply rooted in Western metaphysics. To conclude the study, I summarize results and sketch consequences and perspectives for future research.

As a result of this division, the bulk of the concepts to be treated fall into the middle of my examination, in the discussion of Stäbler and Thaemlitz. The first half, the chapters on poststructuralist background, Cixous, and Stäbler, I have entitled “Where Are We Coming From?”. The musical and musicological concepts in them, while visionary, still hook up clearly to notions from Old Musicology, and I attempt to pick them up there in order to join them to new concepts. The second half, the chapters on electronica, Thaemlitz, Miss Kittin, and the conclusion, I have entitled “Where Are We Headed?”, for these chapters contain themes that move more decisively and obviously

away from past practices and point us to future realms.

With this 'cast of characters' and with the method sketched above, I will now move into a deeper treatment of the historical background and methodological considerations of Cixous' *lecture féminine*, before I attempt a feminine reading of the works by the composers.



**PART I – WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?**



## 1 POSTSTRUCTURALIST BACKGROUND

We must begin *wherever we are...* in a text where we already believe ourselves to be.

(Derrida 1967:162)

Just how much poststructuralist theory is necessary? The art critic of the esteemed German weekly *Die Zeit* recently remarked concerning the 2007 *documenta* art show, “The last couple of *documentas* were more study halls than exhibits. They produced fat volumes of theory and gave many visitors the uneasy sensation they needed to study three semesters of poststructuralist theory in order to begin to be worthy of contemporary art.”<sup>47</sup> Writing in the year 2007, some 40 years after poststructuralism emerged in France, I venture the answer, “Not that much”.

Undeniably, very much has already been said and written about poststructuralism, and in future the flow will doubtless only increase.<sup>48</sup> Although its import has not ‘trickled down’ to the general public, and ostensibly it presents a daunting obstacle to understanding contemporary art, poststructuralism has a firm place in the philosophical canon of Western intellectual history. Once more, a philosophical current arose in France so vast, so insightful, and so fitted to the spirit of the time that its fruitful potential for affecting other areas of thought and study seems far from exhausted. Yet in spite of its influence, it is difficult to grasp or make graspable; indeed, its very nature makes the statement true: there are as many explanations as there are explainers.

Nevertheless, since poststructuralism is the humus in which *lecture féminine*

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<sup>47</sup> Rauterberg, H., “Revolte in Kassel” [Revolt in Kassel] in *Die Zeit*, 12.04.2007 Nr. 16. „Die letzten beiden Documenta-Schauen waren eher Studierzimmer als Ausstellungen. Sie produzierten dickleibige Theoribände und weckten in vielen Besuchern das mulmige Gefühl, sie müssten erst drei Semester lang poststrukturalistische Philosophie studieren, um der Gegenwartskunst überhaupt würdig zu sein.” <http://www.zeit.de/2007/16/Documenta>.

<sup>48</sup> Several websites are comprehensive and easier to browse than books: <http://www.theory.org.uk/>, <http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>, [http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc\\_data/postmodern.html](http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/postmodern.html), <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/agger2.htm>.

grew, it merits our attention here. Poststructuralism has been applied to music and used in musicology; but the infrequent use of poststructuralism in music theory and analysis offers the occasion for highlighting a few 'by-ways' of poststructuralist waters – topics that, although not in the main stream, are of particular importance for the development of Hélène Cixous' thought, of *écriture féminine*, as well as for the development of musical thought in the framework presented here.

It should be said of the eras and areas I am about to treat – Modernism and postmodernism, structuralism and poststructuralism – that they are scarcely past. I wager that most (who have an opinion at all) would say the epoch we are in today is postmodernism, although some make out the dawn of a post-digital age on the horizon. But are we? I find myself attempting to write about something I am stuck in. I stand on the quicksand of the present, trying to paint a static view. I am just as aware as the reader certainly is, that the view I offer is personal and evanescent, rather than distant and scholarly. How calm the waters of sleepy old musicology seem when we venture into the maelstrom of postmodernism and poststructuralist theory! The blizzard surrounding the altercation 'Derrida vs. Lacan' is nothing compared to feminist and anti-feminist interpretations of Deleuze's concept of 'becoming-woman'. To make matters worse, I am a musicologist writing about music for musicologists and can claim to have studied only music deeply.

Therefore, the following sketch cannot have the aim of trying to establish definitive designations or characterizations (which may never be wholly possible). It does, however, have the following two aims. First, I indicate what I mean by the terms used, so the reader can orient him- or herself accordingly; and second, my tale of the narrative may also reveal something of myself and the point from which I look at my subject matter – that, too, will hopefully help the reader position a personal standpoint. I begin with a definition of terms, paraphrased from the American Heritage Dictionary.<sup>49</sup>

*modern.* a) Of, relating to, or characteristic of recent times *or the present*; contemporary or up-to-date: modern history, a modern lifestyle, a modern way of thinking. b) Avant-garde; experimental.<sup>50</sup> *modernity.* The state or quality of being modern.

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<sup>49</sup> N.B.: These terms are defined differently in different countries.

<sup>50</sup> It is worth repeating the American Heritage Dictionary's usage note on *modern*: "The word *modern*, first recorded in 1585 in the sense 'of present or recent times', has traveled through the centuries designating things that inevitably must become old-fashioned as the word itself goes on to the next modern thing. We have now invented the word *postmodern*, as if we could finally fix *modern* in time, but even *postmodern* (first recorded in 1949) will seem fusty in the end, perhaps sooner than *modern* will. Going back to Late Latin *modernus*, 'modern', which is derived from Latin *modo* in the sense 'just now,' the English word *modern* (first recorded at the beginning of the 16th century) was not originally concerned with anything that could later be considered old-fashioned. It simply meant 'being at this time, now existing,' an obsolete

*Modernism (Modernist)*. The deliberate departure from tradition and the use of innovative forms of expression that distinguish many styles in the arts and literature of the 20th century.<sup>51</sup>

*postmodern*. Of or relating to art, architecture, or literature that reacts against earlier Modernist principles, as by reintroducing traditional or classical elements of style or by carrying Modernist styles or practices to extremes.<sup>52</sup> Other forms: *postmodernism* (noun); *postmodernist* (adjective & noun).

*structuralism*. 1. A method of analyzing phenomena, as in anthropology, linguistics, psychology, or literature, chiefly characterized by contrasting the elemental structures of the phenomena in a system of binary opposition (*structuralist*, adjective & noun).

*poststructuralism*. Any of various theories or methods of analysis, including deconstruction and some psychoanalytic theories, that deny the validity of structuralism's

sense today. In the later 16th century, however, we begin to see the word contrasted with the word ancient and also used of technology in a way that is clearly related to our own modern way of using the word. Modern was being applied specifically to what pertained to present times and also to what was new and not old-fashioned. Thus in the 19th and 20th centuries the word could be used to designate a movement in art, Modernism, which is now being followed by postmodernism.”

<http://www.bartleby.com/61/28/M0362800.html> retrieved on 22 Aug 2007.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Boulez' remark in Danuser, H. (ed., 1997): “Que signifie le mot *moderne* ? C'est plus difficile à saisir parce qu'il implique avant tout la notion de mouvement alors que le mot *classique* implique surtout la stabilité. Le *moderne* est essentiellement lié à la transition, à l'insécurité, à l'incertitude de la chose non ratifiée” [What does the word *modern* mean? It is all the more difficult to grasp, because it implies above all the idea of movement, whereas the word *classic* implies especially stability. The *modern* is essentially tied to transition, to insecurity, to the incertitude of things that haven't been formalized]. Recent publications on the relationship of music and modernism see also Meyer (1996) *Klassizistische Moderne*, Williams (1997) *New Music and the Claims of Modernity*, and Berger (2005) *Music and the Aesthetics of Modernity*.

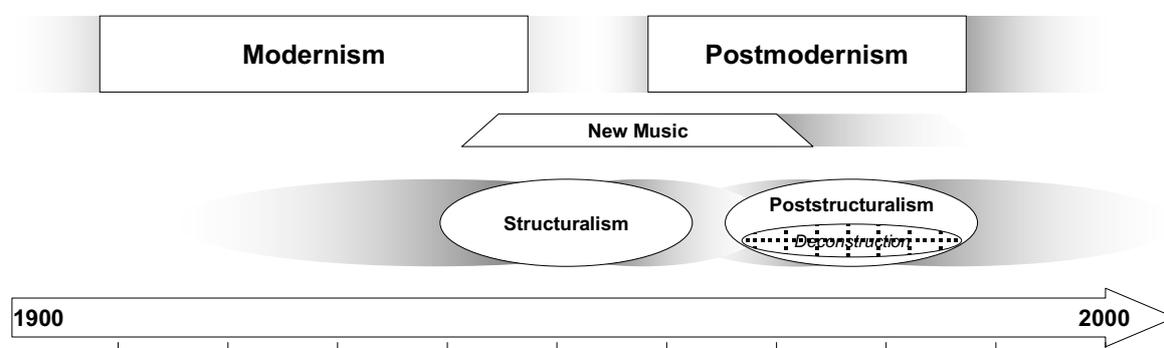
<sup>52</sup> But there is also Lyotard's definition: “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. [...] To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution, which in the past relied on it. [...] Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? (Lyotard, 1979: xxiv-xxv).

Jameson (1991) is highly appreciated and sheds much light on the relationship of postmodernism to culture (excerpts): “Modernism thought compulsively about the New and tried to watch its coming into being, but the postmodern looks for breaks, for events rather than new worlds. In modernism, some residual zones of 'nature' or 'being', of the old, the older, the archaic, still subsist; culture can still do something to that nature and work at transforming that 'referent'. Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. It is a more fully human world than the older one, but one in which 'culture' has become a veritable 'second nature'. Indeed, what happened to culture may well be one of the more important clues for tracking the postmodern: an immense dilation of its sphere (the sphere of commodities), an immense and historically original acculturation of the Real. So, in postmodern culture, 'culture' has become a product in its own right” (ix-x).

For relationship to art, see Kroker and Cook (1991) *The Postmodern Scene. Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics*; for relationship between the French postmodern and technology see Kroker (1992) *The Possessed Individual*. Kramer (1995) explores “just what the elusive term *postmodernism* means” for musicology; and an excellent and comprehensive theoretical treatment of musical postmodernism can be found in Lochhead and Auner (1999). In Chapter 2 “Prehistory: Modernism, Postmodernism, and Music” of *Rationalizing Culture*, Georgina Born (1995) undertakes a steeplechase of music, aesthetics, economics, and institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a structuralist view of the interplay of systems. A discerning treatment of the antecedents of postmodernism can be found in Moira Roth's *difference/indifference. musings on postmodernism, marcel duchamp and john cage* (1998).

method of binary opposition and maintain that meanings and intellectual categories are shifting and unstable (*poststructuralist*, adjective & noun).

To sum up, I hardly use the term *modern*. When I use the terms *Modernism* or *Modernist*, I refer to the stylistic epoch in Western culture after Romanticism and to which New Music belongs. I use the terms *postmodernism* and *postmodern* to describe the stylistic epoch that *reacts* to Modernism. (In the future, Modernism might be *the* reference point and could conceivably embrace postmodernism, just as Romanticism embraces Late Romanticism today.) *Structuralism* and *poststructuralism* refer to intellectual currents in anthropology, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and literature within those epochs respectively, whereas deconstruction is a strand of poststructuralism.



**Figure 5 - Epochs and Terms**

Thus, while we may speak of Modernist or postmodernist music, we generally do not speak of structuralist or poststructuralist music.<sup>53</sup> Regarding structuralism and poststructuralism, it is important to remember that they are external constructs that none of the main proponents ever used in referring to him- or herself. I base my understanding of all these concepts on my reading of H el ene Cixous, Jacques Derrida, and Gilles Deleuze; on interpretations of poststructuralist theory by feminist and non-feminist theorists and critics; and on lectures given by Prof. H el ene Cixous (Universit e Paris 8) and Dr. Joseph Cohen (Coll ege Internationale de Philosophie, Paris), one of Derrida's last students and co-editor of his literary remains.

It is not my goal to establish beyond a doubt any of the theories or stances described. They certainly exist, at the very least as hotly debated hypotheses of their authors. It is instead my goal here to provide a background of poststructuralism, so that in

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<sup>53</sup> In the introduction to his book on *musique informelle*, Borio (1993) provides an excellent background on structuralist and poststructuralist thought on serial, post-serial and *informelle* music. For two composers who consider themselves 'deconstructionist', see below.

the following chapters I can demonstrate where these notions – if they exist at all – can be encountered at work in music. For example, if one is convinced that Western culture is not phallogocentric, then no illustration, including mine, can elucidate it; for those who may find that Western culture has phallogocentric aspects, the illustration may shed light on this characteristic at work in a musical context.

## 1.1 STRUCTURALISM

I begin this background sketch of poststructuralism with structuralism. In the definitions given above, poststructuralism was defined as “any of various theories or methods of analysis that *deny the validity of structuralism's method* of binary opposition and maintain that meanings and intellectual categories are shifting and unstable”. Here we note that this definition – as most definitions of poststructuralism – defines it as a *reaction to* structuralism; congruently, the statement is not surprising that postmodernism is a reaction to Modernism, often a denial of it. Of structuralism, a way of thinking the world that emerged with Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss out of Ferdinand de Saussure’s linguistic theory<sup>54</sup>, I will touch only two points: one, a general overview, and two, concerning its relation to music.

As a general movement, we recall that structuralism strove to direct the attention away from studying the object in and of itself, toward studying the object *in relation to* the structures in which it is embedded. For art, this meant a move away from the notion of *l’art pour l’art*. *Meaning* is not to be found *within* the object; rather, it is created

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<sup>54</sup> “Structuralist theory is founded, in part, on a model of language proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure. ‘In itself, thought is like a swirling cloud, where no shape is intrinsically determinate. No ideas are established in advance, and nothing is distinct before the introduction of linguistic structure’ (*Course in General Linguistics*:110). Words do not, then, as for Locke, serve as markers that convey notions of a world whose structure and order are received into the mind through perception and afterward objectively described through, represented by, language. Language itself structures the world; the world known is determined by the language used” (Berman 1988:115). This view stands in stark contrast to certain Asian (Zen) paradigms that, deeply mistrustful of the treacherous potential of words, concentrate on perfecting the idea – wordlessly – before performing the act – wordlessly: a bull’s eye in kyūdō, a perfect circle in calligraphy. An intriguing attempt to describe this can be found in Chapter 8 “The Space of Poetry. The Kyoto School and Nishitani Keiji”: “In talking about aesthetics, the Kyoto school grounded the arts in a privileged space of ‘emptiness’, or ‘nothingness’, which was understood to provide man with a complement to the limited faculty of reason in grasping a complex reality to which logic alone could hardly do justice...” (Marra 1999: 171).

among all elements surrounding it; these elements serve as systems of *signification*.

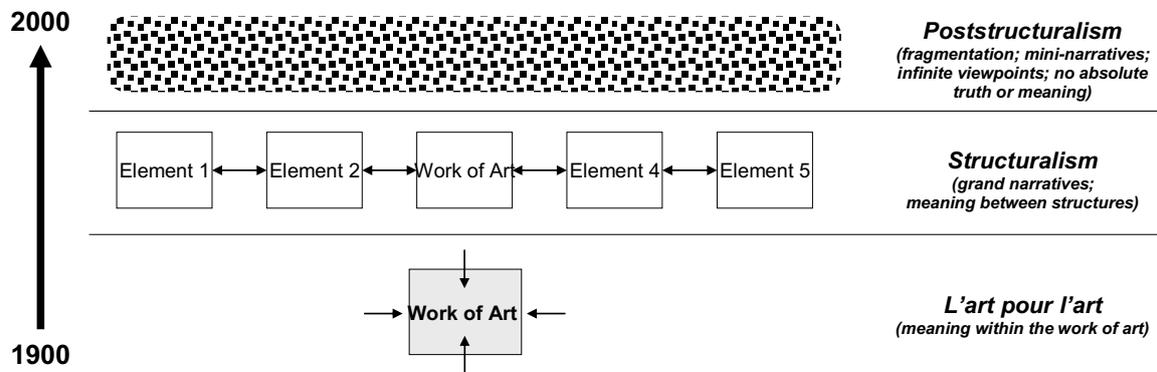


Figure 6 - French Structuralism

More or less implicit in the structuralist view are the notions that:

- universal structures exist, which enable and convey meaning (based on the transcendental signified),
- human behavior is determined by these structures (as is the self, the Subject),
- the structures are perceptible and can be grasped (discoverable objective facts; scientific method), and
- the structures are viewed in operation as pairs of binary oppositions (cooked-raw, hot-cold, male-female).

As stated above, there is no 'structuralist' music, but there are close correlations between structuralism and the beginning of serial music, to which we now turn. We recall Pierre Boulez' epochal serial composition *Structures I* (1952) and Lévi-Strauss' discussion of serialism in *Le cru et le cuit* (1964)<sup>55</sup>. While we cannot explore here the fascinating subtle exchange between them on structuralism, let us glean some conclusions on the situation of this topic from the following retrospective remarks made by Boulez in 1991:

There was a time in the early 1950s when I was really trying to define my own [musical] language – and a language more generally applicable than my own. This was a tendency of the period – the period of structuralism, as you know –

<sup>55</sup> "Ces structures ne peuvent être dites générales qu'à la condition qu'on leur reconnaisse un fondement objectif en deçà de la conscience et de la pensée, alors que la musique sérielle se veut œuvre consciente de l'esprit, et affirmation de sa liberté" [These structures can only be called general on the condition that one recognize an objective foundation this side of consciousness and thought; while serial music thinks of itself as a conscious work of the spirit and an affirmation of its liberty] (Lévi-Strauss, 1964: 35).

when this approach influenced not only music, but many other things. It was a time when musical content, musical hedonism, had been put on the back burner. The musical vocabulary dwindled, and there was a kind of constraint, a lack of freedom, and, in particular, a tendency to obey a sort of general system that prevented one from doing what one wanted when one wanted. At the time I was composing *Marteau sans maître* [1953-1955], and I was already beginning to free myself from this kind of constraint.<sup>56</sup>

These remarks confirm our outline of structuralism's broad lines and also give testimony to the way an extremely creative spirit reacted to it. Here, Boulez also affirms many suppositions about serialism in general. First, we learn that Boulez was aware of structuralist thought; we learn that he was seeking some kind of 'universal structure' – "a language more generally applicable than my own". We also learn that this universal applicability was felt as oppressive. Boulez' remark, "there was a kind of constraint, a lack of freedom, and, in particular, a tendency to obey a sort of general system" tells us that Boulez allowed his compositional behavior indeed to be determined by structures; and finally, we see that he is "beginning to free" himself.

This short anecdote makes clear why young creatives, while welcoming the intellectual rigor of structuralism, soon found it too constraining and turned to the newly emerging intellectual current of poststructuralism. It could also serve to tell the tale of generations of composers.<sup>57</sup> Particularly the oppressive quality of the structures was typical for the shaking off of structuralism and responsible for the turning of many toward new ways of looking at things. In their articles in *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, the journal that five years previously had published Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa", authors Fauré and Stuard (1981) agree that women have "no historical function" in the Annales School and look to the "assumptions of structuralist theory as a primary cause of the problem." While in France, the currents of music and philosophy ran side by side and could be contained under one word, in Germany the situation was different, although the currents in Germany flowed in the same direction. We shall see how composers struggled to free themselves from these structural constraints when we examine Stäbler and Adorno, below.

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<sup>56</sup> "Boulez in Conversation", interviewed at the University of Montreal by Jean-Jacques Nattiez, broadcast 17 Sept 1991 on CBC; [http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm8-3/Pierre\\_Boulez\\_en.htm](http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm8-3/Pierre_Boulez_en.htm) retrieved 27 Aug 2007.

<sup>57</sup> Morag J. Grant has done much to put the record straight on the relationship between structures, structuralism, and serialism in her excellent hermeneutic study *Serial Music, Serial Aesthetics. Compositional Theory in Post-War Europe* (2001). Karlheinz Essl also examines structuralist elements of serial composition in "Zur Theorie der Seriellen Musik" (1996).

## 1.2 POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Are there stable meanings inherent in a work of art? Is a true interpretation of a work possible? Can a work of art be good? Are there features that distinguish art from non-art? Is the work of art autonomous, capable of being grasped by a Subject? Or do “human cultural products in general shape human cognition in ways that make it impossible to reach beyond the dominant narratives, texts, discourses, ‘vocabularies’, or paradigms that mold our thought and our understanding in order to ascertain their truth and so determine their adequacy” (Gaut 2001:158-160)? These are some of the main questions that poststructuralism poses art.

“The strongest and most evident bond between the post-structuralists and the structuralists is their agreement that the self (the subject, mind, ego, cogito) is not a Cartesian-like entity but is constituted, and that this constitution is by and in language” (Berman 1988:174). This may be their strongest bond; but nonetheless, as we noted above, poststructuralism was a reaction to, a swing away from structuralism. With what means did poststructuralism carry out its rejection of structuralist thought?<sup>58</sup>

As Berman points out, the poststructuralists reinstall time into the theory of language and self by identifying as primary not intellect, but desire, a notion that derived from Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of Freud<sup>59</sup>. In this interpretation, subjectivity – constructed by desire – becomes generative, not merely receptive. The constitution of the Subject becomes a process. The generative effect of time on language results in a shift from ‘sign’ to ‘text’, from ‘language’ to ‘discourse’ (175-176), i.e., to *engaging in conversation or discussion*. As we shall see below, this shift is seminal for the new meaning of ‘writing’ (*écriture*), which now becomes a means for *generating* the self. Concomitantly,

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<sup>58</sup> This reminds us of Harold Bloom’s concept in *Anxiety of Influence* of the Freudian relationship of one generation to another with its necessity of killing the fathers; for Boulez in 1952, “Schönberg est mort”... is Derrida killing his metaphysical fathers?

<sup>59</sup> We will deepen our examination of Lacan with the post-feminist reaction below. For here, we recall the theoretical points in question in a nutshell: Jacques Lacan’s notions of desire “replaces the Enlightenment’s faith in reason as the motor for historical change, arguing that the self is split between conscious and unconscious minds, and that as the self knows that what it knows is not all that it is (that there is a gap between consciousness and being), the desire for that *other* becomes a constituting part of the subject, which in turn drives history” (Woods 1999: 19).

a new kind of 'reading' (*lecture*) is demanded, in order for the self to generate meaning from the text it reads (Barthes). These new notions of writing and reading will become the basis for *écriture* and *lecture féminine*.

The poststructuralist aspect of engaging in discussion, as opposed to the structuralist view of studying discoverable objective facts, points to another important change: the notion of binary oppositions. As we saw above, structuralism proposed that certain theoretical and conceptual opposites form the *basis* of structures to be studied. Poststructuralism challenges the explanatory value of these oppositions; moreover, they emphasized the potential for hierarchy in every binary opposition. That is to say, in Western culture (in the Western system), the opposites have acquired the connotation that one side is always valued as being 'better' than the other, thereby creating a 'hierarchy of binary opposites'. Language, being based on them, creates hierarchies. Thus, since the constitution of the Self is based on language, it is also based on the creation – and perpetuation – of hierarchies. Hyperbolically put: I am, therefore, I dominate. Inescapably? "One of the main points of poststructuralism was to 'deconstruct' binary opposition (like that between speech and writing, for instance) showing, firstly, that the distinction between paired opposites is not absolute, since each term in the pairing can only be understood and defined in terms of the other, and, secondly that it is possible to reverse the hierarchy within such pairs, and so 'privilege' the second term rather than the first" (Barry 2002:143). The gauntlet of binary oppositions will also be taken up by Hélène Cixous, particularly, as I will argue, in deconstructing the binary opposition between language and body.

My view of the complex wrinkles of poststructuralism with regard to art is that, at the end of the day, it's about how to look at the creative act with new eyes, about finding a fresh view. It's about trying to see ourselves as the other (non-Western cultures) see us. It is about the endless attempts by Western philosophy (including the musical Subject and musicology) to break out of patterns of centuries-old self-identification. This tendency is, I find, most clearly visible in the development of Deleuze's 'rhizome Subject' through 'becoming woman', to be treated in the chapter on Thaemlitz below. However, of all the poststructuralists Hélène Cixous is closest to Derrida, so I will develop his standpoint with particular weight here. I turn now to his unique and influential reading of the poststructuralist topics touched on above.

### 1.3 DECONSTRUCTION AND PHALLOGOCENTRISM

We wish to identify a decisive articulation of the logocentric epoch. (Derrida 1967:162)

When I look at Derrida and Cixous, I apprehend their plethora of themes and am aware that I can never do justice to them, not even if I attempted the task of merely listing the themes they discuss. I take it as a matter of course that each epoch (and each thinker within that epoch) has its own specific themes to develop; and that ultimately the importance of the *choice* of themes is at least as great as *how* the themes are treated. The same is often true for composers we think of as 'great'; they have associated their creative faculties with the development of a specific weighty topic or topics. Wagner's great theme was the development of the Gesamtkunstwerk in music theater, to which compositional techniques like the use of the leitmotif were subordinated. Schoenberg's great theme after 1920 was the development of dodecaphony, and so on. In order to ascertain these themes, we need the distance of time. And, lacking this in the case of our contemporaries, we must be content with listing the multiple topics of the figure in question. Some may remain 'one-topic' figures, taking their sole subject to new heights (like Hugo Wolf and the lied or Gustav Mahler and the symphony), while others may be judged to be 'all-round talents' who manage to take many topics to their highpoint, like Mozart.

Well then, which of deconstruction's myriad themes should I treat? I orient myself on Derrida's quote above and consider my priority here, which is to treat those themes that are part of Cixous' genealogy, while indicating their meaning for the thought as a whole. In this way, I arrive at a discussion of the 'deconstruction of (phal)logocentrism'... but a few introductory remarks might make things easier.

Jacques Derrida's lecture "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Science" at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore in 1966 is sometimes taken as the birth of deconstruction. As to what deconstruction is, I have found Derrida's letter to a Japanese translator very helpful for its explanation of the background and intent behind the word 'deconstruction' (1983). I let Derrida speak here:

[1] When I chose the word, or when it imposed itself on me – I think it was in *Of Grammatology* – I little thought it would be credited with such a central role in the discourse that interested me at the time. Among other things, I wished to translate and adapt to my own ends the Heideggerian word *Destruktion* or *Abbau*. Each signified in this context an operation bearing on the structure or traditional architecture of the fundamental concepts of ontology or of Western metaphysics. But in French, *destruction* too obviously implied annihilation or a negative reduction

much closer perhaps to Nietzschean ‘demolition’ than to the Heideggerian interpretation or to the type of reading that I proposed. So I ruled that out. I remember having looked to see if the word *deconstruction* (which came to me it seemed quite spontaneously) was good French. I found it in the *Littré*...

[2] At that time, structuralism was dominant. ‘Deconstruction’ seemed to go in the same direction, since the word signified a certain attention to structures (which themselves were neither simply ideas, nor forms, nor syntheses, nor systems). To deconstruct was also a structuralist gesture or, in any case, a gesture that assumed a certain need for the structuralist problematic. But it was also an anti-structuralist gesture, and its fortune rests in part on this ambiguity. Structures were to be undone, decomposed, de-sedimented (all types of structures, linguistic, ‘logocentric’, ‘phonocentric’ – structuralism being especially at that time dominated by linguistic models and by a so-called structural linguistics that was also called Saussurian – socio-institutional, political, cultural, and above all and from the start philosophical).

[3] This is why, especially in the United States, the motif of deconstruction has been associated with ‘poststructuralism’ (a word unknown in France until its ‘return’ from the States). But the undoing, decomposing, and de-sedimenting of structures, in a certain sense more historical than the structuralist movement it called into question, was not a negative operation. Rather than destroying, it was also necessary to understand how an ‘ensemble’ was constituted and to reconstruct it to this end. However, the negative appearance was and remains much more difficult to efface than is suggested by the grammar of the word (de-), even though it can designate a genealogical restoration [*remonter*] rather than a demolition. That is why the word, at least on its own, has never appeared satisfactory to me (but what word is), and must always be girded by an entire discourse.

In the second paragraph, Derrida describes deconstruction as an ambiguous gesture: structuralist, but also anti-structuralist. He is working within the structural context “of the fundamental concepts of Western metaphysics” (mentioned in paragraph 1). He expatiates on the “undoing”, the de-sedimenting (Adorno) of structures, particularly of the “logocentric” ones. Since in the third paragraph, he again mentions the undoing of structures, this notion must be important for him. In his lectures, Joseph Cohen has repeatedly confirmed what Derrida implies: deconstruction, far from being solely negative, contains the positive: con + struction = a building, a new existence (and this is consistent with Derrida’s many-faceted sense of language, demonstrated above). But what are we to make of this? We are involved in what we might call today a ‘pro-active’ deconstruction, a positive undoing of logocentric structures, indeed of all of Western philosophy (metaphysics). How can this destruction be creative? Derrida ex-

plains to us above: by understanding how an 'ensemble' is constituted and by re-constructing it to this end.

Let us turn to some other explanations, first from Cohen (2001):

'Déconstruire' le philosophique, disséminer ses totalisations et ses intentions, c'est le faire passer et le laisser lui-même s'expatrier sans cesse hors de lui-même, dessaisi à chaque instant non seulement de ce qu'il vient de dire, mais du pouvoir même de l'énoncer ; c'est, en somme, le laisser là où il est, loin derrière soi, s'arraisonner et se dérouler dans un silence qui n'est pas l'intimité ou la sauvegarde d'un secret, mais l'idée pure d'un autre envoi où les mots se déroulent et se développent indéfiniment.<sup>60</sup>

All of philosophy is put into question – it is a radical exposition that Cohen makes of Derrida, but no more radical than Derrida himself. In effect, Cohen tells us that to deconstruct the philosophical, we must abandon it to itself, "c'est, en somme, le laisser là où il est, loin derrière soi." For, the necessity is felt to allow philosophical writing reinvent itself – an intrinsically constructive step – in a way such that it is not content solely with methodical structures, in a way such that it doesn't just devote itself to schemes of contradiction, induction, or induction. No, philosophy is looking for completely new possibilities of philosophizing. I believe that Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine* is one of these possibilities. With her writing, she practices one of these possibilities.

Cixous offered a deconstructive literary portrait of Derrida in her book on him (2001), and the American philosopher Richard Rorty offered a more philosophical view, albeit written in simple language (2004: extracts). Let us take a look at Derrida from Rorty's standpoint and try to see him as Rorty did in the history of philosophy.

[1] Derrida made it possible for us to think of philosophy as, among other things, a symptom of obsessional neurosis. Heidegger had read the history of Western philosophy as a series of increasingly desperate attempts to achieve what Derrida called 'a fundamental immobility and a reassuring certitude [...] beyond the reach of play'. Freud had associated such yearnings with the compulsion to keep washing one's hands, or to inspect food for minute particles of forbidden substances, or to worry that the efficacy of a religious ritual might be impaired by the

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<sup>60</sup> "To 'deconstruct' the philosophical, to disseminate its totalizations and intentions, is to let it go by, and to let it expatriate itself endlessly outside of itself, dispossessed at every instant not only of what it just said, but even of the ability to enunciate it. It means, in sum, to leave it there where it is, far behind oneself, examining itself, and letting it unroll in a silence that is not intimacy or keeping a secret; rather, it is the silence of the pure idea of another flight, where words unroll and unwrap themselves infinitely" (423-424).

impure thoughts of the celebrant. Derrida wove Heidegger and Freud together. He referred to them as his 'two grandfathers'.

[2] Most of the canonically great philosophers have shared an almost manic desire to achieve an impossible purity.... Such attempts to imitate God were described by Heidegger as denials of human finitude.

[3] Derrida, picking up on Freud, characterized them as expressions of **phallogocentrism** [my emphasis] – of the conviction that the human intellect must stand proudly erect, towering above the squishy world of hope and fear, displaying the clean-cut, virile autonomy that is its birthright.

[4] In a witty and brilliant essay called "White Mythology" [1974], Derrida describes what happens when philosophers obsessed with purity turn their attention to language. They typically try to cleanse discourse of any trace of metaphor.

[5] Derrida thought this ludicrous. His essay shows that the Western philosophical tradition itself was a tissue of imaginative metaphors, and none the worse for that. His larger point is that words gain their fluctuating meanings from the fluctuating contexts in which people put them. What matters are the relations between those contexts, not the relation of words to reality. Many of us read Derrida as echoing Wittgenstein's suggestion that we stop asking about meaning and start asking about use. As long as you can figure out how somebody is using a word, and how her<sup>61</sup> use differs from yours, there is no point worrying about whether she is misusing it.

[6] [...] I have emphasized the similarities between Derrida's view and that of Robert Brandom. For Brandom, the fact that no two people have quite the same background beliefs means they never draw exactly the same inferences from the same assertion. We should conclude, he argues, that no two uses of a sentence ever have exactly the same import. Derrida would have agreed. This is not to say that rational discourse is impossible, or that the intention of the author of a text can never be discovered. But Derrida and Brandom think we can get along without the sort of fixity that philosophers have obsessed over. Analytic philosophers who insist on stability of meaning think that unless they can convict opponents of misusing words (and therefore of 'conceptual confusion'), they will be unable to defend Truth and Reason against their cultured despisers.

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<sup>61</sup> One possibility authors have found to avoid repeating the phallogocentrism inherent in writing statements applicable to women as well as to men is to sometimes write 'he' and sometimes 'she'. The constant click in the mind of the reader is designed to recall that women, too, are referred to in the statement in question.

In looking at Rorty's text, we follow his line of reason leading up to the use of the word 'phallogocentrism' in the third paragraph. Whereas we spoke above of *logocentrism*, Rorty now speaks of *phallogocentrism*. What is that? With utter succinctness, Rorty makes the meaning of the term, ostensibly coined and used by Derrida, perfectly clear. This term will be taken up as part of Hélène Cixous' main program.

And what is it that particularly needs to be deconstructed? In paragraph 4 we find the explanation of how the philosophers, obsessed with purity, turn their attention to language, they proudly erect verbal monuments, a discourse cleansed of metaphor, of multiple meanings. Without metaphors – without figures of speech, without symbols, without transferences – the discourse is centered; it is logo-centric, phal-logo-centric.

In paragraph 5, Rorty tells us that Derrida, laying bare inherent contradictions, unveiled Western philosophical tradition as a tissue of metaphors – “and none the worse for that”. There is revelation, but Rorty offers no condemnation. However, in his unveiling, Derrida begins to be concerned with relationships, thereby creating a new viewpoint on “what matters”.

Finally, in paragraph 6, “the fact that no two people have quite the same background beliefs means they never draw exactly the same inferences from the same assertion”. I, in writing with my background beliefs, draw certain inferences from Rorty. You, from yours, may or may not draw the same inferences. In order to enable you to draw yours, I offer you two texts to read. Can you “convict me of misusing words”? Yes, but only if you believe in the fixity Rorty is talking about. What happens to meaningful discussions that arrive at Truth? Can we nonetheless entertain meaningful discussions? The urgency of finding ways to do so has seldom been so great as it is today.

This is my interpretation of Rorty's vision of Derrida's deconstruction. But how can the (phal)logocentrism he speaks of in paragraph 3 be deconstructed? I stated above that poststructuralism shifted the epistemological emphasis from observation to discourse, to an *exchange* as generative source of the Subject, the Subject being the prerequisite, so to speak, for apprehension of meaning in an object. Derrida took this notion a step further. This generative exchange can take place in an exchange that is read, not just spoken. One way Derrida suggests, already mentioned above, is *deconstructive reading*. This brings with it a new definition of reading that will play an important role in *écriture féminine*.

Derrida talks about what deconstructive reading can produce, but, “what does produce mean here? In my attempt to explain that, I would initiate a justification of my principles of reading. A justification, as we shall see, entirely negative, outlining by exclusion a space of reading that I shall not fill here: a task of reading” (1967:158). Derri-

da declines a justification of the principle of reading – this is part of his *modus operandi*. But then, Derrida does tell us a few things about the task of reading. “It must always aim at a certain *relationship*, [my italics] unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of language that he uses (158). It attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight” (163). When you read what I write, you perceive my command of the patterns of language. But you also perceive my lack of command. And your unique view of the relationship between these determines your view. Moreover, meaning, since it must be generated, doesn’t take place immediately. It is delayed (*différé*). There is a ‘difference’ (Fr.: *différence*) between what we initially read, and the meaning that may come to us from other words associated with the initial word.<sup>62</sup> Derrida coined the term ‘*différance*’ (with an ‘a’) to describe the heterogeneous features that govern the production of textual meaning.

An anecdote might elucidate this practice. The lectures held at Stuttgart University in 2005 by Dr. Joseph Cohen on the philosophy of his deceased mentor, Jacques Derrida, sometimes recalled talks about koans held by the Rinzai Zen masters of old. There was something Cohen was trying to say, and something we were trying to grasp. But after hours of listening, we could only assume that what he was trying to say must lie somewhere between the lines, and we searched our brains – trying to enlarge our circle of awareness – in order to access the meaning. Cohen was provoking us to engage in dialogues on topics that were new to us, leading us to enter into the process of beginning to grasp a notion and beginning to notice how a fuller understanding would come only bit by bit, one part at a time, in differed time – *différé*. We were in this way experiencing *différance*. Yet another anecdote illustrates the relationship of our perplexity concerning Derrida’s *modus* of differing comprehension. As Cohen tells it, Derrida was being quizzed by a group of American students on what an ‘event’ could be according to his use of the term. One after another, they suggested possible ‘events’. Each time, he would reflect, then shake his head. Finally, exasperated, they demanded, “Well, what is an event?” Quickly, but seriously, he replied, “Ah, ça, je ne peux pas vous dire [I can’t tell you – it is impossible to say]”.

As stated, one of deconstruction’s main activities is to make visible the phallogocentrism of Western thought, which he refers to as ‘metaphysics’ and in so doing,

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<sup>62</sup> The ontological concept of ‘difference’ (French and English), in contrast to identity, is a central term in (post)structuralist continental philosophy, as also in feminist critique. So many interpretations of the term exist that definitions – particularly when trying to do justice to traditional and feminist philosophy – are extremely complex, and I found no clear definition that didn’t contradict another one. Since the concept is of secondary or tertiary value for the present examination, I have not delved into its depths.

to deconstruct it. Indeed, the main subject of his masterwork, *On Grammatology*, is his investigation of Rousseau, that giant of Western thought. But it is not merely the historical Rousseau who interests Derrida. “We wish to identify a decisive articulation of the logocentric epoch. For purposes of this identification Rousseau seems to us to be most revealing” (“The Exorbitant. Question of Method”, 162). The question is “not only of Rousseau’s writing, but also of our reading. We should begin by taking rigorous account of this *being held within [prise]* or this *surprise*: the writer writes *in* a language and *in* a logic whose proper system, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them only by letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system” (158).

Why is writing so important? We are all caught inescapably in the clutches of various systems. Not only are “we” all, as writers, writing in a system that we “cannot dominate absolutely”; but *all* writers of the “logocentric epoch” have been. With deconstructive reading, however, the roles of the writer (author) and the reader are altered. The reader comes to replace the author as the primary Subject (of inquiry). The author is destabilized, decentered – or dead. This will entail new concepts of the Subject, to which we turn in the next section. As I have come to understand it, deconstruction is a force that is at work in life, like gravity. There is no need to deconstruct something, because everything is always deconstructing itself anyway. In this way, my dissertation, due to the mere fact of its being written, will partake in the deconstruction of certain hierarchies or blockages of communication or separation of disciplines by reconstructing their elements.

Before closing this section on deconstruction, I should mention places where deconstruction has visibly touched music and musicology. (Other references may be found in the introductory section “(New) Musicology” and in the following chapter on *écriture féminine*.) Music composition in Europe travailed long and hard on musical Modernism and postmodernism; so much so, that it almost seemed to sleep through deconstruction. Two notable exceptions are German composer and writer Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf (2004 and 2002) and French composer Marc André (born 1964), who have both positioned their work in relation to deconstruction.

American academic musicology, on the other hand, has accorded deconstruction and *différance* a hearty reception, and these intellectual currents play a key role in New Musicology. Ruth Solie (1993) has applied the concept of difference to musicolo-

gy<sup>63</sup>, and Rose Rosengard Subotnik (1991 and 1996) has undertaken a comprehensive view of Western music from a deconstructive basis. British literary critic and deconstruction theorist Christopher Norris offers an excellent summary of these and many other authors in his review 1999. This reception has been so overwhelming that British Adorno scholar Max Paddison felt it “somewhat eclipsed the work of Adorno and German Critical Theory”.<sup>64</sup>

Through their American counterparts, musicologists on the continent have become aware of these newer tendencies, albeit slowly and skeptically. (Many principle works have not yet been translated from their English originals.) Independently thereof, British scholars have incorporated deconstructive theory in their analyses of the discipline of musicology, for example Alastair William’s *Constructing Musicology* (2001).

I close this section on deconstruction with a rare philosophical consideration written in a deconstructive fashion on music (“la nuit du philosophe?”). This admirable approach is by Marie-Louise Mallet in *La musique en respect* (2002). Centered around Hegel and Nietzsche, the text offers the playing with words, the deferential distance, the indirect insinuation, as well as the direct attack on philosophy’s beloved “absolute knowledge” that are all part of the deconstructive tone.

Respecter la musique, ce serait donc avant tout l’accueillir, lui donner l’hospitalité de l’écoute. Se laisser approcher par elle. La laisser *venir*, passer sans jamais revenir. La laisser être la « passante » qui « n’arrive qu’à s’effacer », qui « n’arrive qu’à partir », sans essayer de la retenir. Laisser *revenir* aussi ce qui vient avec elle, qui n’est jamais le « même » et ne fait que passer. Écouter ce qu’elle dit sans *rien* dire. Non pas renoncer à penser, mais essayer de penser en renonçant à la volonté d’appropriation.

Cela impliquerait de renoncer à l’espoir téléologique du *savoir absolu*. La philo-

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<sup>63</sup> As Solie states in the introduction, “My intent...is to chart the terrain of the difference debate. I would like to explore the range of positions argued by an interdisciplinary array of scholars. At the same time, I hope that such a survey can provide a context for reading and interpreting the essays that follow and for imagining interactions and confrontation of one with another...To begin, I want to locate these issues of difference in the musicological sites where they come into play: that is, in the formulation of the most basic questions about what pieces of music can express or reflect of the people who make and use them, and thus of the differences between and among those people” (3). I recall the example of Sophie Calle’s work mentioned in my Introduction. We are so accustomed to living with ‘one view’ of things – particularly when the view has been imparted as part of education in, or initiation to, the academy – that the different view, the Other’s view, makes us feel uncomfortable, even threatened. As does *lecture féminine*. Indeed, I have recently heard some angry polemics against articles in Solie’s book, some fifteen years later (“That is not Brahms!!”).

<sup>64</sup> And made a contribution to righting this imbalance with his collection of essays on Adorno, music and Modernism (2004 and 1996).

sophie le peut-elle ? (14-15)<sup>65</sup>

#### 1.4 THE SUBJECT

The biggest problem in science today is, “What is the nature of the human self?”

– Sam Parnia<sup>66</sup>

In the preceding sections I treated general characteristics of structuralism and post-structuralism and deepened this with a consideration of key topics from deconstruction, one of poststructuralism’s defining currents. Now I turn to the treatment of one of post-structuralism’s main topics, the constitution of the Self or Subject. What is the nature of the poststructuralist Subject? One of the prime ways language works is through the author, through authorship; and precisely this point was used by the poststructuralist writers to leverage a new notion of Subject. The goal of my inquiry here is to trace a relationship from this notion of Subject to the musical Subject, which will be taken up in the chapter on Gerhard Stäbler. But before that relationship can be traced, we must try to grasp the changes the notion of Subject went through in the late 1960s. I will trace the dynamic development of this notion through the writings of three authors in the short space of two years. The author disappears, and then dies.<sup>67</sup> Finally, at the end of this section, I will use the discussion of authorship as a vehicle to take us from post-

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<sup>65</sup> “To respect music would mean, above all, to welcome music, to offer it the hospitable act of simply listening. To let oneself be approached by music. To let it *come*, to pass by without ever returning. To allow it to be the ‘passer-by’ who only ‘arrives by disappearing’, who ‘arrives only to depart’, without trying to hold it back. Also to welcome that which comes along with music, which is never the ‘same’ and is transitory. To listen to it *without* comment. Not by renouncing thought, but by trying to think while renouncing the will to appropriate music. That would mean renouncing the teleological hope of *absolute knowledge*. Is philosophy capable of that?”

<sup>66</sup> Interview with British Doctor Sam Parnia, one the world’s leading experts on near death experience, Fellow at Cornell University, founder of The Consciousness Research Group, University of South Hampton, UK, study leader of international study on what happens when we die, in “What Happens When We Die?” episode of *On Point*, public radio station WBUR, Boston 25 Aug 2007. <http://www.onpointradio.org/>

<sup>67</sup> A topic for further reading concerning the Subject, which I do not cover here, is how emerging technologies affect the constitution of the Subject. Mark Poster (1990), who, like Kroker, treats poststructuralism and technology, examines the impact of electronic media on the constitution of the Subject in his Chapter 4, “Derrida and Electronic Writing. The Subject of the Computer”: “I shall analyze how the introduction of electronic writing functions to destabilize the figure of the subject as it is drawn in the great traditions of Western thought, the Cartesian subject who stands outside the world of objects in a position that enables certain knowledge of an opposing world of objects, or the Kantian subject who is both outside the world as the origin of knowledge and inside the world as an empirical object of that knowledge, or the Hegelian subject who is within the world, transforming him or herself, but thereby realizing the ultimate purpose of the world’s coming into being. Electronic writing, I shall argue, disperses the subject so that it no longer functions as a center in the way it did in pre-electronic writing” (99-100).

structuralist theory to the French feminist theory and Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*.

I begin (chronologically) with Derrida (1967). For him, the Subject that is writing and reading is already disappearing:

The philosophical text, although it is in fact always written, includes, precisely as its philosophical specificity, the project of effacing itself in the face of the signified content, which it transports and in general teaches. Reading should be aware of this project, even if, in the last analysis, it intends to expose the project's failure. (160)

Revealingly, Derrida himself, tells us that this attribute is historically conditioned:

If it seems to us in principle impossible to separate, through interpretation or commentary, the signified from the signifier, and thus to destroy writing by the writing that is yet reading, we nevertheless believe that this impossibility is historically articulated. (159)

Around the same time, Roland Barthes questions the validity of the author's voice, then he posits the "Death of the Author" (1967, extracts)<sup>68</sup>.

[1] Who is speaking in this way? Is it the story's hero? Is it universal wisdom? All writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes. Probably this has always been the case: once an action is recounted, for intransitive ends, and no longer in order to act directly upon reality – that is, finally external to any function but the very exercise of the symbol – this disjunction occurs, the voice loses its origin, *the author enters his own death* [my emphasis], writing begins (142)

[2] Though the Author's empire is still very powerful, it is evident that for a long time now certain writers have attempted to topple it (143). The absence of the Author utterly transforms the modern text. Time, first of all, is no longer the same. There is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now. This is because to write can no longer designate an operation of recording, of observing, of representing, of 'painting' (as the Classic writers put it), but rather what the linguists, following the vocabulary of the Oxford school, call

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<sup>68</sup> In so doing, the visionary Barthes moved from structuralist to poststructuralist, according to some; one could easily argue that he laid the theoretical basis for performativity and interactivity here, as well. I have quoted Howard's translation from the online version; for reference, the page numbers of the book version are added (q.v. both in bibliography).

a performative, a rare verbal form (145).

[3] Once the Author is gone, the claim to 'decipher' a text becomes quite useless. Criticism (even 'new criticism') should be overthrown along with the Author. In a multiple writing, indeed, everything is to be distinguished, but nothing deciphered; structure can be followed, 'threaded' (like a stocking that has run) in all its recurrences and all its stages, but there is no underlying ground; the space of the writing is to be traversed, *not penetrated*: writing ceaselessly posits meaning but always in order to evaporate it. Thus literature liberates an activity which we might call counter-theological, properly revolutionary, for to refuse to arrest meaning is finally to refuse God and his hypostases, reason, science, the law (147; my emphasis).

The author is dead, God is refused. Where can meaning come from? Barthes replied that meaning must be actively created by the reader, as David Novitz explains.

'The goal of the literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text'<sup>69</sup>; it is to make the reader more active, less passive: more, Barthes suggests, like the writer, so that there is a clear sense on Barthes' view in which such a 'writerly' reading or interpretation helps create the meanings that are found in the work. The resultant 'methodological field' of active creation on the part of the reader, Barthes calls the 'Text'<sup>70</sup>; and it consists of a ludic or playful response that destabilizes the reader's ordinary beliefs about language. (Gaut 2001:161)

The new types of text are a) '*lisible*' 'readerly', the normal, readable text; and b) '*scriptible*' 'writerly', or the text that solicits an active, create act from the reader. With these new elements, Barthes paves the way for elements we will encounter again in Cixous' *lecture féminine*: the reader as active writer, playfulness, multiple identities, performativity...

And yet another poststructuralist was asking, "What Is an Author?" In 1969, Michel Foucault turns to the "singular relationship that holds between an author and a text" (115). He finds that one of the major themes is that "the writing of our day has freed itself from the necessity of expression; it only refers to itself, yet is not restricted to the confines of interiority... This reversal transforms writing into an interplay of signs, regulated less by the content it signifies than by the very nature of the signifier." Writing is transformed.

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<sup>69</sup> Novitz' reference: Barthes S/Z, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Novitz' reference: *ibid*, p. 74.

Writing unfolds like a game that inevitably moves beyond its own rules and finally leaves them behind. Thus, the essential basis of this writing is not the exalted emotions related to the act of composition or the insertion of a subject into language. Rather, it is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears (116).

Three authors, writing within two years of each other, all find that writing must be or has already been changed. The writing Subject has disappeared. Foucault takes this even further:

Writing is now linked to sacrifice and to the sacrifice of life itself; it is a voluntary obliteration of the self that does not require representation in books because it takes place in the everyday existence of the writer. Where a work had the duty of creating immortality, it now attains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author. Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka are obvious examples of this reversal. (117)

In spite of this seemingly nihilistic sacrifice, something “continues to preserve the existence of the author. This is the notion of *écriture*<sup>71</sup>”. (119)

The conception of *écriture*, as currently employed, is concerned with neither the act of writing nor the indications, as symptoms or signs within a text, of an author’s meaning; rather, it stands for a remarkable profound attempt to *elaborate the conditions of any text* [my emphasis], both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment. (119)

The author is dead, in her place is *écriture*.

This conception of *écriture* sustains the privileges of the author through the safeguard of the a priori; the play of representations that formed a particular image of the author is extended within a gray neutrality. The disappearance of the author – since Mallarmé, an event of our time – is held in check by the transcendental. (120)

Foucault is making some vast assumptions here. Let us try to corroborate them. I refer to an explanation by Prof. Mary Klages (2001):

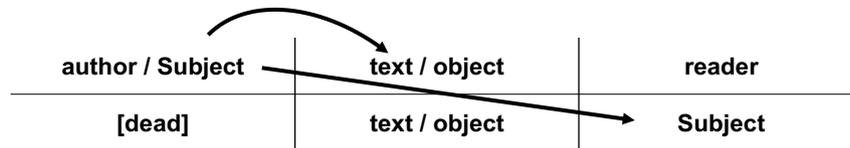
This *écriture* is related to the French feminist idea of *écriture féminine*, but Foucault doesn't choose to give it a gender. One of the hallmarks of *écriture* is the in-

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<sup>71</sup> Note of Foucault’s translator: “We have kept the French, *écriture*, with its double reference to the act of writing and to the primordial (and metaphysical) nature of writing as an entity in itself, since it is the term that best identifies the program of Jacques Derrida. Like the theme of a self-referential writing, it too builds on a theory of the sign and denotes writing as the interplay of presence and absence in that ‘signs represent the present in its absence’ (‘Difference,’ in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David B. Allison, Evanston Ill.; Northwestern Univ. Press, 1973: 138). See J. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*.”

terplay of signifiers; language in this kind of writing is not about reference to a signified, but rather it's about the play among signifiers.

We have followed the trajectory to the creation of new relationships between author/Subject – text – reader:



**Figure 7 - Relationship Author/Reader**

The author, who was the Subject, is dead. The reader has become the Subject. Where the author used to create the text for himself, now, the reader creates his own Subject by reading the text. Klages (2001) sums this up as follows:

So why does Foucault say the author is 'dead'? It's his way of saying that the author is decentered, shown to be only a part of the structure, a subject position, and not the center. In the humanist view, remember, authors were the source and origin of texts (and perhaps of language itself, like Derrida's engineer), and were also thus beyond texts – hence authors were 'centers'. In declaring the author dead, Foucault follows Nietzsche's declaration (at the end of the nineteenth century) that 'God is dead', a statement which Derrida then reads as meaning that God is no longer the center of the system of philosophy which Nietzsche is rejecting. By declaring the death of the author, Foucault is 'deconstructing' the idea that the author is the origin of something original, and replacing it with the idea that the 'author' is the product or function of writing, of the text. (Foucault also borrows the idea of 'the death of the author' from poststructuralist literary critic Roland Barthes.)

The author is deconstructed. The new Subject is the co-creating reader. Here, we can begin with *lecture féminine*.

## 2 HÉLÈNE CIXOUS AND *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*

All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another story (Cixous 1997e:178).

In the preceding chapter we traced the paths within poststructuralism that led up to and point to Hélène Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine*. In this chapter, it is neither my aim to furnish a comprehensive history of Cixous, her thought, or her works, nor to discuss their vast reception, as these areas have been more than amply covered by authors elsewhere.<sup>72</sup> (An exception to this is the realm of musicology, which I will treat in the subsection later in this chapter.) I recapitulate my goal as stated in the introductory section "Approach (Method)" above: I seek to interpret Cixous' *écriture féminine* following the poststructuralist thought that there is no one, single Truth, only the interaction of different interpretations.

Thus, I strive to communicate to you, my reader, my understanding of what *écriture féminine* can be; looking at its historical influences, we will see what its themes are, and how it can work. One of the characteristics of *écriture féminine* is its refusal to be defined. Hélène Cixous is clear from the very beginning:

It is impossible at present to *define* a feminine practice of writing. And this impossibility will continue, for one can never *theorize* this practice, never enclose it, never codify it; which doesn't mean it doesn't exist. [...] This practice takes place and will take place in areas that are not subjected to theoretical-philosophical mastery (LM: 883).

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<sup>72</sup> The reception of the French feminist theories in English began with articles that were almost contemporaneous with their appearance in the 1970s, and books from the 80s onwards. The most prolific writer on Cixous is Susan Sellers (1988-2004); others include Conley (1984), Wilcox et al. (1990), Shiach (1991), Ives (1996), Cooper (2000), Simons (2004). Among the most comprehensive early treatments of French feminism are Marks and Courtivron (1980) and Showalter (1985). In Germany, the reception began later, but due to this fact the German treatments draw on the English texts and offer broad, systematized treatments, most often as part of feminist literary criticism or gender studies: Lindhoff, L. (1995), Osinski (1998). The original works were, of course, published in France, but it was only much later that they were received and appeared in anthologies: Rossum-Guyon (1990), Negrón (1994), Calle-Gruber (2000 and 2006). French systematic historic or critical treatments have yet to appear. Countless dissertations have been written on Cixous and/or on *écriture féminine*. An excellent early literary treatment of Cixous' writing is Fisher (1988); the latest to my knowledge is Wardle (2007).

Cixous found adequate places, *lieux*, to unfold her own *écriture féminine* – in literary works, often with unconventional forms, in the theater, and in her teaching activity. I offer here a historical orientation with a number of particular ‘aspects’, followed by a large number of ‘topics’ from *écriture féminine*. In the chapters that follow, many of the topics will be thrashed out in the discussions of the musical works, in the manner described in “Approach (Method)” above. Some of the topics – perhaps the most sublime – will not be discussed; they await further engagement with Cixous’ theory and with art. But first, I begin with a few biographic elements, because for Hélène Cixous, what is recounted here

[...] (including what is forgotten and omitted) is for me inseparable from writing. There is continuity between my childhoods, my children, and the world of writing – or of the narrative (*Rootprints*, eng., pp. 203-204). Her speech, even when “theoretical” or political, is never simple or linear or “objectified”, generalized: she draws her story into history (LM:881).

Hélène Cixous was born in 1937 in Oran in West Algeria, which at the time was still a French colony. The town of Oran had been founded in 903 by Moorish traders and was long under Spanish rule. Her father’s family had “followed the classic trajectory of the Jews chased from Spain to Morocco”. In 1831, Oran fell to the French. After the final bloody conquest of Algeria in the early 1900s, the French government confiscated communally held land, and European settlers moved in to farm it, a common practice of colonization. Prior to the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), Oran had one of the highest proportions of Europeans of any city in North Africa.

Cixous’ background, therefore, was a plurality of cultures. “When I was little I lived in a city full of neighborhoods, of peoples, of languages.” But in addition, she says she had a “double childhood”: Her father was a French citizen of Spanish descent; he was a businessman and played the violin. Her mother was of German and Slovak (Austro-Hungarian) descent. “Consequently, although I am profoundly Mediterranean of body, of appearance, of *jouissances*, all my imaginary affinities are Nordic.” The German grandmother lived with the family, and Hélène grew up hearing French, Spanish, German, Arabic... and her father forged “in a Joycian way” a play of signifiers and jokes on the German language “that became part of the family idiom... Perhaps the verbal virtuosity or versatility that there is in my writing comes to me from my father.” But her father is also a source of disturbance for her. A doctor, he contracts tuberculosis; and thereafter “there is a sort of veiled death in the house, the effects of which we receive only because my father reserves himself, physically, in his relations with us. He avoids holding us in his arms. This produces uninterpretable effects of distance for us.”

When she was 18, she came to Paris to prepare for university studies; the Algerian War of Independence had just begun. In Algeria, Cixous had felt distant from her origins, “I was born so far from my beginnings”. And as Jews under the French Vichy regime, even in Algeria, the Cixous family experienced anti-Semitism. But it was in Paris that Cixous experienced the new culture as an outsider, as a not-belonger, as an ‘other’.

[In the Lycée Lakanal] I felt the true torments of exile. Not before. Neither with the Germans, nor with the English, nor with the Africans, I did not have such an absolute feeling of exclusion, of interdiction, of deportation. I was deported right inside the class.

In Algeria I never thought I was at home, or that Algeria was my country, or that I was French. This was part of the exercise of my life: I had to play with the question of French nationality which was aberrant, extravagant. I had French nationality when I was born. But no one ever took themselves for French in my family.

In this extract, not only do we see Cixous’ profound sense of exile, but also of her sense of urgency in dealing with her outsider-ness, it became the exercise of her life, she *had* to play with the question. The daily matter of feeling ‘outside’ necessitated her wrestling with the notions behind it. Inside, outside – it was her first large literary theme, that would be combined with sexual politics.

Soon after her arrival in Paris, Cixous met another Algerian émigré with whom she could share the feeling of being outside – socially and philosophically – until his death in 2006: Jacques Derrida. With geographical modification, Gustav Mahler’s quote on exile could fit both of them: “Ich bin dreifach heimatlos: als Böhme in Österreich, als Österreicher unter Deutschen und als Jude überall”<sup>73</sup>.

Cixous ended her study of literature in 1968 with a dissertation on the Irish author James Joyce, a figure for whom ‘Exile’ was also a life topic<sup>74</sup>. In 1969 her first novel was published, *Dedans* [Inside]. In 1974, she founded the Center for Feminine Studies at the University of Vincennes (today Paris 8); it was the first institute of its kind in Europe. In the following year, she first formulated her literary theory of *écriture féminine*. In addition to her theoretical and instructional activities, Cixous has written numerous novels, poems and pieces for theater, the latter notably together with Ariane

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<sup>73</sup> “I am thrice homeless: as a Bohemian in Austria, as an Austrian among Germans, and as a Jew everywhere.”

<sup>74</sup> *L'Exile de James Joyce ou l'art du remplacement* [The Exile of James Joyce or the Art of Replacement]; Joyce’s only play bore the title *Exiles* (1918).

Mnouchkine at the Théâtre du Soleil in Paris. Today, following the practice in other countries, the institute has been renamed Center for Feminine and Gender Studies, and Professor Cixous continues her activities as writer and lecturer in retirement.

The person we have been is now an 'I was', the character from our past. She follows us, but at a distance [...] This is how I have behind me, one, two, three, four deceased women [...] Left today is the one who will have followed us till here. And who passes with me into the present. We cherish this one, the one who has traversed the decades where others fell: she cannot be, we believe, but the strongest and best of ourselves.<sup>75</sup>

## 2.1 EXORBITANT METHOD. *ÉCRITURE FÉMININE*

Writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures. (LM:879)

We have cast a cursory glance at Hélène Cixous and how she became the person she is, and in a moment, we will turn to *écriture féminine* and the influences that shaped its contours. But before that, I resume the strand of another idea mentioned in the introduction: method.

A method, as we saw above, is part of a discipline aimed at discovering Truth. A dissertation is an exercise that demonstrates the writer's learned ability to employ method to attain that Truth. If, however, I maintain that this Truth does not exist, for what do I need the method? And what, then, should the dissertation demonstrate, if not method? It is a fundamental conundrum for the deconstructive writer today. How can writing, a fundamentally logocentric activity, be conducted in an anti-logocentric – in an anti-phallogocentric – fashion? The answers to these questions may contribute to our understanding of *lecture féminine*, and Derrida gives us the first hint of an answer. In the preceding chapter, I explained deconstructive reading, but I did not yet mention that this kind of reading is an attempt to escape the ineluctability of logocentrism. Derrida refers to this attempt as “exorbitant”:

I wished to reach the point of a certain exteriority in relation to the totality of the age of logocentrism. Starting from this point of exteriority, a certain deconstruc-

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<sup>75</sup> From *Jour de l'an*, (45-46), quoted in (Cixous 1997e: 138-139).

tion of that totality which is also a traced path, of that orb (*orbis*) which is also orbital (*orbīta*), might be broached. [...] To exceed the metaphysical orb is an attempt to get out of the orbit (*orbīta*), to think the entirety of the classical conceptual oppositions. (Derrida 1997e:161-162)

This is Cixous' take-off place. *Écriture féminine* is an ex-orbital approach to writing; *lecture féminine* is an ex-orbital approach to reading. They are attempts to escape the orbit of fixed classical habits and oppositions. Thus, in calling *écriture* and *lecture féminines* 'exorbitant methods', I take up Derrida's oxymoron, recalling that their result is not the Truth. The reader who is accustomed to receiving morsels of Truth, packages of method and conclusion, etc., will be disappointed.<sup>76</sup> As for my current endeavor, I wander on the crest between the academy and its deconstruction along with others of my generation. And we find *écriture féminine* on that path. It is, I find, for this reason that Hélène Cixous is so adamant about the non-definability of *écriture féminine*, and one of the chief reasons it is so difficult to describe.

Hélène Cixous n'écrit pas sous la tutelle de la dichotomie chrétienne corps/âme, de la logique cartésienne et de la dyade aristotélicienne. Son écriture se meut dans les sentiers du non-connu, de l'errance et de l'imagination pure (Fisher 1988:5).<sup>77</sup>

A final remark on this *écriture féminine* as a 'method', drawing on the concept of 'nomadology' formulated by two other poststructuralists, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1980n). Nomadology describes ways in which concepts – definable or not definable – fit into the accepted body of knowledge. The authors make a distinction between 'striated' and 'smooth' space<sup>78</sup>. Something that is striated is characterized by striae, thin lines or bands, especially those that are parallel or close together; that is to say, structured. Berman associates this with the *polis*. Smooth, on the other hand, is not structured; it follows the logic of the pasture (*nomos*). Striated space requires endless vigilance and defense (gatekeepers and canons); smooth space, on the other hand, is slippery. When threatened, an object in smooth space simply goes somewhere else. Since this space is about non-establishment, non-territory, there is nothing to defend.

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<sup>76</sup> What will happen, I wonder, when the young students of today, who no longer seem to expect these packages of Truth, contentedly zapping between multi-tasked bites of information, begin to seek answers? Will they begin to seek Truth?

<sup>77</sup> Hélène Cixous doesn't write under the tutelage of the Christian dichotomy body/soul, nor of Cartesian logic or of the Aristotelian dyad. Her writing voyages on the paths of the 'not known', in meanders, and in pure imagination.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Berman's description 2000: 136-8. Abundant literature exists that discusses Boulez' concept of smooth and striated pitch-space and the Deleuze/Guattari concept.

The conflict between smooth and striated space can also be seen in the history of science and art, as well as in politics. The nomadic is not bound up into ruling hierarchy, striated is. Calculus, for example, began as nomadic science with unruly notions of the limit and of the infinitesimal; the focus was almost completely on process, on becoming. State mathematicians sought to eliminate such nomadic notions and instead imposed static rules upon them; it became striated. The state always seeks to control the ambulatory and the heuristic, and this can be seen in everything from music to cathedral buildings. The model is that of a tribe in the desert, of relays and intermezzos, rather than that of a universal subject. This description of the slippery, smooth nomad – whether thought, writing, or art – reminds us of *écriture féminine*. It flies by, it is not susceptible to being theorized.

This brings us to the problem of institutionalizing or canonizing knowledge or, in our case, works of art. How to conserve, to sediment something whose nature is evanescent? Emergence. Perhaps this is what the composer often attempts. She cannot simply repeat the sedimented formula of the past, but seeks instead to give the listener an experience. The composer, almost like the alchemist, the proto-scientist, must create a re-creatable series of givens that, when reproduced, will produce a certain experience in the listener. At the moment the listener experiences the ‘message’, it ‘emerges’ in her brain. I believe this is what Barthes refers to in the second paragraph of his quote above, “There is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now”.

Certain kinds of knowledge are not amenable to formulation. Rorty already noted this above by connecting Derrida to Ludwig Wittgenstein. And so, also, Berman’s view: for Wittgenstein, “The true philosopher is not a member of any community of ideas” (138), he remains a nomad. Wittgenstein’s admonition rings in our ears, “wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen”<sup>79</sup>; and “die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt”<sup>80</sup>. And yet, as Cixous’ quote heading this section counters, “Writing is precisely the very possibility of change, [... it is] the precursory movement of transformation”. In writing, I expand my limits. I write, therefore, I am. No, I write, therefore I am becoming.

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<sup>79</sup> “What one cannot speak of, one must be silent about” (Wittgenstein, Preface, 1921: 9).

<sup>80</sup> “The limits of my language are the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein, §5.6, 1921: 67).

### 2.1.1 History

*Écriture féminine*, or feminine writing, has its roots in French post-structuralism and in feminist literary criticism, which developed as part of the international women's movement.<sup>81</sup> From the early 60s onward, drawing upon their experiences in the nascent women's movement and in the sexual revolution, women proposed theories that would soon become compounded with ideas from poststructuralist thought. In the United States, feminists seeking equality through political and direct action developed theories of a pragmatic nature. New feminist journals, like *Signs*, *Feminist Studies*, and *Feminist Review*, provided ample place for formulating them.

Some years later in France, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous began to formulate theories that directly engaged the thought of their poststructuralist milieu.<sup>82</sup> These literary or French feminist theorists, as they are referred to today, adapted post-structuralism to feminism. Linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism and deconstruction all provided feminist critical theory with important analytic tools. However, due to the socially disrupting resurgence of the women's movement at this time, the form their work took was different from their poststructuralist colleagues and from their American counterparts. The French feminist theorists shared a common pool of thought and ways of thinking with the poststructuralists, but they treated areas not touched upon by their male colleagues, or treated them in different ways, often developing their own poetics. One of the most important themes they introduced into the poststructuralist discourse was the area of biology and body; for, structuralism silences the speaking body in favor of bloodless structures, and few poststructuralist theories suggest ways to articulate the body. There was, however, an animated exchange between the French feminists and the American authors and activists. American feminism was pragmatic – activist. On the other hand, the French were not so much concerned with what was said and done in their theory, but rather with the *process* by which meaning is achieved.

Showalter summarizes this development in three phases: first, becoming aware of sexual injustice in the women's liberation movement of the 60s and 70s; then, the discovery of the historical and thematic coherence of women writers and a re-reading

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<sup>81</sup> The following remarks draw on accounts in Gamble (2001), Lindhoff (1995), Sellers (1991), and Showalter (1985), and the online lexicon *On Our Terms: A Feminist Lexicon. A Resource for Academics, Students, and More General Readers*, [http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/Publ\\_OOT/OOT.htm](http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/Publ_OOT/OOT.htm), as well as my own participation in the American women's movement from 1972 onward.

<sup>82</sup> Other theorists and writers who are counted to *écriture féminine* include Chantal Chawaf, Sarah Kofman, Annie Lèclerc, and Monique Wittig.

of literature; finally, feminist criticism that demanded a radical rethinking of the conceptual grounds of literary study and a revision of the accepted theoretical assumptions about reading and writing based entirely on male literary experience.

French feminist theory originated from one of the first and most influential of the groups founded by the feminist movement in France, *Psychanalyse et Politiques*, which established the influential publishing house *des femmes*. These feminists argued that differences between men and women are products of gender identities formulated through the operation of *discourse* rather than the consequence of biology; that binary oppositions are the dominant versions of sexual difference; and that theories such as Marxism, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralist thought could offer a way of deconstructing the opposition – man/woman, rationality/hysteria, etc. Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous opened different perceptions and expectations to theory. Each one of these highly differentiated writers had her own particular view of language and her strategy for changing language and the meanings inscribed in it. Kristeva and Cixous consider that art and literature offer important evidence of the ways in which differences of thought are structured. Often allusive, poetic, and full of linguistic puns, French feminist thought is sometimes considered over-intellectual and ‘difficult’: however, the idiosyncrasy of their language is part of the poetics with which these writers seek a form of expression outside dominant structures of signification.

*Écriture féminine* is the result of this theoretical reflection, and it opened new creative possibilities. It is characterized by fluidity, fragmentation and *jouissance* (which means pleasure, including the sexual sense), and it is particularly associated with a *writing of the female body*. First described in Hélène Cixous’ 1975 article, “*Le Rire de la Méduse* [Medusa’s Laugh]”, ‘writing the female body’ is one of its central concepts. But the essay is also a war cry, a war cry in the name of de-construction, as is made clear in the third paragraph: “What I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy [destruction]; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project [construction]” (LM:875). The seminal essay is, in the original, 17 pages long in seven parts, which correspond (but only very roughly) to the following topics: introduction; the suppressed feminine; breaking phallogocentrism by writing the body; woman’s relationship to woman; bisexuality; grammar and what happens, when *she* writes; conclusion: love. The essay is truly seminal, for it holds the seeds of almost all the topics that Cixous would later develop in *La jeune née* (1975), *La venue à l’écriture* (1977), and other works are contained within it. She describes how women, through the means of writing, might break away from myths and rhetorical structures that have kept them from participating in society and in intellectual discourses. A form of feminist criticism, *écriture féminine*

holds that there is an area of textual production that exists beneath the surface of masculine discourse and only occasionally comes to the fore in the form of disruptions of 'masculine' language. Particularly evident from the beginning was the desire to cultivate different points of view, rather than to develop one, specific method or theoretical system, a fact that makes grasping and reviewing feminist theory a slippery endeavor.

Julia Kristeva, drawing on Lacan, has summarized the latest phase of the feminist struggle (roughly since WWII, described above) in three steps. In the first, which she calls 'liberal feminism,' women demand equality of access to the Symbolic order (Lacan) – here we see the actions of the early American feminists. In the second step, 'radical feminism,' women subsequently reject the male Symbolic order, and femininity is extolled in the name of 'difference'; it is here that she locates the radical French feminists. In the third step, women recognize and reject the dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine metaphysical, a stance deeply nourished by deconstructive thought (Moi 1985:12). This is Kristeva's position, where Butler would also be situated.

At the basis of their innovations was the notion of 'womanness' or 'féminité', the notion that only women possess certain characteristics. In this (at least superficially) essentialist notion of exclusivity, they unconsciously mirrored the behavior of 'clubby male exclusiveness' they had lived with for years. In the evolution of their thought, the French feminist theorists formulated many innovative ideas, and their works, widely translated into English after 1985, experienced a landslide of positive reception in Anglo-American countries. And it was not long before this point was recognized and commented on in yet another wave of theory, begun by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). In this reasoned critique of the preceding feminist thought, Butler also initiated a new appreciation of gender and performativity.

### **2.1.2 Topics**

Cixous comes to writing via fiction. What relationship then does the 17-page long theoretical essay, "*Le rire de la Méduse*", have to the rest of Cixous' work?

For me, theory does not come before, to inspire, it does not precede, does not dictate, but rather it is a consequence of my text, which is at its origin philosophic-poetical, and it is a consequence in the form of compromise or urgent necessity. Each time I have written or that I write a so-called 'theoretical' text – in quotations because in reality my theoretical texts are also carried by a poetic rhythm – it has been to respond to a moment of tension in cultural current events, where the ambient state of discourse – academic discourse, for example, or journalistic or political discourse – has pushed me to go back over things, to stop my journey and

take the time to emphasize, to display in a didactic manner the thinking movement which for me was inseparable from my poetic movement, but which seemed to me to be entirely misunderstood, forgotten or repressed indeed by the topical scene. So all that is called 'theoretical' in my work is in reality simply a kind of halt in the movement that I execute in order to underline in a broad way what I have written or what has been possible to read for a long time in my fictional texts.  
(Cixous 1996)

This theoretical text, "carried by a poetic rhythm" and characterized by her typical word creations, sets out Cixous's program of *écriture féminine* and employs neologisms and concepts the reader may be unfamiliar with; it also redefines existing terms<sup>83</sup>. Most of these will be described and discussed individually in the context of the works to be considered below: bisexuality; difference/*différance*; feminine economy (including the 'gift' and the elimination of the 'masculine artifact'); *jouissance* (pleasure); perception; sex as weapon; subject (hierarchic binary opposition of subject/object), and writing the body. But a few themes *underlie* the essay. To facilitate the procedure, described above, of preparing the reader for an individual *lecture féminine* of the works that follow, I will describe these underlying aspects that shaped *écriture féminine* and other texts of the time, as well: the notion of the 'other'; the notion of 'feminine'; and the psychoanalytic background touched on above (the aspect of phallogocentrism was explained in the preceding section).

### **2.1.3 Aspect: The 'other' (*l'autre*)**

The revelation which I [Cixous] believe to be the core of human experience: the nature of the relationship to the other (Cixous in Sellers 1988:143).

Next to philosophy, the notion of the 'other' has also been developed in the contexts of psychology (Freud, Lacan), feminism (Beauvoir), and social sciences (Said). It is generally understood as a contrast to or a part of defining the self, a meaning it took on in Hegel's dialectics. I am my Self, s/he is the Other. In philosophy, Emmanuel Lévinas was instrumental in coining contemporary usage of 'the Other' as radically other (God). The term plays a role in the development of poststructuralism, as well as in French feminist theory. French theorists followed de Beauvoir's analysis of woman's construction as the 'Other' by seeking to explore the ways in which language and culture con-

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<sup>83</sup> "One has to take her texts as a mixture of theory and literature, for otherwise they are scarcely comprehensible; one cannot understand her theoretical basis without prior study of the main works of Freud, Lacan, and Derrida" (Osinski 1998: 59).

struct sexual difference, and to do this they drew on the work of the French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan. How does Cixous view the other?

H.C. I could say that my first others are people of my family. Only if I move now into another, larger sphere, then I produce my other out of a sense of urgency. This other is imposed on me, is dictated in an absolute way to me, by history, by the state of history. Today it is necessarily women, the question of women, the woman. [...] For me, the other is the other to love. Yet what I may have lived in my existence was that the other had to be hated, feared, that he was the stranger, the foreigner, everything that is bad. I situate the other in what classically or biblically one could have called my neighbor. It is complicated to say this kind of thing. And then you have the whole range of others...

V.C. In that case, the other is not sexually determined. It could be any 'other'.

H.C. It is always anybody. (Conley 1984:144-45)

#### **2.1.4 Aspect: What is 'feminine'?**

On several occasions I have had the opportunity to speak of *écriture féminine*, and in 95% of the cases, the understanding of what Cixous means stops at the second word. People can't seem to get past the word 'feminine'. In her original manifesto, Cixous declared:

Since these reflections are taking shape in an area just on the point of being discovered, they necessarily bear the mark of our time – a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (*la nouvelle de l'ancien*). (LM:875)

We note here that the 'feminine' is *parenthetical*. Cixous goes on to declare,

There have been poets who would go to any lengths to slip something by at odds with tradition... Thus did Kleist expend himself...

There are reasons to believe that where Cixous writes 'poet', we can also understand 'composer' (cf. the discussion of the 'author' above). Thus, obviously, we have every reason to look at the work of men with *écriture féminine* without 'feminizing' them. (Cf. Routledge Aesthetics, 438.) But this message has demonstrated itself to be extraordinarily difficult to get across! It is a fine line of demarcation that lodges the danger of misinterpretation for almost all. ***Écriture féminine* is not about writing by women!** "Attention ! Je n'essaie pas de créer une écriture féminine, mais de faire passer dans l'écriture ce qui a toujours été interdit jusqu'ici, à savoir des effets de féminité. Je suis

encore en état de recherche.”<sup>84</sup> It is not even about femininity. It is about a type of writing with a gendered designation, gendered due to the historical context at the time of its description in 1975.

For Cixous, the terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ do not refer to ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in an exclusive way. A clean opposition into man and woman would be nothing but a correct repression of the drives imposed by society (Conley:9).

Since this concept is apparently so difficult to convey, I will quote here lengthy extracts from “An exchange with Hélène Cixous” (Conley 1984:129-161), in which Cixous expatiates on what she meant and means with the terms ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’. It is the most succinct exposé by her on the subject I have found; moreover, it reveals many other nuances of her thought, such as philosophy, historical awareness, ethics, libidinal economy, her frame of literary reference, sociology, multi-level discourse, etc.<sup>85</sup> It is also an example for us to observe her style.

H.C. The preliminary question is that of a ‘feminine writing,’ itself a dangerous and stylish expression full of traps, which leads to all kinds of confusions. True, it is simple to say ‘feminine writing’. *The use of the word ‘feminine’ is one of the curses of our times* [my italics]. First of all, words like ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ that circulate everywhere and that are completely distorted by everyday usage, – words which refer, of course, to a classical vision of sexual opposition between men and women – are our burden, that is what burdens us. As I often said, my work in fact aims at getting rid of words like ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’, even ‘man’ and ‘woman’, which designate that which cannot be classified inside of a signifier except by force and violence and which goes beyond it in any case. [...] Instead of saying feminine writing or masculine writing, I ended up by saying ‘a writing said to be feminine or masculine’, in order to mark the distance.

True, it is a question here of our whole history, of our whole culture; true, it would be nice if one could use, instead of masculine and feminine, color adjectives, for example. Like blue and green and black [...] You see, these are linguistic instruments, words that do not take into account the reality of exchange...

When I read this text to you, I did not want to tell you at first who wrote it. Be-

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<sup>84</sup> “Look here, I’m not trying to create writing that is feminine, I’m trying to get something into writing that has been forbidden up to now, namely the effects of femininity. I’m still researching” Cixous in Rambures (1978:58).

<sup>85</sup> Examples of exactly where and explanations of how Cixous uses these terms are given in Cixous 1997e: 157-160.

cause if I do tell you, for example, that it is by Maurice Blanchot, I am saying that it is a text written by a man and you are sent back to the lure, to the screen. You are sent back to the fact that it is a man who wrote a masculine text. My own position is to insist always on the fact that libidinal femininity is not the *propre* of women and that libidinal masculinity is not the *propre* of men. What is most important for me, what allows me to continue to live and not to despair, is precisely the conviction that it does not depend on the anatomical sex, not on the role of man and of woman, but that it depends in fact on life's chance, which is everybody's responsibility. [...] Publicly, I must constantly have recourse to [strongly marked words], because we are in history, we live in history, we are in a historical, political situation which we must take into account [...] We must take into account the fact that we are caught in daily reality in the stories of men and women, in the stories of a role. That is why I come back to the question of the terms masculine and feminine. Why these words? Why do they stay with us? Why do we not reject them? Because in spite of everything and for historical reasons, the economy said to be feminine – which would be characterized by features, by traits, that are more adventurous, more on the side of spending, riskier, on the side of the body – is more livable in women than in men. Why? Because it is an economy which is socially dangerous in our times. That is what we saw already with Kleist. You live, you believe, you give life to values that are apparently moral values, but in fact these moral values do not exist without precisely coming forth from a primary locus which is in any case *corporeal* [my italics]. If, for example, like Kleist, you believe in the possibility of a love, a real love, not one based on a power struggle, on a daily war, on the enslavement of one by the other, society is going to reject you. If you are a man, the rejection is almost immediate. Society does not give you any time [...] What you are doing is absolutely prohibited, and you are sent into madness and death. Women do have another chance. They can indulge in this type of life because by definition and for culturally negative reasons they are not called upon, they are not obligated, to participate in the big social *fête* – which is phallogentric – since they are often given places in the shadow, places of retreat, where they are in fact parked. It will be more easily accepted that a woman does not battle, does not want power. A man will not be forgiven.

V.C. Yes, but do women not want to get out of that negative historical position?

H.C. Something which is absolutely necessary. What I am saying is always on two levels. One level would be, if you like, that of libidinal truth. It is cut mercilessly by historical reality. I also say that for negative reasons, women have positive reasons to save something through generosity, which is mortal for men. Because man is projected on a scene where he has to be a warrior among warriors. He is assigned to the scene of castration. He must defend his phallus; if not, it is death.

There you are. Women are not called upon the scene of castration, which in a way is not good for them, since they are repressed. Let us suppose that in our feminist period, women manage, for example to have equal chances; that is precisely where things start to become interesting and complicated. With equal chances, you are back in the old scenes. In the old scenes there were power struggles, and so what does one do? That is our problem. That is the problem of all women who, for example, cross the bar of absolute repression behind which women are parked and who are, in fact, on the side of men. What do they do? Either they are killed right away, or they effectively resist castration. They find themselves in the scenes where castration makes the law with the usual phallic stakes. But what about us? What we like, what we want, what men may also want but have been taught a long time ago to renounce – are we going to keep that? That is when one begins to live dramas. Are we going to be the equals of men, are we going to be as phallic as they are? Or do we want to save something else, something more positive, more archaic, much more on the side of *jouissance*, of pleasure, less socializable? If so, how and at what price? That is our daily question.

V.C. When you talk about 'women', even between quotation marks, you still refer to a very specific group with its demands and ideas of community. There are new exclusions, new masters.

H.C. The problem goes beyond that of women. It is the problem of any community, any society, because there have been many ideal societies. One collides right away with a contradiction that is '*not mastery*' [my emphasis]. I will take it at a banal level. When we founded Paris VIII, we founded it with the idea that there would be no more professors, no more masters – something that never did materialize, because if one is not the master, the other is, of course. We never did get out of the Hegelian system. What one can do is displace it as much as possible. One has to fight it; one can diminish the degree of mastery, yet without completely eliminating it. There always must be a tiny bit of phallus, so that things continue one way or the other. I believe that it is humanly impossible to have an absolute economy without a minimum of mastery [...] complete freedom, in my opinion, ends up by being too vague and is found only in spiritual evasion (extracts from 129-135).

### 2.1.5 Aspect: Lacan

In most mentions of *écriture féminine* I have run across the importance of Lacan. Now, this may be true for Kristeva and/or Irigaray.<sup>86</sup> But, in my reading of Cixous I find very many – almost constant – references to Freud, not Lacan.

L'enjeu en fait ne se situe pas exclusivement au niveau freudien. Au contraire, l'issue, la sortie, (les Sorties, pour plagier Cixous elle-même dans la *Jeune Née*) pou le sujet se trouve dans sa capacité de rejeter les théories freudiennes qui ne tendent qu'à déféminiser la femme, qu'à l'affaiblir ou la déposséder de sa puissance de corps (Fisher 1988:46).

Cixous worked with Lacan for two years<sup>87</sup>, so we can assume she has some clear-cut views on him – the few remarks I found on him were very dismissive, for example on his (lack of) understanding of woman's *jouissance*<sup>88</sup>. Is it possible that many are interpreting Cixous superficially? Certainly, Cixous' very awareness of Freud and psychoanalysis might be traced Lacan and the contemporary discourse, or to her actual discourse with him. True, her *écriture féminine* is 'based on pre-Symbolic Imagery' (Gamble 2001:177), and she emphasizes certain connections to the mother and to the origin and importance of language (Sellers 1991:44-64), but these notions may be attributable to both Lacan and Freud, to only one of them, or to a cocktail brewed of the two.

Cixous' post-Lacanian discourse, however, has also been indicted for supporting patriarchal and psychoanalytic norms. Ann Rosalind Jones and others have charged that underlying Cixous feminine economy, her sophistication in articulating it notwithstanding, is the assumption of an 'essential' femininity in texts, the

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<sup>86</sup> Let us not forget that both Kristeva and Irigaray are psychoanalysts (Irigaray was even expelled from Lacan's École Freudienne de Paris for her outspoken critiques of psychoanalysis), in contrast to Cixous. Kristeva's influential essay "Women's Time" (1981) deconstructs the binary opposition of masculine and feminine and opens up new notions of identity. For her, 'masculinity', and 'femininity' are particular socially constructed subject-positions and have little to do with biological difference. Irigaray found that psychoanalytic theory was not an analysis of patriarchy, but an example of it (Gamble 2001:176).

<sup>87</sup> "1963: For approximately two years she works regularly with Lacan" (Cixous 1997e:210). In a letter to the present author dated 'end May 2008', Mme Cixous wrote: "Je n'ai jamais été 'analysand' de Lacan, ni d'aucun analyste. (Mais lectrice de Freud, amie d'analystes – et attentive à tout instance aux effets de 'l'inconscient', et pour cause. Pas de littérature mais les souterrains). J'ai rencontré Lacan en 1963 parce qu'il cherchait quelqu'un pour l'initier à Joyce. Après quoi, nous sommes restés en amitié, chacun lisant l'autre. Il fut toujours convaincu que j'avais été analysée – preuve que - - - à ma manière – Voilà 'moi – l'analyse' comme dit Derrida." [I was never the analysand of Lacan, nor of any analyst. (But reader of Freud, friend of analysts – and always attentive to the effects of 'the unconscious', and for good reasons. Not literary, but \_\_\_\_???) I met Lacan in 1963 because he was looking for someone to acquaint him with Joyce. After that, we remained friends, each reading the other. He was always convinced that I was analyzed – proof that - - - in my own fashion – voilà 'I am analysis', as Derrida says."

<sup>88</sup> Cf. section on *jouissance* in Stäbler chapter below.

identifiable quality that allows feminine discourse to be named as such in relation to Oedipus, the essential quality of openness that allows a text to resist external control and the superimposition of closed Oedipal patterns. More recently, however, other critics have come to her rescue [...] Anu Aneja has suggested that the case against *écriture féminine* results from a desire 'to locate *écriture féminine* within a definite category, a desire to co-opt into a literary theory that which always exceeds it' (1989:195). Aneja's observations place Cixous discourse in relation to the Eastern doctrine of non-duality (Briganti and Davis 1994).

I have read of Cixous' 'neo-Lacanian', 'anti-Lacanian', and 'post-Lacanian' usages of certain notions. For my understanding, Lindhoff (2003) hits it correctly:

The three most influential feminist theoreticians in France, Irigaray, Kristeva and Cixous, find very disparate consequences from Lacan's theory: While Kristeva follows the theory of Freud and Lacan in broad stretches, from which she develops a literature theory, Irigaray demands and practices psychoanalytic deconstruction of psychoanalysis itself. Cixous, on the other hand, who also employs Lacanian terminology, rejects intuitional psychoanalysis. (69)

A genealogy of those Lacanian thoughts, which Cixous actually adopts but doesn't admit to, or that she deforms in using, or whatever stance she takes, exceeds the scope of this consideration. My reading suggests to me that Cixous may be performing her own interpretation of Freud, analog to Lacan's interpretation, as a *counterweight* to Lacan's; and that her standpoint does not depend so much on Lacan as on her own re-reading of Freud, giving her own emphases to themes like castration, libido and libidinal development, etc. After all, she did devote several works to Freud (on Dora) and to my knowledge, none to Lacan. Many authors do refer to this context, and manifestly, Lacan played an enormous and omnipresent role in preparing the way for poststructuralist thought. Nonetheless,

The effect of Lacan in the women's movement is astonishing considering the fact that his theory restitutes a whole series of Freudian postulates. The central scandal of Freud's and Lacan's theories is the reduction of their theories to the male perspective; they are centered around the Oedipus complex, castration complex, and incest taboo, whose transfer to the female psychosexual development is problematic, to say the least (Lindhoff 2003:70).

Since his notions on the development of the child – and particularly the feminist reaction to these – may not be familiar, I summarize for our discussion three topics from one area that are relevant: I will note aspects from Lacan's notions of early childhood and personality development concerning a) the Subject, b) language, and c) the

phallus. I follow here the description of Lena Lindhoff (2003:55-90), a description informed by feminist criticism, which was convincing in its detail and accuracy compared to other sources. Anglo-American authors no longer accord Freud and/or Lacan description in such detail<sup>89</sup>; but without this contextual detail, the aptness of the reaction of *écriture féminine* cannot be gauged.

Before we look at Lacan's revision of Freud, let us recall Freud's theories concerning the formation of **subjectivity** and sexuality. Since I presume the reader is already familiar with these, I present them schematically with a few notes.

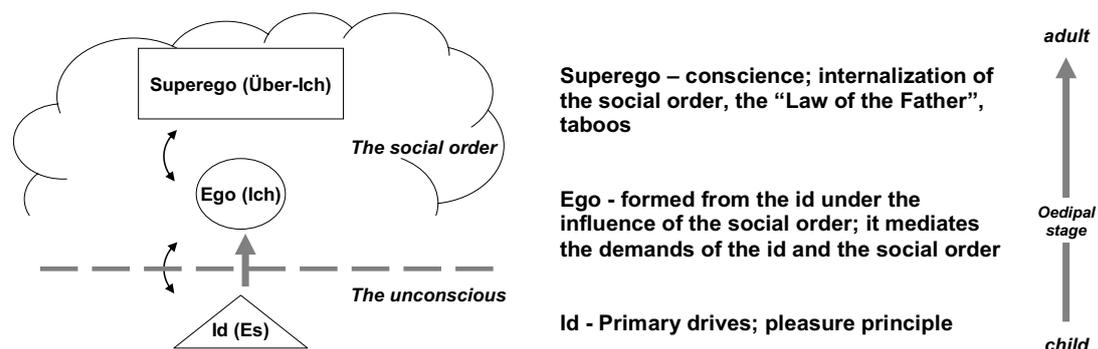


Figure 8 - Freud's Concept of Mind

Notes:

- The formation of the superego takes place within the oedipal complex – for Freud the crystallizing moment of early childhood development.
- The social order demands the repression of certain drives.
- The motivation for fulfillment of the ego is strengthened by the superego.
- The ego contains not just 'me and my desires', but also a critical parental eye.

Since Freud's theory is almost exclusively concentrated on the (male) oedipal complex and excludes the pre-oedipal phase, the male oedipal constellation (the incest desire toward the mother, the father-murder impulse, the father incest taboo, and the threat of castration) determines the content of the unconscious. Thus, Freud's theory of the psychosexual socialization is reduced to the male perspective. The patriarchal order of the family and society, within which the Subject is formed, is for him incontrovertible: a victory of the male spirit over the threatening, female connoted nature. Every deviation from this normal development is a mistake, and the woman has no own sexuality. As Irigaray put it, "For Freud, there is no difference between the sexes: Humans are male; woman is a male without a penis."

Lacan turns around Freud's understanding of ego and unconscious: the true

<sup>89</sup> I've even read on the American Musicological Society's forum that "Freud is dead".

Subjectivity of the individual is to be found not in the conscious ego, rather in the unconscious. (Instead of *conscious* and *unconscious*, Lacan recognizes the imaginary ego (*moi*) and the true ego (*je*.)

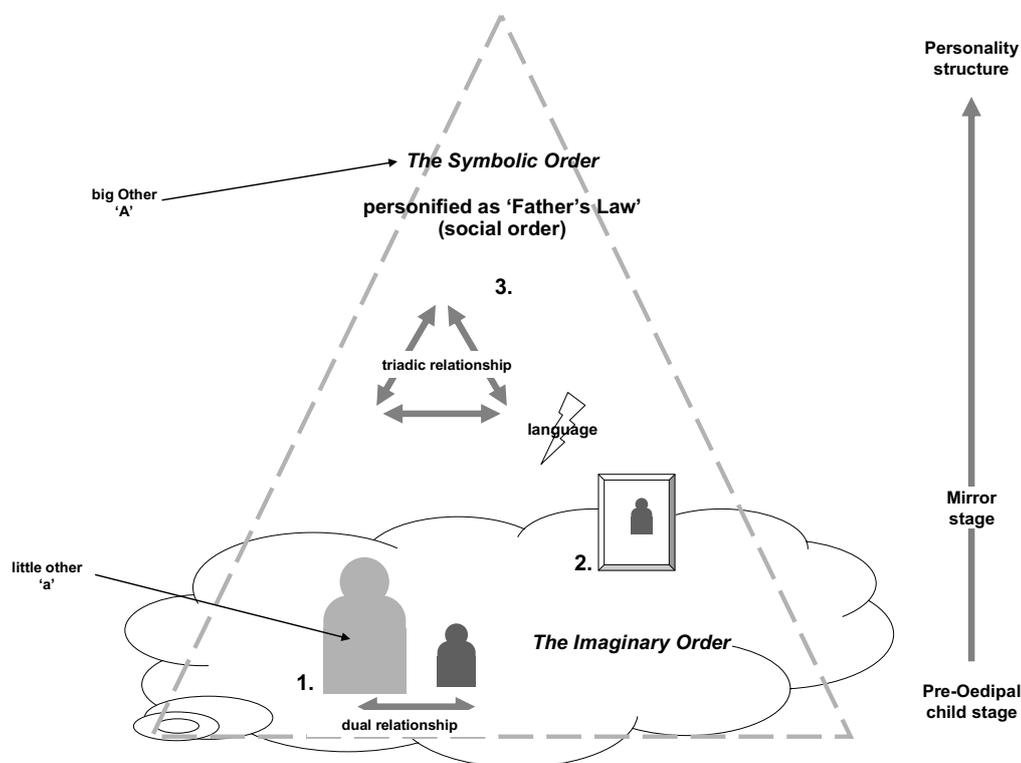


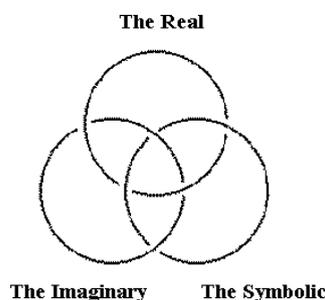
Figure 9 - Constitution/Structure of the Subject (Ego, *moi*)

1. We are in the realm of the Imaginary, the world of the first mother-child relationship. The mother and child have a dual relationship. As a child, the Subject's identity is not internal, it is external.

2. The mirror stage, the constitution of the Subject based on Hegel's master-slave dialectic, is accompanied by an ego-splitting, i.e., alienation. The child perceives its own specular image and acquires, through seeing its reflection, a sense of itself as a separate being. It recognizes: "I am not the mother, I am me! But she is omnipotent!" In the mirror stage, the Subject tries to deny the split through an identity as autonomous ego within the mirror relationship. This denial, however, produces fear and aggression, since the Subject cannot be autonomous.

3. The recognition of being only mirrored, the realization of the alienation breaks through the structure of the Imaginary Order. Language enables separation from the mother. The child can now enter the Symbolic Order, personified by the father. This recognition enables the Subject to replace the dual relationship with a triadic one, the third member being the social order. The Symbolic Order is inter-subjective; it is the origin of language and culture. The mother never leaves her position as projection of

the male child; she never becomes a Subject; she cannot enter the Symbolic order. There is also a real world, which is represented in Lacan's Borromean knot:



**Figure 10 - Lacan's Borromean Knot**

All later dual relationships of the Subject (man/woman, analyst/analysand) will be characterized by the original aggression of the mirror stage. The Imaginary, however, does not disappear after the mirror stage, it always remains as structure. The sexual roles are completely determined by the Imaginary. In love between man and woman, there is only one Subject: the male. The woman remains his selfless mirror.

So much for the theory of the constitution of the Subject. The notion of **language** is more complicated. Language is located in several areas: the origin of language is in the Symbolic order and language enables separation from the Imaginary order. The unconscious is structured like a language. The true nature of language can be seen and studied there. But language is a *dynamic* production of meaning, which is nourished by the inextinguishable desires of the (conscious) Subject. This desire is empty, and seeks not objects, but being and identity. The Subjects themselves are products of the linguistic production of meaning. But this social language is dead writing; it has lost its connection to desire. The social order is characterized by dead language.

In contrast to this is the 'language of desire', a universal language. Simultaneously, this is the source of the Subject's individual specificity, which develops uniquely in every childhood: it is the *repressed* 'first language' of the Subject. This language is alive. Every person grows up within the Symbolic Order that determines everything. It is the patriarchal order, the 'Law of the Father'<sup>90</sup>, that defines the structured patriarchal

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<sup>90</sup> "In 1897 Freud remarked, on the basis of his analysis of his first patients and his self-analysis, that 'the father forbids the child from realizing its unconscious wish to sleep with his mother' (letter to Fliess, October 15, 1897). This first outline of the Oedipus complex, which now appears simplistic, grew increasingly complex throughout Freud's research. In time, the Law of the Father turned out to be directed both toward the mother ('You will not reintegrate your product') as well as her offspring swept up by desire. The law is also accompanied by an injunction against cannibalism and murder, and hold up ideals, primarily sexual ones ('Later you will enjoy, like me, a woman from another family'). Once introjected, this becomes the

relationship of everything to everyone – the mother's body, the own body – the collective unconscious. The first language of the individual is thus the individual's own version of the incomprehensible patriarchal order. *Language in Lacan's scheme precedes all construction of reality*. Radicalizing Saussure's concept, Lacan speaks of a 'primacy of signified'.

Signifieds (concepts of reality) are 'effects' of signifiers (words). Language is not fixed (as by Saussure), rather a flowing, endless 'structuration' of signifiers (words). A word can have many other meanings, depending on its context among other signifiers. The concept 'glides' under a chain of words.

Lacan associates the endless movement of desire (which structures language and produces meaning) with 'metonymy'<sup>91</sup>. He associates the 'imaginary' fixation and hypostasis of meaning with 'metaphor'<sup>92</sup>. But, in the last analysis, metaphors are based on metonymies. These two basic principles of language function are different, but inseparable. Accordingly, the notion of the 'imaginary' is ambivalent. On the one hand, the imaginary is a basic function. The structuring identification of the developing Subject in childhood is a necessary pre-condition for grasping reality. On the other hand, the 'imaginary' constitution of ego and the world is a process of the acquisition of reality – with a negative result: the ego and its objects become *fixed* in a narcissistic (phallic) construction.

We have reached the third aspect to be considered here. In the formation of Subjectivity and language, the **phallus** plays a central role. According to Lacan, in the mirror stage, the child believes the mother is 'phallic'. It then recognizes, however, that the mother is 'castrated'. The child doesn't assume that the mother is simply different, she is castrated. Previously in identity-union with the mother, the child now makes its first discovery of non-identity – and denies it. The missing phallus becomes the child's fetish, he must have it. It is the first imaginary object of the child (*objet a*) that serves to hide the experience of difference behind an assumed identity.

Precisely this is the function of language. The phallus stands [!] thus at the be-

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origin of the superego and ego ideal. The repression of drives, their suppression and sublimation, are the principal outcomes of the conflict that connects them structurally to this law." Article "Law of the Father" in Locklear, S. (2005) in Mijolla, A. (ed) *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, English version, Farmington Hills MI: Gale Group and eNotes.com (2006), retrieved 14 Sep 2007.

<http://www.enotes.com/psychoanalysis-encyclopedia/law-father>.

<sup>91</sup> A figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of 'Washington' for the United States government or of 'sword' for military power.

<sup>92</sup> A figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making an implicit comparison, as in 'a sea of troubles' or 'All the world's a stage'.

ginning of language, it is the 'first signifier', and language is nothing but an endless process of the constitution of imaginary objects destined to fill the fundamental lack of identity, which characterizes all human existence. All terms of language are only new substitutes for the phallus. It is the connection to the unattainable 'real'. The order of language creates autonomous identities, where in reality there is only interaction and difference. Finally, there is the father. The 'Symbolic father' is language itself, which precedes all individuation as an impersonal authority. It is the 'Law' or the 'big Other'. Language delivers salvation to the Subject. It enables self-identification and corrects narcissism.

We are nowhere near the end of Lacan's theories, and I have not yet expounded those that derogate women, but we have enough to get a good impression of them, to help us identify them in Cixous' writing, and to help us imagine the reactions they provoked. In reading them, we notice first how distasteful they are to women, as well as to men today. The violent responses of Cixous and others become understandable and justified – they are the existential struggle for woman's own identity and sense of self. At the same time, just as the French feminist theorists 30 years ago, we today stand in awe of a fine network of theories that covers so many areas of intellectual history, human existence, and cultural creation. How could one not be seduced by some of Lacan's ideas on the origin of language?

Through Kojève, Lacan had assimilated Hegel's thought, and we see it here, illuminating his reading of Freud. In Freud's image, the poor Ego, like a meatball in a sandwich, was caught between one slice, pressing down on him from above – his internalized societal superego – and his slice of primary drives pressuring him from below. The poor meatball is deemed healthy if he manages to keep control. Lacan also sees the ego caught between forces, but viewing personality formation and structure as a dialectic process. By introducing the element of language as the dynamic motor in the process, language becomes the royal jelly that enables the ego, relaying between the pressures, to construct itself and even reality, not merely still its drives. It is the creation of the imaginary sublime – for pleasure's sake. Here, the notion of *Aufhebung* reflected in this true dialectic that always reaches a new plane. Indeed, Lacan's image reflects more accurately what we know today about the way the neurons of the brain work together in processes of perception and ratiocination. Cixous' *lecture féminine* will take this image yet another step closer to the empirical models of the brain's functioning we know today, 40 years later.

The pure beauty of this notion must have delighted the aesthetic perception of his readers, captivated them. The gigantic structure of Lacan's thought galvanized the

brilliant post-war generation of young scholars and intellectuals who were forging a new identity for Europe out of the ashes of the Second World War. Lacan's thought served either as a reference point, to be accepted, rejected, or continued; or as a lever to stem the weight of the new, emerging theories, critiques, and refutations, as in the case, for example, of Cixous and the French feminists theorists.

It is this view of sexual difference as constructed in and by language that influenced the development of French feminist theory. In their different ways, Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva sought to establish a female identity, language, and writing which would subvert and/or deconstruct the phallogentricity of the Symbolic Order. In so doing, they opened up for feminist investigation questions about the relationship between desire and language and about the constructedness of identity (Gamble 2001:40-41). "Lacan is an antifeminist thinker who gave feminism a new foundation" (Lindhoff:78).

With this contextualization, I close the résumé of the poststructuralist topics of particular relevance to our discussion of *écriture féminine*. I turn now back to Cixous and to the reception her works have received in the realm of musicology.

## 2.2 RECEPTION IN MUSICOLOGY

Although Hélène Cixous has enjoyed abundant reception in disciplines such as literature, feminist theory, gender studies, and psychology, her theories have seldom been approached by musicology and media theory and, with one exception to my knowledge, not at all with regard to multimedia. In reference to opera and/or the voice, some authors have mentioned *écriture féminine en passant*, but without in-depth treatment.<sup>93</sup> Three musicologists who have taken on large presentations are Joke Dame (1994), Hanna Bosma (1997), and Sanna Iitti (2006), who have all argued for a kind of musical *écriture féminine*.

To my knowledge, the first person to apply Cixous' *écriture féminine* to music in an extended work was Dutch musicologist Joke Dame in her dissertation, later published (1994) as *Het zingend lichaam. Betekenissen van de stem in westerse vocale*

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<sup>93</sup> An early, short presentation is Lorraine (2001), a 15-page article that represents the first section, "Feminine Aesthetics", in Pendle's *Women and Music*. (The first edition appeared in 1991, so presumably her article dates from then.) The article attempts to localize possible 'feminine aesthetics' and is a remarkable *tour d'horizon* of theories at the time. Lorraine devotes only two pages to Cixous, Kristeva, and Irigaray and doesn't quite succeed at separating entirely the treads of their different thoughts; thus, the use Kristeva and Irigaray make of Lacanian precepts are mixed with Cixous' stance.

*muziek* [*The Singing Body. Significance of the Voice in Western Vocal Music*]. Since I cannot read Dutch, I must rely on statements made about this book by the next person to treat the topic, her compatriot, composer Hannah Bosma. In 1997 she wrote:

In her book *Het zingend lichaam*, Joke Dame suggests a similarity between the literary work of French women writers (such as Hélène Cixous) under the name of *écriture féminine* and music by composers like Luciano Berio and John Cage. Even more so, Dame proposes to consider as '*écriture féminine musicale*' the vocal music of Cathy Berberian, Joan La Barbara, Meredith Monk, Diamanda Galas, Laurie Anderson, Moniek Toebosch, Greetje Bijma and Jannie Pranger. However, Dame does not further work out this interesting suggestion...

In her suggestion of an '*écriture féminine musicale*' Dame stresses the vocal, non-verbal, non-linguistic aspects of *écriture féminine*: close to the voice, the voice of early childhood and the voice of the mother, the body, the flesh and rhythm of language, play, disruption, excess, gaps, grammatical and syntactic subversion, laughing. The idea that feminine vocal music is characterized by the use of nonverbal, pre-linguistic voice sounds is also offered by Renee Cox [Lorraine; cf. note above] in her article "Recovering Jouissance".

Both Dame and Cox relate these aspects of *écriture féminine* to Kristeva's notion of the semiotic, that consists of the materiality of language, sound, the sound of the body, the movements of the voice, intonation, timbre, [and] rhythm that accompany and disturb language. Kristeva's 'semiotic' is linked to the pre-linguistic, pre-symbolic, pre-oedipal primary processes...

According to Bosma's description, Dame takes a first step in joining approximately contemporaneous music with *écriture féminine*. I note three aspects in her description. First, Dame senses the proximity between *écriture féminine* and composers who found completely novel areas of music like Cage. Second, Dame brings *écriture féminine* into proximity with vocalists who have utilized a great deal of bodily engagement and/or who use a great deal of improvisation. She is certainly 'on the right track': It is a proximity that all following interpreters will take up – the logical, sensitive first step, in my opinion. Finally, Dame takes up the notion of pre-linguistic sounds. As we saw above, this notion of Lacan localized the 'feminine' in the premature, 'pre-symbolic' phase of development. "However, Dame does not further work out this interesting suggestion." It is now up to Bosma's, for she is the next to take up the topic.

Dame's notion of *écriture féminine musicale* evokes questions about the relation between this 'feminine' music and the, predominantly male, musical avant-garde. Also, questions arise concerning the role of language, voice, body, and electronic sound technology. All vocalists and composers mentioned by Dame not only

used the voice, but also electronics.

In her research for her own doctoral dissertation, Bosma poses more specific questions than Dame did, probing deeply into the matter of the voice.<sup>94</sup>

I want to focus in this paper only on the idea of the pre-linguistic voice as feminine. So I will not discuss other possible aspects of *écriture féminine musicale*, for example related to musical structure...

The idea that women have a privileged relation to the pre-cultural, pre-linguistic of pre-symbolic realm is a common stereotypical idea in our culture. *Écriture féminine* reinforces, elaborates, and extends this idea. Instead, I do not relate femininity to the general notion of a presumed uncultural body. I consider feminine practices such as mothering and singing as cultural practices of women. In the work of female vocalist-composers and of women composers, I perceive a mixture of masculine and feminine cultural practices, such as singing, composing and electronic sound technology; and often I find in electrovocal work of women composers references to cultural feminine issues like mothering and singing.

Thus, we see that Bosma restricts her prime concern to pre-linguistic voice (representing the feminine) and particularly investigates the area of electrovocal music and composing, her main areas of personal occupation. Here, Bosma becomes quite concerned with ticklish questions on the nature of what is feminine and what is masculine. Bosma also takes up Dame's treatment of Berio with regard to *écriture féminine* and after an analysis of *Thema - omaggio a Joyce* for tape (1958) formulates the question, "Is Berio a feminine subject?" and comes to the resounding negation, "I would say no: Berberian's work was appropriated by him. There is no place for two different authors of *Thema* in its surrounding dominant discourse."

The third person to do extended work on *écriture féminine* with regard to music is the Finnish musicologist Sanna Iitti. In her 2006 book, *The Feminine in German Song*, she develops her own theory of musical gestures based on Cixous' *écriture féminine*. Her work has two foci: a) determining the gender of works, which entails defining and discussing historical notions of feminine and masculine; she recognizes feminine qualities in both male and female individuals and undertakes the fine distinction between men's and women's femininities; through this, she seeks b) to enable a new, non-hierarchical view of music and its forms, particularly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Iitti offers extended, multi-faceted philosophical discussion of Cixous' concepts. She accepts the

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<sup>94</sup> Dame treated this topic in her article "Unveiled Voices. Sexual Difference and the Castrato" (1994) in relation to Barthes, but not in relation to *écriture féminine*.

viewpoints of Goehr and Goodman, but refutes Lorraine's interpretation (1991), claiming that she failed to recognize the proper epistemological context of Cixous thought, Derridean deconstruction; she asserts her own interpretation:

Feminine writing should neither be treated as a prescription for a particular style, nor equated with "women's music" in an essentialist manner. Ignoring the fact that Cixous identified *écriture féminine* in multiple historical contexts led Cox Lorraine astray. French post-structuralist theory nevertheless allows us to explain musical constructions of gender, regardless of the composer's period or sex. A Cixousian approach to music and gender must *posit desire*<sup>95</sup> as the generative principle of musical production. *Écriture féminine* is motivated by the feminine libido, denied by Freud. It suggests spontaneous musical creation and refers to improvisation and tone color. Historically, as composers, men transgressed their customary gender roles in society, thereby acquiring freedom. Women's feminine expressions nevertheless perpetuated devalued genres. Feminist musicology should therefore uncover the emancipating potential of gender studies in music. Analytically, this suggests going beyond the score and engaging factors that emerge in performance but cannot be notated... actual gestures in performance. (litti 2003 and cf. 2006:19)

We sense here how litti is building her argument for a reevaluation of 'women's' small musical genres in the book and for a beginning valuation of performance gestures. To accomplish this, litti goes on to unfold a minute investigation of feminine constructs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their history, and their manifestation in music. In effect, she deconstructs them, always referring to Cixous.

In contemplating *écriture féminine*, both Bosma and litti dwell on definitions of feminine and masculine in order to try to find evidence of the one *écriture* or the other. While in no way do I put their academic methods into question, I personally find this approach a dead-end street. No sooner have I found some 'feminine' writing than I discover possible 'masculine' attributes. And when I start examining 'men's femininity', at some point all defining characteristics seem to become arbitrary. Like Saussure's signifiers. In the last analysis, the pair of binary opposites 'masculine/feminine' bears within it the very hierarchy that *écriture féminine* avows wanting to go beyond (cf. Cixous' concept of bisexuality, in Thaemlitz below).

Although my personal preferences may lie outside of areas these three authors deal with, nonetheless I can only heartily welcome the growing attention and depth of

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<sup>95</sup> My emphasis. I recall the discussion above of how, in the emerging poststructuralist conception, desire helps constitute the Subject. I will continue this discussion in the chapter on Stäbler below.

investigation into this broad theme. In my reading of them, the steps they take are pioneering and timely. They have an inner consistence and reflect music history and theory as well as the broader philosophical context. Each of the authors presented in this section, including the following, took the integral 'next-step' in the musical reception of Cixous' *écriture féminine*. My work is another step, and I hope that these steps will continue. It is a project, like deconstruction, that will go on and on. I thank these authors for the intellectual simulation they have given me.

To conclude this section, I come to a fourth writer, whose short article takes the direction of my own thought, quite possibly because it is the most recent and because it deals with the same musical matter I do: multimedia art. In 2005, curators Lina Dzuverovic and Anne Hilde Neset organized the huge exhibition *Her Noise* at the South London Gallery, with satellite events at the Tate Modern and the Goethe Institute London.<sup>96</sup> The catalog contains an excellent overview article by Christoph Cox, "*A la recherche d'une musique féminine*", concerning women's often ambivalent feelings toward having their art be treated as 'women's art'. He names the often drawn distinction between 'egalitarian feminists' (or essentialists) and 'difference feminists'.

Among difference feminist, theorists such as Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray searched for an *écriture féminine*, a uniquely female mode of writing<sup>97</sup> characterized by a joy in the materiality of language, multiplicity of voice and linguistic register, and a fluidity and duration that resists closure and remains in media res...

Is there a *musique féminine*, a noise that can rightly be claimed as *hers*? Artist and theorist Dan Graham grapples with this question in an important essay from 1981. Titled "New Wave Rock and the Feminine", the essay examines a range of positions that have been available to, and strategies that have been taken up by, women in pop and rock since the 1960s. ...the heart of his essay: an analysis of sexual difference and female specificity.

Cox, too, dwells on defining 'feminine' elements, quoting artist Dan Graham (1993) extensively in his quest to locate these.

Drawing on the heterodox psychoanalytic framework that informs the writing of Cixous and Kristeva, Graham locates the feminine in a kind of return of the repressed: in a resurgence of the primary drives that have been foreclosed by entrance into symbolic language, the establishment of a stable ego and the

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<sup>96</sup> [http://www.ubu.com/film/her\\_noise.html](http://www.ubu.com/film/her_noise.html).

<sup>97</sup> As we saw above, for Cixous, *écriture féminine* is not uniquely female; Cox notes his himself below.

regulation of sexual desire. Never integrated fully into the symbolic order, argue Cixous and Kristeva, women have privileged access to these primary drives. For Graham, this resurgence finds its musical manifestation in extreme expressions of the female voice...

Once again, the tropes of repressed desire, the Symbolic order, and the importance of the voice are labored. But, Cox and Graham find some other interesting characteristics, which recall aesthetic elements Eva Rieger (1992)<sup>98</sup> once listed as typical of classical music composed by women.

More generally, Graham discerns this female specificity in music that is 'plurivocal, heterogeneous and polymorphous'... Exchanging instruments and roles after every song [creates a] 'non-hierarchical structure' that undermined stable group identity and identification with the singer/hero. Likewise [... the] 'deliberate use of mistakes, silences, and personally motivated or arbitrary shifts of pattern/feeling' that produced a musical texture characterized by a 'continually shifting, polyvalent, hierarchical pattern'.

Cox continues, "Graham's argument is powerful and intriguing. Yet surely such characteristics are not unique to all-women or women-led groups". Certainly not, Cox affirms, going on to list male artists who share these characteristics.

Yet, just as Cixous and Kristeva champion James Joyce, Jean Genet, Antonin Artaud and other male writers as exemplars of *écriture féminine*, so we might see these male musical precursors as fellow travelers in the project of resisting or undermining the structures of sexual-social power that pervade music and musical organization.

And now Cox hints at the new direction his thought takes him, along with Reynolds and Press (1995):

'Having exhausted the psychosexual dynamic of male rebellion', writes Reynolds with Joy Press, 'rock culture is confronting the possibility that the only new frontier is the specifically female experience that has hitherto been left out of the script.'

Suddenly, we are not talking about aesthetics. We have shifted to 'the experience'. What is this specifically female experience? Where are the great female sonic wizards?

The answer lies outside the rock fortress in the domains of experimental and

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<sup>98</sup> Quoted in MacArthur (2002) *Feminist Aesthetics in Music*. MacArthur's view: "The central argument of this book is that women's music operates according to aesthetic criteria that suggest differences from men's music" (173).

electronic music, where women have played a prominent role for nearly a half-century. Although entirely ignored by [standard texts] on the subject, pioneers such as Pauline Oliveros, Maryanne Amacher, Alison Knowles, Maggi Payne, Laurie Spiegel, Annea Lockwood, Eliane Radigue, Christina Kubisch, Meredith Monk, and Ellen Fullman have produced work as significant as their male counterparts [...]

For Oliveros<sup>99</sup> and her generation, electronics opened up a new and uncharted world. Beyond the ordered, stratified<sup>100</sup> domain of music, it gave access to what John Cage called ‘the entire field of sound’ and what media theorist Friedrich Kittler has called ‘acoustic events as such’: no longer merely pitches, scales and meters embroiled in formal systems of meaning and communication, but all the noises of the world in all their messy heterogeneity laid out on a single plane. Kristeva calls this plane ‘the semiotic’; and philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call it the ‘body without organs’<sup>101</sup>. All three maintain that it has a unique resonance with the feminine. For Deleuze and Guattari, the liberating transformation of the human subject and of music into a body without organs first requires a ‘becoming woman’, a dismantling of the libidinal investments that characterize Man and Music as norms, and the cultivation of a broader range of affective relationships. From this perspective, experimental electronic music signals the becoming-woman of music; and women have a privileged relationship to musical experimentation. Here, women do not follow but lead. And this *musique féminine* offers a glorious world of noise that is hers and, via his becoming-woman, man’s as well.

Who would ever have thought that woman’s oft cited multi-tasking capacity to create order out of a chaotic babble of children at the family hearth – “all the noises of the world in all their messy heterogeneity laid out on a single plane” – would one day be perceived as having a particular “resonance with the feminine”? I understand Olkowski’s critique of Deleuze’s standpoint (cf. Chapter on Thaemlitz below), and following her, I doubted the necessity of Deleuze’s new concept ‘becoming-woman’ to express this philosophically – until a respected feminist male colleague countered my skepticism with, “Why not? That’s what I needed in order to get in touch with my femi-

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<sup>99</sup> Pamela Madsen (1994) explores the notion of ‘feminine form’ in Oliveros’ deep listening (my footnote).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. nomadology.

<sup>101</sup> Stevie Meriel Schmiedel offers comprehensive and easily understandable genealogies and explanations in his *Contesting the Oedipal Legacy. Deleuzean vs. Psychoanalytic Feminist Critical Theory* (2004), to which I will refer below. Concerning rock music and gender see also Riley (2004) *Fever: How Rock ‘n’ Roll Transformed Gender in America*.

nine side.” Thank you, Christoph, for pointing your finger in the direction I see *écriture féminine* indicating today. It is a standpoint that opens up a path of ‘together’. It is the path that both Deleuze and Cixous point to. It is neither a woman’s direction, nor a man’s direction; it is our direction, of us all, as we walk experimentally and experientially together into a very uncertain future. Cixous wrote of woman’s place in the shadows, where experimentation is easily accepted. If this is what it takes to arrive at the insight that “women have a privileged relationship to musical experimentation”, then I can only say, “Allez-y!” – or better yet, “Allons-nous!”

### 2.3 LECTURE FÉMININE?

The non-master must be imagined. (Cixous and Clément 1986:144)

Till now, I have described feminine *writing*, and now we turn to *lecture féminine*, or feminine *reading*. If “Rousseau inscribes textuality in the text” (Derrida), the artists we will treat below attempt to inscribe their meaning everywhere but in text, and it is with the ‘exorbitant method’ of *lecture féminine* that we hope to decipher these attempts – bearing in mind Barthes’ caveat above: “Once the Author is gone, the claim to ‘decipher’ a text becomes quite useless”. How did we get from one to the other? Since founding her Center for Feminine Research in 1974, Cixous has sought with her students to arrive at a new kind of textual explication: feminine reading. She criticized the then current fashion of reading texts “on a purely formal level”; in contrast, she proposed a new kind of reading:

“The texts we work on are strange either because of their language or because of what they say. What binds us together is our belief in the need to ensure that the essence of each strangeness is preserved [...] There are thirty ways into a text. Reading together in this way we bring the text into play. Though work on the form is necessary, it doesn’t uncover the heart of a text. We take a page and everyone comes individually towards it. The text begins to radiate from these approaches. Slowly, we penetrate together to its heart.”<sup>102</sup>

Even male literary critics were apprehending the necessity for a new kind of

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<sup>102</sup> Sellers 1991: 143-148. Further references on this topic are Part 4, “Teaching after Cixous” in Wilcox, H. et al. (1990) *The Body and the Text. Hélène Cixous, Reading and Teaching*, and the chapter “Coming to Reading Hélène Cixous” by Deborah Jenson in Hélène Cixous (1991) *Coming to Writing and Other Essays*.

reading. Stephen-Paul Martin wrote about feminine reading in 1988:

Up until very recently, men in Western cultures were encouraged to be arrogant in their pursuit of power and pleasure, to assume that they had the right to penetrate and subjugate whatever they wanted to enjoy or possess. But when we “penetrate” an experimental text, such phallogentric arrogance is inappropriate. Because the work will not be immediately accessible, it will ask us to approach it with much more respect than men are expected to display in most business or professional situations. [...] Once the desire to inseminate the text is activated and we have shared our masculine potency, feminine energies assume primary importance. Although an initial investment of masculine attention is necessary, the processes of gestation, pregnancy, birth, and nurturance are more significant in dealing with open literary structures. Instances of how this works might be found in the tendency of contemporary writers like Derrida, John Cage and Jackson Mac Low [...] Students have always been taught to read like men and *penetrate* the work. What they have not been taught is how to create and nurture it (10-11).<sup>103</sup>

It is important to remark, however, that indications can't be taken too literally. For on the one hand, the interpreter is tempted to apply Cixous' formulations superficially; on the other hand, Cixous doesn't want her descriptions to be taken as rules.

I choose to work on the texts that 'touch' me. I use the word deliberately because I believe there is a *bodily* relationship between reader and text [...]. We listen to a text with numerous ears [...] Every text has its foreign accents, its strangenesses, and these act like signals, attracting our attention [...] We aren't looking for the author as much as what made the author take the particular path they took, write what they wrote. We're looking for the secret of creation, the same process of creation each one of us is constantly involved with in the process of our lives (Cixous in: Sellers 1991:148; my emphasis).

So how to take them? Cixous own texts are strange, they tease the reader into their folds. They are not formulaic, nor do they offer precise dissections of problems with proffered solutions. With their musicality and mystery, they seduce the reader into listening. In offering no immediate solutions, they defer comprehension, thereby embodying the deconstructive concept of *différance*.

It occurs to me that the salient features of a *lecture féminine* could be reduced to two points: *how* and *what*. How does one read? If, up to now, one has read looking

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<sup>103</sup> In the section “A Polemic for New Reading”; my emphasis. Compare his remark on penetration with Barthes' above in the section 1.4 on the Subject.

for understanding from a limited number of sources, *lecture féminine* opens up this practice to more sources. If works of music were previously read for aspects of structure, balance, and harmony, a *lecture féminine* might read them for myriad new aspects, such as how the notion of the composing subject manifests itself in a work. And how are they read? Teleologically, to end up at a certain knowledge? How can any knowledge be new, if it was read to be found? Or to experience a work in a different way? “They do not fetishize... they observe, they approach” (LM:892).

And, what do we read? Only works in our canon? Susan Sellers, often quoted here, has this to say about *lecture féminine*, gleaned from her experiences in Cixous’ seminars (Wilcox et al. 1990:192):

Perhaps the best way to describe a ‘feminine’ reading is to say that it implies ‘opening’ the self to what it is the text is saying, even if this is puzzling or painful or problematic. It entails reading to see how a text is made, by exploring all the various resources for meaning a writer has at their disposal: the writer’s intended meaning, as well as the ‘other’ meanings that contradict, complement, unsettle, or dislodge this meaning. It involves standing back from the text and looking at its overall construction; it entails reading at the level of the words themselves, at the level of the syntax, the syllables and letter-patterns, the rhythm and punctuation. It means asking who and what produced this text: and why? It means acknowledging that I as reader participate in the ongoing process of the text’ creation; it means recognizing that my reading is itself a product of certain questions, blind-spots, needs and desires, and that these motivations are constantly changing. The question of how we read includes the question of what we read.

Sellers, too, adds a notice on the consequences feminine reading has for writing:

Blurring the rigid and, to me, absurd distinction between ‘critical’ and ‘creative’ writing, a ‘feminine’ writing entails relinquishing the pseudo-objectivity of conventional critical discourse and implicating ourselves as writers, accepting our role in the signifying process as well as the way language itself works on and shapes what we write (194).

Catherine Clément, in her joint work with Cixous, *The Newly Born Woman* (1986), described the necessity of struggling for a “truly democratic transmission of knowledge with great subtlety:

It is true that whole segments of knowledge are “trapped” in the dominant ideology, but still they are conveyed. There are, for example, Marxist historians; they teach history in a “history” program. It is not because they are in a position of mastery within the teaching structure as it is now that the *content* of their knowledge goes hand in hand with ideology, The division is more complex: it is

between the subject's position in relation to knowledge and *the specific effects of the knowledge itself*. The transmission is effective in any kind of structure; even if it is attenuated by the instructional system, it is not *wiped out* (142).

A theory of otherness that brings the body into play with the intellect, that questions the validity of the text, that poetically encourages a collective and respectful approach to reading with an abundance of interpretations: All of these notions and more are included in *lecture féminine*. Cixous' approach might help us bridge the theoretical gap as we move from the autonomous work of music toward experiential media art. For, perception can happen with the mind, or perhaps with the body. More and more, neuroscience is encoding the bodily reactions and actions involved in reading. If *écriture féminine* writes the body, perhaps *lecture féminine* reads with the body. But in any event, "for us the point is not to take possession in order to internalize or manipulate, but rather to dash through and to 'fly' [*voler*: also, to steal]" (LM:887).

**Figure 11 (below) - Cixous' Seminar 2004  
At the Collège international de philosophie, Paris**







### 3 BRIDGING THE GAP. GERHARD STÄBLER

German composer Gerhard Stäbler, born in 1949 in Germany, enjoyed a well-grounded, conventional music education. After thorough conservatory training as composer and organist in Detmold and Essen (1968-1976), he worked as organist and simultaneously participated in direct political action (street theater) and in music ensembles. It took a creative crisis at the end of the 70s to help him find a way out of German traditions and conventions to his own, very original path to new forms and ideas. In doing so, he drew inspiration from John Cage's unorthodox thought and from pioneer video artist Nam June Paik, working with both in later years, as well as from German composers Hanns Eisler and Kurt Weill.

One of the most striking characteristics that confronts the commentator of Gerhard Stäbler's oeuvre is the heterogeneity of forms, materials, and notations he has employed in some 40 years of composing. Stäbler's Ricordi work catalogue contains the more 'conventional' works, including some 5 works for music theater and/or multimedia, 17 works for orchestra, ensemble or chorus, 19 chamber works and 10 works for solo instruments. His own publishing series contains more than twice that number of works, most of which are more recent pieces that increasingly don't fit the genres of a publishing major's catalogue<sup>104</sup>: political theater works, graphic scores, 'secret scores', works with peculiar instrumentations, 'conceptions', performances, and so on; some of the most unorthodox are not even published. But the difficulty of analyzing Gerhard Stäbler's works is due only in part to the heterogeneous nature of the works themselves.

Having found his way out of the German idealistic tradition, it is precisely because the intellectual and creative roots of this composer-turned-multimedia-artist lie

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<sup>104</sup> The problem of genre, touched upon above in the section on the musical canon, is discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.1.

there that studying Stäbler's path reveals so much. And as we study it, we also discover that Stäbler realized many of the aims Hélène Cixous formulated for her *écriture féminine*, without ever aiming to do so.<sup>105</sup> In a *lecture féminine* of Stäbler's work, I will approach two major concepts: the changing concept of the Subject with its hierarchic implication; the changing concept of the specific Object 'musical material'.

Studying a path with divergences like Stäbler's makes great demands on the tools employed to approach it. Can we study Stäbler's serial compositions as well as his performance pieces and installations using one, single approach? What are the alternatives – switch methods, use several methods, ignore certain works? Analysts of Stäbler's work have demonstrated remarkably imaginative approaches in coaxing meaning from them. Next to commentaries, interviews, and personal impressions of his work, one finds many single work analyses, including 'harmonic' and structural analyses of the artifact 'score', cross-genre, biographical, sociological, and musical-political approaches. Undeniably, music analysis no longer balks at instrumentations such as a collective composition [*Voix (Time)*] (1998), "Comics", or graphic scores; nor at pieces for materials so diverse as internet, ice, 113 grand pianos, koto, and sho. Nonetheless, even when one knows in advance that Stäbler's œuvre is heterogeneous, one can't help being surprised when confronted with pieces for screamers or aromas. And the greatest conundrum arises when analyzing the use of methods from the past combined with such new, unexpected media – it's as if the composer were wearing a life jacket in an open sea of new possibilities – and it matters little whether the mixture is in one single work or in several works.

In order to approach his works, I am 'writing my own theory' and have chosen a *mélange* of methods, combining older music analysis methods with a *lecture féminine*. While some theorists have a distaste for such 'impure' theories, mixing theories is not entirely new; in fact, cultural studies already has a name for it: *métissage*. The word *métissage* is primarily used in francophone countries, and it is emerging in cultural studies, notably in Canada. While the word *métissage* is also used in English, it has not found its way into broader usage yet. In American states with high Latino populations, the term 'mestizo' is often employed instead.<sup>106</sup> Both terms designate mixtures (Latin:

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<sup>105</sup> Stäbler had never heard of Cixous before I began to speak to him of her; but he immediately found her approach sympathetic.

<sup>106</sup> The English language Wikipedia entry '*métissage*' silently links to the curt article 'half-caste', and '*métis*' similarly presents a laconic ¼ page entry; but the entry 'mestizo' provides more ample information, including on '*métis*'. On the contrary, the French Wikipedia article on '*métis*' presents a three page article with some pointed cultural aperçus: "Dans l'imaginaire de nombreux peuples, l'unité ethnique est symbolisée par le sang comme dans l'expression 'sang bleu' des nobles français, le métissage est alors considéré

*mixtus*) of North American Indian blood with others, respectively French Canadian or European (*American Heritage Dictionary* 1969).<sup>107</sup> Three Canadians describe *métissage* used in their research site thus:

*Métissage*, from which the Canadian word *métis* is derived, is a site for writing and surviving in the interval between different cultures and languages; a way of merging and blurring genres, texts, and identities; an active literary stance, political strategy, and pedagogical praxis. As *métis* has been appropriated from its original and negative meaning 'half-breed', we appropriate *métissage* from its original meaning 'mixed-blood' to become a creative strategy for the braiding of gender, race, language, and place into autobiographical texts.<sup>108</sup>

What makes such a *métissage* of theories necessary? Where Modernism proceeded to postmodernism, from one paradigm to another, there is a 'joint'. An approach to Modernist works can use a Modernist theory, ditto for postmodernism. But what about the works of art created *in the joint*? "One of the more striking features of the postmodern is the way in which, in it, a whole range of tendential analyses of hitherto very different kinds [...] have all coalesced into a new discursive genre, which we might as well call 'post-modernism theory', and which demands some attention in its own right" (Jameson 1991:x).<sup>109</sup> It is natural that a kind of clasp, a hinge, be fashioned to hold the two sides together, the old and the new, and this applies to new approaches as well. This problem has been tellingly identified by two authors in Andrew Benjamin's

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comme un mélange de sang, les métis sont des 'sang mêlés'. Lorsqu'il y a tension entre des groupes ethniques, il arrive que les métis soient rejetés par leurs deux communautés d'origine. Il en va différemment du métissage culturel qui ouvre souvent de nouvelles possibilités, en particulier dans le domaine artistique. Le métissage des peuples s'accompagne quelquefois d'un métissage culturel dont il résulte de nouveaux modes de vie ou expressions artistiques. [...] Avec le développement des idéaux pacifistes, la fin du XXe siècle a été marquée par une forte valorisation du métissage. Il devient un canon de beauté et l'on observe en effet l'élection des premiers top-models métis. Mais aussi, le métissage se forge une identité musicale avec la popularisation de la world music..." [In the minds of many peoples, ethnic unity is symbolized by blood, as in the expression 'blue blood' for French nobility. Métissage is thus considered as a mixing of blood, the métis are 'mixed bloods'. When there is tension between ethnic groups, it can happen that the métis are rejected by both of their communities of origin. The situation is different regarding cultural métissage, which often opens new possibilities, in particular in the artistic domain. The métissage of peoples is sometimes accompanied by a cultural métissage that produces new ways of life or artistic expression. [...] With the development of pacifistic ideals, the end of the twentieth century has been marked by a strong valuation of métissage. It has become a canon of beauty and one observes it in the popularity of top-notch métis models. In addition, métissage forges a new musical identity with the popularization of world music...]. The term 'creolization', with similar roots, is also used; cf. Gallé (2004).

<sup>107</sup> Also of interest in this context is the notion of 'mimicry' in post-colonial studies <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/bhabha/mimicry.html>, developed among others by Claudia Breger <http://www.indiana.edu/~germanic/faculty/CV/Claudia2006.pdf> retrieved 13 Feb 2008.

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.ccfi.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/v07n02/metissage/metiscript.html> retrieved 12 Oct 2007. More information available at <http://www.othermetis.net/Biblios/otherbiblio.html>.

<sup>109</sup> For paradigm changes in post World-War II music cf. Schreffler (1996) and in particular the reasons stated for it (191).

collection *The Problems of Modernity. Adorno and Benjamin*. The authors Andrew Bowie and Joanna Hodge both address the unique contribution music – and Adorno’s philosophy – can make to our understanding of the joint ‘modern/postmodern’ and the lacunae in investigating this potential (1989).

A new approach might be a *métissage* of theories. But *métissage* is a term with a biological origin, so the term implies more than just holding two things together, like a clasp. In *métissage*, the two elements mix blood, they exchange DNA, there is cross-over and imprinting, and a third new thing is produced, to date unclassified. In this regard, the notion of *métissage* has something in common with *lecture féminine*: both tell us that there is no single approach, there are only multiple approaches. And both blur boundaries and defy categorization. It is the kind of ‘fuzzy’-theory science is uneasy with; but, exactly its fuzziness makes it appropriate for postmodern works of art whose creators weren’t thinking along exact methodological lines.<sup>110</sup>

I will try to show how works like Stäbler’s, which have their heritage in one tradition and their continuation in another, can be approached using a *métissage* of Modernist music hermeneutics and *lecture féminine*. Two of the aspects I will focus on are rooted in Modernist musical hermeneutics and can be counted among its major themes – the (composing) Subject and the (composed) Object, musical material. The relationship composer/composed – Subject/Object – is a binary opposition that ultimately implies the master/slave hierarchy of the phallogocentric system.

Opposition, hierarchizing exchange, the struggle for mastery which can end only in at least one death (one master – one slave, or two non-masters ≠ two dead) – all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values. (LM:893)

Thus, I will suggest that if they are to retain relevance for musicological research, older notions of the composing Subject and musical material need to be altered – perhaps mixed – in order to take them out of their context of phallogocentric values. In bringing together theories from the two worlds, I seek to demonstrate that their confluence helps us gain knowledge of Stäbler’s work. A final goal of this ‘method *métissage*’ is to graft the new theories as well as the new forms and works onto the existing stock of the musicological canon.

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<sup>110</sup> I have encountered strong resistance to this notion among some German scholars who would seem inclined to retain the ‘racial’ purity of particular theories and methods. For example, it was suggested that combining Adorno’s concept of ‘body’ with Cixous’ would require a complete dissertation and should not be attempted here. Considering the technology-driven acceleration of our theoretic development and the postmodern mixtures and blurrings described here, I hold that stance, whether in German musicology (as tellingly described by Gerhard) or elsewhere for illusory. While I don’t deny there are “trade-offs” (as mentioned by Subotnik 2002:250), I attempt with the concept of *métissage* to offer a workable alternative.

### 3.1 MÉTISSAGE OF SUBJECT

In the manner prepared above, we attempt now an escalade of the works that follow, like climbers wending a way from one philosophic artistic notion to another, grabbing hand-holds on horns and overhangs as they presents themselves in the works. Sometimes one text will belay another, we may do some free climbing, sometimes we may be forced to fall back. In order to understand how Cixous' notions might apply to music, it is helpful to take a brief comparative look at the concept of the Subject and its applications as developed in musicological thought. In reflecting on Stäbler's works, I take recourse to theories of music and composition that held sway in the 70s and 80s that Stäbler grew up with: the theories of Adorno, of the serial, and of the post-serial Darmstadt school. My description is based on the main lines of thought established in the Schoenberg/Krenek debate of the 30s concerning musical material (to be treated in the following section) and taken up by Adorno's interpretation thereof in his *Aesthetic Theory* in the 50s; it is extended with short statements from principle composers of the 1970s and 1980s that underscore a general acceptance of this view of the Subject; and by arguments from critics and philosophers of the 90s who compare this view with a poststructuralist view. I will try to point out parallel or analogous lines of thought between the composing 'Subject' and the self that was trying to find expression through *écriture féminine*. Finally, looking at Stäbler's compositions, I will describe how the concepts might be found in the music.

Let us begin by recalling that 'to compose' comes from 'com' + 'ponere', to put together. As the narrative goes, throughout Western musical history – through the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and modern eras – the composer emerged as an 'individual' and enjoyed increasing freedom to 'put the notes together' as desired, and not merely to fit dictated rules. Now, if something is 'put together', there must be *someone* who does the putting together. In music history, particularly since the advent of the discipline of *Musikwissenschaft* in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the one who 'puts' is the Subject; the Subject is the 'I' in "I compose". This notion, which draws on Hegel's ideas of the role Subject and Object play in history, gained particular importance in the high point of Western music development, in the *Großbürgertum* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was theorized and developed by its later apotheosis, Adorno.

### 3.1.1 Adorno's Subject

We can learn much of the notion of the composing Subject<sup>111</sup> from Adorno's conception of it, and we can approach poststructuralist theories of the Subject by comparing or mapping Adorno's concepts with Freud's. To date, this was a lacuna in Adorno reception, but it has recently been filled in exemplary fashion by Yvonne Sherratt in *Adorno's Positive Dialectic* (2002), which I follow here. First of all, how can we think about the relationship of the *self* to the *Subject*?

Adorno inherits the 'German view' of the self as *historically* constituted. He also inherits the Freudian view of the self. Yet Freud provides a psychosexual theory of the psyche, that is a view of the psyche as '*natural*'. (59-60; my emphases)

Can the two seemingly incongruent views – the historical and the psychosexual – be reconciled? Can the one be mapped onto the other? After detailed argumentation and proof, Sherratt concludes (emphases are hers):

There is a compatibility between the '*natural*' Object of the psyche and a view of the self as constituted through history. The human psyche may be a 'natural' Object, but that is entirely compatible with its being shaped by social activity. This is true for all kinds of historical determination, material, ontological or (historical 'will'. *In short, the self can be conceived of both through Freud's theory and through Hegelian-Marxism.* (64)

We have shown that Adorno marries Freud to a Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history. This centers around Freud's concepts of the ego and id, maturity and immaturity. These concepts from Freudian theory map onto those from Adorno's German Philosophy of History tradition [...] In short, Adorno generates a Hegelian-Marxist derived philosophy of history, which includes the human psyche as both Object and Subject of historical determination. (68-69)

We note characteristics of the Subject Sherratt describes, which will support our discussion of the composer:

The self is not acted upon, but instead, as a *Subject, the self acts*. It thus contributes to social activity and so partakes of determining the course of history. (61)

Subjects can act according to [...] will, or historical will. For instance, from a Hegelian perspective, individuals indulge in rational activity and transform the world to become more rational. From a Marxist perspective, individuals undertake polit-

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. a concise history thereof in Scheit 1999.

ical activity and transform capitalism into communism. For Adorno and Horkheimer activity in this category of historical will would be that which helps transform the social world into enlightenment.

Our acting Subject is, of course, more complex than simply a Freudian Subject. He/she is a Freudian-Hegelian-Marxist Subject. That is to say, he/she is part natural, and also always part social – meaning part socio-historical. The Subject is constituted by his world, unintentionally (materially), intentionally (ontologically), and historically ('historical' will). This affects the nature of the Subject's identity as a thinking, acting human being. (65)

I find Sherratt's description, which draws on Adorno's article "Zu Subjekt und Objekt" (first German edition 1969) succinct and accurate; however, I point out that, as much as the just described Subject may have in common with any Freudian concept of Subject, these Freudian aspects concern primarily the concepts of id/ego and narcissism/maturity, and not psychosexual development. In contrast, for Lacan and the post-structuralists, the latter was the prime area of concern.

### 3.1.2 Adorno vs. the Poststructuralist Subject

How does the line of thought on the nature of the Subject as seen in Adorno compare with the poststructuralist view? Above, we explored the death of the author. I suggest that the condemned poststructuralist author was, like the composer, also a 'putting' Subject. In the section "Meaning and the Self" in his chapter on Derrida, Peter Dews (1987) limns Derrida's concept of the self.

For Derrida, the collapse of the transcendental signified entails the "absence of a center or origin"<sup>112</sup>, allowing no thought of a Subject, which is no longer an origin, but a *focus* which is never fully present to itself<sup>113</sup> (34).

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<sup>112</sup> Dews' reference: Derrida *Writing and Difference*, p. 289.

<sup>113</sup> Dews' reference: Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, London 1962, p. 85. Dews prefaces this conclusion with the following argumentation: "It should not be assumed, however, that the only means of escaping the difficulties of Derrida's position, in which dissemination 'overshoots the mark' – as it were – and results in an *abolition of meaning* [my emphasis], which Derrida himself could not have seriously intended, is to return to some version of absolute idealism... The concept of a pre-reflexive identity can be retrieved from this speculative framework. This is made clear by the hermeneutic and post-Husserlian phenomenological traditions, which retain the key notion of a pre-reflexive self-acquaintance, but abandon the claim that the structure of the world is simply the structure of subjectivity, by distinguishing between the subject – which is *not* understood as self-present – the language in which this subject is caught up, and the world which language interprets. In this way it is possible to overcome the difficulties generated by Derrida's conviction that our only choice is between a view of the subject as an immobile center, a core of self-certainty, or the acceptance that there is no subject at all, except as an 'effect' of the

Dews goes on to draw the parallels and differences between the attitudes of Adorno and Derrida on the Subject/Object hierarchy. “The parallels between this Adornian procedure of ‘immanent critique’ and Derridean deconstruction are clear. Yet it is also important to note the major contrasts” (39). And although Adorno holds that “the purpose of critical thought is to abolish the hierarchy”<sup>114</sup>,

What Adorno understands by abolition of the hierarchy, however, is *not* abolition of the subject-object distinction, or of any other philosophical opposition. And this is where he differs from Derrida.

Dews carries on his carefully weighed argument at some length. However, here we are less concerned with its outcome than with remarking that the debate was well under way in 1987.<sup>115</sup>

The discourse attempting to clarify the different attitudes of Adorno and the poststructuralists continues today. David Sholle (2003) holds that:

The critique of the epistemic subject engendered by Marx (through Hegel) is rejected by poststructuralist cultural studies. [...] Poststructuralist cultural studies unhinges this mode of critique by replacing the reflective (the realm of consciousness) with the linguistic (the realm of language). Thus, the subject is replaced by a system of structures, oppositions, and differences which are not viewed as products of a living subjectivity at all. Here we have the full ‘death of the subject’. [...]

Ultimately, Adorno wants to reconceptualize the subject as capable of acknowledging its own moment of non-identity. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, in rejecting any reflective consciousness, sees the ego or self as only capable of exclusion, thus, the only option is to reject this supposed unity of self-consciousness in favor of a dispersal of intensities, a metaphysics of desiring

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play of the text... The first feature of Merleau-Ponty’s position, which should be noted in this context, is that he does not believe any more than Derrida in the possibility of a ‘transcendental signified’, an objectifiable meaning in principle separable from language, and directly available to consciousness. For Merleau-Ponty it is an ‘objectivist illusion’ to believe that the expressive act in its normal or fundamental form consists, given a signification, in the construction of a system of signs such that, for each element of the signified, there corresponds a signifying element – in other words in representation.’ [Dews’ reference to M-P: *The Prose of the World*, Evanston 1973: 148]. Accordingly, there can be no self-present subject prior to language, who employs language merely as the vehicle of already conscious dignifying intentions...” (31-32).

<sup>114</sup> Dews’ reference: *Negative Dialectics*, p. 181.

<sup>115</sup> Dews deepened his treatment of these themes in (1995), enriching his consideration with a chapter on Adorno and poststructuralism and one on Lacan and the Frankfurt School. This line of thought has benefited by some insightful recent scholarship by Lambert Zuidervaart, beginning with his *Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion* (1993) and followed by *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, And Imaginative Disclosure* (2004). From a musicological standpoint, I found the most exciting recent scholarship in the articles by Paddison and Subotnik in Gibson and Rubin (2002).

machines [Deleuze and Guattari], or the indifference of boundless flux. Adorno, like the poststructuralists, sees the failure of modernity in its denial of the body, the sensuous and material existence, but for Adorno the mere affirmation of these non-identical others is no solution. [...] Further, for Adorno, the subject-object relation cannot be eliminated, it can only be reconfigured. Adorno's tack in this regard is to give predominance to the object.

And so the debate continues with conflicting interpretation on all sides. However, it seems clear that, whatever their ultimate prognoses for the Subject, all sides acknowledge its existence in the manner formulated above, as one who puts objects.

### 3.1.3 The Composing Subject

Let us turn back to music now to try to compare the poststructuralist view of the 'dead author' with the notion of the composing Subject. For this, we examine the mainstream (German) musicological view of the Subject, typical for the 1970s and 80s.<sup>116</sup> In 1977, in Carl Dahlhaus' article "Zur Frage nach dem Subjekt der Musikgeschichte" [On the Question of the Subject in Music History], we encounter the composing Subject.

Die Frage nach dem Subjekt „der“ Geschichte – als eines übergreifenden Ganzen – erhielt von Karl Marx in den Pariser Manuskripten die Wendung, dass die Geschichte, wie die Historiker sie erzählen, „die noch nicht wirkliche Geschichte des Menschen als eines vorausgesetzten Subjekts, sondern erst Erzeugungsakt, Entstehungsgeschichte des Menschen“ sei (Frühschriften, Herausgegeben von S. Landshut, 1964, 252) (87-88).<sup>117</sup>

Although Dahlhaus finds the concept "problematic", it is nevertheless certain that the Subject can constitute itself by creating its own history. The fruit of its labor is an intact metanarrative, "a history with logical inner connections".

Die Identität des Subjekts, die das Rückgrat erzählter Geschichte zu bilden

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<sup>116</sup> As indicated above (Kerman, Subotnik), American musicology was occupied with 'positivist' topics in the 70s and 80s, and its participation in this typically German philosophical discourse on the composing Subject had not yet unfurled.

<sup>117</sup> "The question of the Subject 'of history' – as an all-encompassing totality – took a new turn with Karl Marx in his Paris manuscripts: History, as historians tell it, is 'not yet the real history of man as a given subject but only the act of creation, the history of the origin of man'" (Early Writings, edited by S. Landshut, 1964: 252; English translation of Marx from [http://home.freeuk.net/lemmaesthetics/epmht\\_44.htm](http://home.freeuk.net/lemmaesthetics/epmht_44.htm) retrieved 31 Dec 2007). For a contemporary view of historicism and contemporary music cf. Solomos (2005).

scheint, ist jedoch sogar in der Biographie eher problematisch als selbstverständlich, und zwar insofern, als sie nicht von Natur gegeben ist, sondern aus der bewussten Anstrengung des Subjekts resultiert, sich der eigenen – mit der Gegenwart vermittelten – Vergangenheit als einer in sich zusammenhängenden Geschichte zu vergewissern. Das Subjekt „hat“ nicht einfach eine Geschichte, sondern muss sie „herstellen“ und konstituiert sich dabei überhaupt erst als Subjekt [...] (77). Doch wird die künftige Geschichte, die sich dadurch überhaupt erst über die Stufe bloßer ‚Vorgeschichte‘ erhebt, das Werk von Menschen sein, in deren Handeln die Idee der Menschheit Realität geworden ist. [...] „Die“ Geschichte in Singular, in der die Geschichten im Plural, wie sie von Historikern erzählt werden, ohne Rest aufgehen, ist zwar nicht gegeben und einer empirischen Methode zugänglich, aber sie kann und soll hervorgebracht werden (88).<sup>118</sup>

I suggest this is the same concept of Subject that Schoenberg, caught in historical currents, had described in his fight forging his musical material, as we shall see below. In 1985 Dahlhaus adds an austere judgmental dimension to this notion, in which we hear the condemnation of composing Subjects who, adopting the attitude of “anything goes” prevalent at the time, avoid compliance with the “violent tendency” of musical material.

Als Subjekt aber übt „die“ Geschichte – auch die der Musik, deren Triebkraft von Adorno „Tendenz des Materials“ genannt wurde – eine zwingende Gewalt aus, der sich Komponisten nur um den Preis entziehen können, dass sie Überflüssiges und Unstimmiges produzieren (9).<sup>119</sup>

This outlook is corroborated in different ways by the views of two composers of the period, Helmut Lachenmann (born 1935) and Mathias Spahlinger (born 1944). After the student movements starting in 1968, the German current of *kritisches Komponieren* [critical composing] sought in the 70s and 80s to realize Adorno’s concept of the Subject that, through its actions, would help change society, thereby expressing the highest philosophical goals. Among proponents of *kritisches Komponieren* were Lachenmann,

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<sup>118</sup> “The identity of the Subject, that would seem to form the backbone of narrative history, is more problematic than evident, even in biographies, in the respect that it is not given by nature. Instead, identity is a result of conscious exertion by the Subject to reassure itself of its own history (and the history communicated through the present) as being a history with logical inner connections. The Subject doesn’t just ‘have’ a history, it must ‘make’ one, and it is only in doing so that the Subject constitutes itself at all... (77). Future history, which manages thus to rise above the stage of mere ‘pre-history’, will be the work of humans in whose actions the idea of humanity has been realized. ‘The’ history (singular) into which all ‘histories’ (plural) told by historians will one day be totally subsumed, does not exist and cannot be investigated by any empirical method; but it can and should be produced.”

<sup>119</sup> “But as Subject, history [singular] – also in music, whose drive Adorno called the ‘tendency of musical material’ – has an ineluctable violence that the composer can only avoid at the price of producing superfluous nonsense.”

Spahlinger, and Stäbler. The Schoenberg-Adorno-Dahlhaus Subject coincides in broad lines with the Subject Lachenmann refers to in his article “Affekt und Aspekt” (1983), but this Subject has become fragile, breakable. He described it thus:

Das Ich, in Erkenntnis seiner Gebrochenheit, Sprachlosigkeit, in der Auseinandersetzung mit seinen bürgerlichen Bindungen und seiner Unfähigkeit, diese abzuschütteln – als Ich, tastend nach seinem Es, nach seinem Über-Ich, nach seiner Struktur in der Hoffnung auf jenes Rettende, von dem Hölderlin sagt, dass es dort wachse, wo Gefahr sei – das Ich, sich mitteilend nicht affektiv durch die emotional sprechende Gebärde, sondern durchs suchende Handeln über den Aspekt, der sich niederschlägt im umformenden Umgang mit dem ästhetischen Apparat und dem darin vermittelten Materialbegriff: Komponisten meiner Generation haben ihre Situation so verstanden und als Herausforderung akzeptiert (68).<sup>120</sup>

Lachenmann acknowledges the dimensions of ego, id, and superego, but he must recognize that the composing Subject is in dire straits. It has lost autonomy and the ability to impose its own will. To what extent is it still a Subject then? This question is not posed; instead, the ego *communicates* itself: not via affect, not through emotionally speaking gestures (screaming?); instead, Lachenmann tries to rescue the Subject through searching and seeking *action* based on aspect – and this is done within the aesthetic apparatus that itself communicates a particular hierarchical notion of material (orchestras and audiences rampage when their beloved ‘philharmonic sound’ is spoiled). But when the ‘composing Subject’ of Lachenmann’s generation *puts*, he is maintaining the erectness of the hierarchy. This explains in part why some performers feel uneasy performing the music of these high modernists: In spite of the undeniable genius of many compositions, the ability to create new semantic levels and achieve new aesthetic ideals of beauty, these goals are achieved through the rigorous application of hierarchical, high modernist means, in which the composer-Subject masters the composed-Object. The more highly modern and the more complex, the more the performing Object is removed from her own performing self and required to step into the habitus of the composing Subject, thereby negating the personality of the performer. The more the composer puts, the lesser is the role of the player, and the greater is the

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<sup>120</sup> “The ego, recognizing its brokenness and speechlessness, wrestling with its bourgeois bonds and its inability to shake them off – the ego, groping for its id, for its superego, for its structure, hoping for that rescue of which Hölderlin said, “it grows where there is danger” – the ego, communicating not with affect and emotional speaking gestures, rather through searching action via the aspect that is written into transformative dealings with the aesthetic apparatus and the concept of material that it communicates: Composers of my generation understood their situation thusly and accepted it as a challenge.”

degree of domination. Ultimately the performer rebels, as against a dictator. This situation may be combined with a lack of understanding of a new semantic and risks being interpreted by the composer as rejection or ignorance on the part of the players; but this view would overlook the performers pain at being required to sacrifice their own musical personalities in order to realize the composer's. Yet in spite of the brokenness of his composing Subject, Lachenmann does not abandon his concept. The debate raging over the poststructuralist view of the dying author hardly scathed the high modern concept of Subject. In a paralytic clinch with the aesthetic apparatus, he heroically continued composing.

In December 2006, I had the good fortune and pleasure of spending an afternoon with composer Spahlinger. In answers to my questions on his concept of the historical composing Subject, he corroborated a view of the material dialectic Subject, drawing heavily on his quotation and interpretation of Marx and Hegel. I see a similar Subject in the concepts of both composers, although Spahlinger's version draws less (or not at all) on Freud. As Rainer Nonnenmann has pointed out ("The Dead-End as Exit" 2005), it has become manifest that the efforts of the critical composers to create their own histories and own Subjects have not brought about the changes in society their philosophy conjured up.<sup>121</sup> Instead, with the rigorousness and righteousness of their forebears, they may have composed New Music into a cul-de-sac (another reason why their high Modernist standpoint seems foreign to young composers today). This does not mean to say that their goals were misplaced, but their characteristic, inherited attitude seems to have inhibited the interrogation of means outside of their own systems of reference. In the section on 'The Subject' above, we saw that the questioning of the relationship between author/Subject and text/Object had led to the creation of new relationships between author and reader, to 'scriptible' texts. And precisely this upheaving questioning deafens by its absence in 'revolutionary' New Music.

Up to here, I have examined some of the principle exponents of the composing generation around Stäbler, and we have observed a relatively intact composing Subject.<sup>122</sup> In all cases it seems that the generation of German composers and musicologists remains firmly in the German metaphysical lineage of idealism (Kant – Fichte – Hegel – Marx – Adorno) with its transcendental Subject. Although the generation of the 70s realized that their Subject was in dire straits, the pull of this inherited notion proved

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<sup>121</sup> However, it has produced a kind of exhausted 'stay the course' mentality, cf. Spahlinger 2007.

<sup>122</sup> From the end of the 70s (Faltin 1979) up to the present (Richard 2000), critics have attempted to reconcile the composing Subject with a poststructuralist notion; but the progress is slow.

too great to resist; there was still enough attraction in the notion to hold them. We can see that the intellectual world of New Music with regard to its notion of Subject is diametrically opposed to poststructuralism, in spite of being contemporaneous. This is not the case of Stäbler, who turned his back on creating a particular style, on his own 'corporate identity', in order to seek new means and new media for communicating his art. "Ich habe versucht, den Weg der positiven Alternativen zu gehen, ohne irgendwelche Tendenzen auszuschließen".<sup>123</sup>

### 3.1.4 Cixous' Critique of the Phallus-Subject

In the development of *écriture féminine*, the concept of Subject as it evolved from Freud to Lacan to the poststructuralists played a major role, but the vantage point taken reflected its feminist roots. The question naturally arises, what does the one Subject have to do with the others? What alternative views of the Subject might *écriture féminine* offer? How would this change the notion of the composing Subject? French feminist theory presented a new viewpoint.

We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine". When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectification in discourse – by being "female". Re-objectifying her own self whenever she claims to identify herself "as" a masculine subject. A "subject" that would re-search itself as lost (maternal-feminine) "object"? (Irigaray "Any Theory of the 'Subject' Has Always Been Appropriated by the 'Masculine'" in 1985:133)

It was an 'ex-orbitant' vantage point; an 'other' view was nascent. As stated above, Cixous sees the Subject woven into the confining phallogentric web of Subject/Object relationships.

Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogentric tradition [...] But [this applies to] only the poets – not the novelists, allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining

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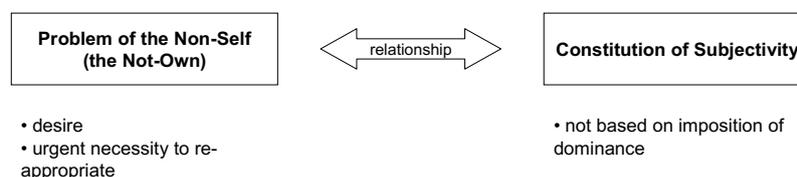
<sup>123</sup> "I tried to take the path of 'positive alternatives', without excluding any particular tendencies," in an interview conducted in Duisburg, 15 Nov 2004. Another group of composers was also seeking their way outside of the mainstream, often calling on id and body much more than on ego and ratio. Their paths are finding increased interest and reception, cf. Attinello on Dieter Schnebel (2007) and Mauricio Kagel (2002).

strength through the unconscious and because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffmann would say, fairies<sup>124</sup> (LM:879-80).

In these two passages, we see explicitly how this new vision was added to the views on Subject and Object. Transferring it to our context, we see how the relationship composer/composed – Subject/Object – is a binary opposition that ultimately implies the master/slave hierarchy of the phallogocentric system. But as Cixous allows above, there is some hope for the poet, and presumably for the composer as well, who also draws heavily on the unconscious (the natural Subject) in the creative process. But Cixous pitilessly surrenders the non-poet to Lacan's theory of the constitution of the Subject and, as countermove, posits the inapplicability of his theory to the 'feminine' writer.

And one becomes aware that the Empire of the Selfsame is erected from a fear that, in fact, is typically masculine: the fear of expropriation, of separation, of losing the attribute. In other words, the threat of castration has an impact. Thus, there is a relationship between the problematic of the not-selfsame, not-mine (hence of desire and the urgency of reappropriation) and the constitution of a subjectivity that experiences itself only when it makes its law, its strength, and its mastery felt, and it can all be understood on the basis of masculinity because this subjectivity is structured around a loss. Which is not the case with femininity. (Cixous and Clément 1986:80)

I offer below a diagram that plots these notions of Cixous.



**Figure 12 - The constitution of masculine subjectivity**

Here, we can easily make out the tension between the two aspects that await the ('masculine') Subject according to Lacan. The person, the 'Not-Own', must create its

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<sup>124</sup> For the non-native speaker of English we note that 'fairy' is an old synonym for the homosexual man.

Subjectivity, its Subject-aspect. Since it is driven by its constant and ineluctable sense of loss, the creation of its Subject is conditioned by its urgent need to re-appropriate. The thirst for acquisition is unquenchable. The Subject only exists in the act of re-appropriation: of persons, of material goods, of power, of knowledge and ideas. According to Cixous, the alternative – ‘the feminine’ – is not driven by these motives. It is capable of constituting its Subject without appropriating from elsewhere to do so. “I distrust the identification of a subject with a single discourse” (Cixous and Clément 1986:136). Cixous, the radical, calls for a completely new system. Instead of “that theoretic monument to the golden phallus looming”, she wants to create new possibilities, evoking the possibility that the writer “create outside the theoretical”. For the composer, this would imply not just changing musical language or syntax, it would imply no longer ‘putting the notes together’. Would that be a viable alternative for the Western European composing Subject? Cixous warns of the pitfalls awaiting those who dare.

If the New Women, arriving now, dare to create outside the theoretical, they’re called in by the cops of the signifier, fingerprinted, remonstrated, and brought into the line of order that they are supposed to know; assigned by force of trickery to a precise place in the chain that’s always formed for the benefit of a privileged signifier. We are pieced back to the string which leads back, if not to the Name-of-the-Father, then, for a new twist, to the place of the phallic-mother (LM:892).

But if it were to be attempted, how might it be done?

It will be up to man and woman to render obsolete the former relationship and all its consequences, to consider the launching of a brand-new subject (LM:890).

### **3.1.5 Stäbler’s Evolving Subject**

Can existing rhetorical structures be broken in order to create a new composing Subject? How might the approach of *écriture féminine* introduce new elements into this discourse? According to our examination of the composing Subject above, the Object of the composer’s Subject is *musical material*. And the composer is mastering – dominating – his material by ‘putting’ it. I relate here the Subject who is ‘putting the notes’, to the poststructuralist Subject, dying or dead. The author, like the composer, is a Subject who is ‘putting words’ on paper. At the same time Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida were abandoning their Subject, the concept of Subject was still functioning in the Western music canon. If one were to transfer the French feminist critique to the Western composing Subject, what might the result be? We might imagine an approach that *investi-*

*gates* material, instead of trying to dominate it.

To suggest another alternative, I will trace a line of development through four works of Gerhard Stäbler spanning his composing path over 35 years, from the period under discussion to the present. In contrast to many composers, Stäbler has not followed a continuous, temporal development; his is an achronological development, an “overthrowing of successiveness, connection”. Different forms and styles exist and are developed, dropped, then picked up again; it is a zigzag course with many strands, not a linear narrative development. Here we find an attribute of Cixous’ theory: an abundance of creation and movement, writing that constantly changes shape; the “imaginary is inexhaustible...the stream of phantasms is incredible.” There is pleasure in “jumbling the order of space...in dislocating things and values”. Ultimately, the styles rub off on each other and color one another. Tension is created in individual works through this exchange, and regarding the *œuvre* as a whole, we see that this tension informs the totality of the development of his works.

The works to be discussed here are *drüber...* [the other side<sup>125</sup>] for eight active screamers, cello, synthesizer, and tape (1972/73); *Das Sichere ist nicht sicher. Spiralrondo* [What’s Sure Isn’t Sure. Spiral Rondo] for flute, bassoon, horn, violin, cello, bass, percussion, and tape (1982); *kalt-erhitzt. Abgesang auf 113 Flügel* [Cold-Heated. Abgesang<sup>126</sup> to 113 Grand Pianos] (1999/2000); and the (not yet realized) *Skulptur für einen Industriebunker in Duisburg* [Sculpture for an Industry Bunker in Duisburg] (200?) with architect Pit Kroker.

We recall that the generation of serial composers in the 60s had originally welcomed the structuralist matrix (cf. Boulez above), but it soon became too restraining for them. *drüber...* can be seen in the lineage of compositions that demonstrate their writers’ desire to liberate themselves from structural constraints, without yet having discovered how to share the task of ‘putting notes together’, all the while still maintain compositional integrity in the resulting work. This state of tension is seen in several aspects in *drüber...* First, the work is based on a Psalm motet by Hans Leo Hassler and dedicated to Antonin Artaud. With these references Stäbler, on the one hand, anchors the piece in the ancient Judeo-Christian tradition of music and, on the other hand, looks with Artaud toward new expressive means in (European) theater. Second, the piece

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<sup>125</sup> *Drüber* can also mean over there, on the other side, or beyond.

<sup>126</sup> The final of three stanzas in the German Bar form *Stollen* are referred to as *Abgesang*. In addition, it can also mean ‘exit song’.

experiments with the mixture of acoustic and electric (tape) material.<sup>127</sup> Third, it employs notation and a more traditional time scale, in addition to less orthodox stage cues. Hassler and Artaud, acoustic and electric, controlled time and stage actions – all of these exemplify the historical extremes Stäbler is trying to bridge with the composition. Where is this composing Subject standing?

Through the stage instructions Stäbler also allows a degree of freedom unusual for a piece of high modern music; for example, for 45 seconds (from 1'30"), Player 7 must "Bawl (as if drunk), drunk walk, free, loose, yet out of control. Large dynamic changes, now and then spit, **sfz** (without voice)". Here, Stäbler composes no notes. Try bawling like this for 45 seconds, and you'll see how much free time you have! The notation of *drüber...* reflects this ceding of control. Instead of staves of music, elements of graphic notation are used. And Stäbler renounces the tyranny of the beat in favor of the clock; the piece has a strict metrical notation in seconds – not exactly freedom, but a touch less demanding than meter.

[Please turn page.]

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<sup>127</sup> For more on Stäbler's work with tape in this and other works cf. Ungeheuer 1994.



permits elements of freedom in staging and notation. The word 'drüber' is followed by dots of ellipsis, thus indicating that not everything has been said, or perhaps thought, on the subject. As his opus 1, it is a powerful statement: Stäbler is moving 'beyond', he does not stand firmly in the German musical canon, even with his first work. In its dual nature, it portends two tendencies that will become manifest in future works. Its musical material also underscores this dual orientation, as we shall see in the next section.

After the cautious experimental use of freedom and not freedom in *drüber...*, the next work to be considered here would seem to be an exercise in ultimate composer control. If we imagine Stäbler's register of compositional styles existing between the poles of structured Modernism and improvised performance, at the most structured pole we would find the composition *Das Sichere ist nicht sicher*, a title taken from Brecht's "Lob der Dialektik" [In Praise of Dialectics] (1932):

Wer noch lebt, sage nicht: niemals!  
Das Sichere ist nicht Sicher.  
So, wie es ist, bleibt es nicht.

If you're alive, never say never!  
What is certain, is not certain.  
As things are, they will not remain

In spite of the ironic tone of the text, the piece is far from being humorous or ironic à la Kagel; it is deadly serious. Freedoms that were allowed ten years earlier are removed. All tones are notated, all on staves, and it's not enough that time signatures and metronome marks are given, the corset of minute timing is added for good measure. It is as though the composer, in shock from not having put enough notes, now compensates with deadly rigor. The tone material of this 'spiral rondo' is stringently derived from the three fundamentals of the piece, d/g/b. Seating of the instruments and particular positions for the percussionist to strike the instruments are all painstakingly notated. 1/8 tones and even sinus waves of +1 Hz variance are demanded. In all, there are eleven pages of introductory instructions plus four pages of tape score before the actual score begins. The piece is the apogee of Stäbler's besieged but evidently still unbroken Subject putting notes together. (It will be discussed further in the next section on material.)

It was a final paroxysm of Subjective control before plunging into release, but this phase doesn't last either. From this extreme pole of structure, Stäbler finally sets off into realms using improvisation and the body; later, in his installations, he will go even further. The work *kalt-erhitzt* came into being by chance. A manufacturer of grand pianos, with 113 instruments destined to be junked, asked Stäbler if he could use them in some way. Out of this happenstance, a series of works came into being scored for the pianos, pianists, singer, cellist, percussionists, amateur choirs (9), amateur brass ensembles (2), piano pupils, electronics, film, choreography, and conductors (5) to be performed at a cemetery – symbol of death and transience. Among the electronic material were citations of repertoire piano pieces and portions of Stäbler's other works. In

later versions of *kalt-erhitzt*, recordings of earlier versions were also employed. One of the main characteristics of this work which puts process in the foreground, is the instruction that it be executed several times at intervals of several months. In this way, the gradual weathering and deterioration of the grand pianos – *the iconic Romantic instrument* – created differing uncontrollable conditions of sound for each performance. It is obvious from the instrumentation alone that *kalt-erhitzt* lies somewhere between



**Figure 14 - 113 Dying grand pianos**

spectacle, piece of music, performance, installation, theater, and neo-happening. Stäbler had also succeeded in crossing genres, a theme we will investigate with Thaemlitz further.



**Figure 15 - Performing Stäbler's *kalt-erhitzt***

A last work to be considered is the as yet unrealized sculpture for an industry bunker in Duisburg, conceived by architect Pit Kroker, for which Stäbler is to create

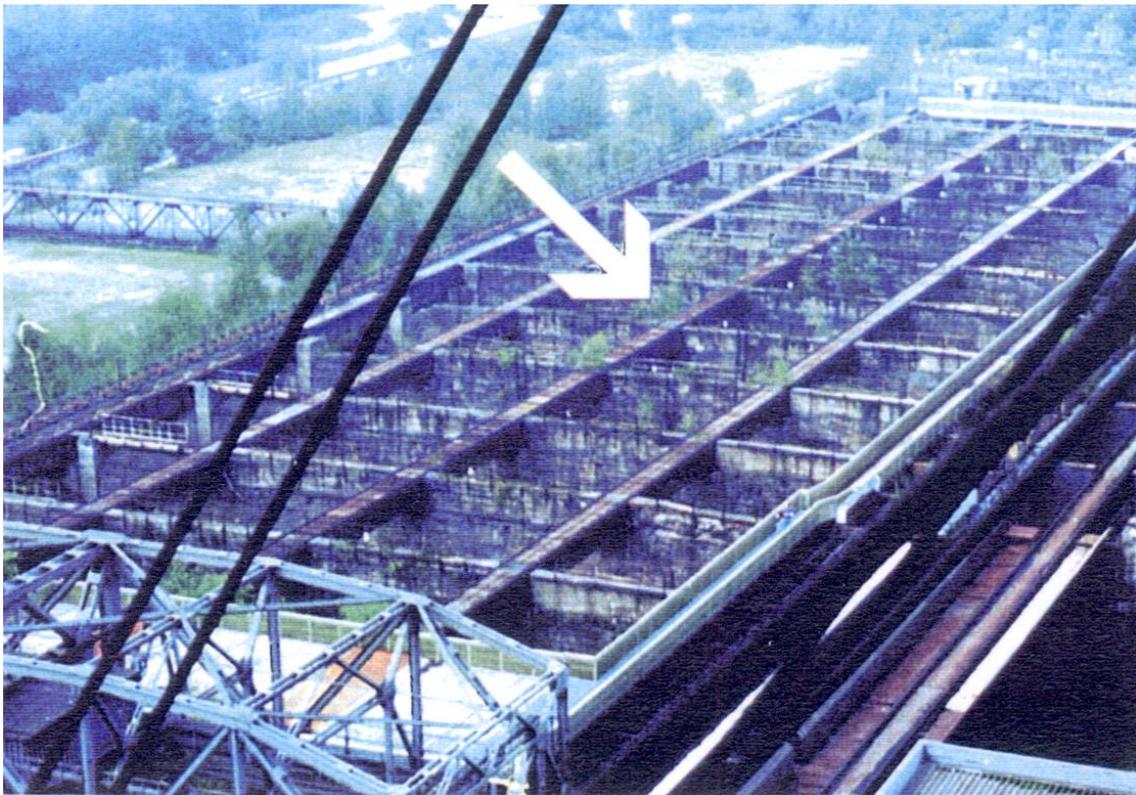


Figure 16 - Stäbler, series of industrial coal bunkers

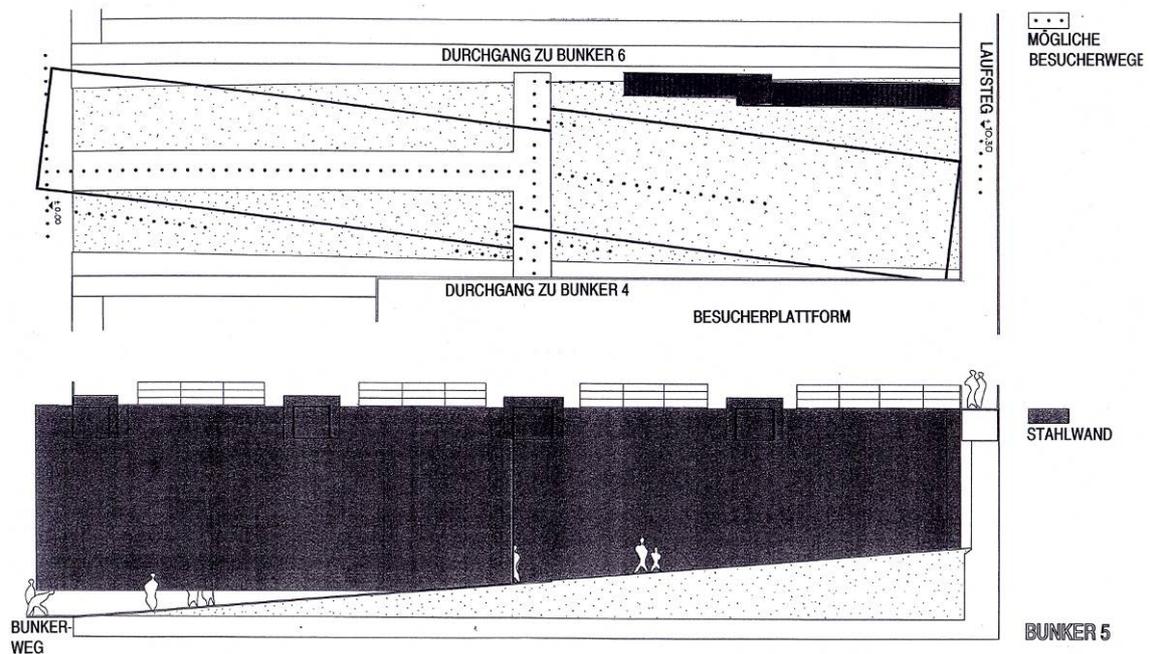


Figure 17 - Pit Koker, floor plan for bunker project

the acoustic surrounding. The “project for an artistic use of one of the erstwhile ore bunkers in the North Duisburg landscape park” is the “inter-disciplinary shaping of space through sculptural elements, color, light and music”. The walk-through sculpture, or installation, is concerned with the impressions the voluminous bunkers can evoke. The individual bunkers are separated by T-elements, visible in the photo and floor plan

here. In addition to an aerial overview, the visitor can also descend into the bunker. Here, several paths are planned that “offer different possible ways out of depressed anxiety or imprisonment”. Inclined planes offer an “exit out of the narrows”. As for



**Figure 18 - Stäbler, a bunker seen from within**

material used, aside from minor additions, “the existing materials (concrete and steel) retain their character”.<sup>128</sup>

### 3.1.6 Conclusions about the Subject

What has happened to the composing Subject? Has it turned into a **composting** Subject in the cemetery, where worms do the dirty work of digesting the remains of the dead authors and decaying music icons? Is there still a Subject at all? How has the (composing) Subject changed or stayed the same?

First, we note that its historical nature remains. We do not need a score of *kalt-erhitzt* to see the continuation of a lineage of pieces to be played on the interior of the piano, from Cowell’s *Aeolian Harp* to Fluxus actions. We can see and hear the kind of sounds that Stäbler himself once ‘composed’, or ‘decomposed’, or ‘de-con-structed’ in the material fetishism phases of *drüber...* and *Das Sichere*. But the Subject has now set his material free in a context that a composer can no longer control: the effects of weathering, the ambience of a cemetery, the resonance of a bunker. This, of course, has an impact on the value of the material that is composed. It loses importance, for it will change at every performance. The same goes for the tones and sounds, since the material that produces them will have changed; the composer cedes part of his control over them. Detailed stage instructions no longer make sense for such large masses, they are futile; the artifact of the score can no longer dictate everything to be performed. Using amateur choruses, which can never realize a score like professionals<sup>129</sup>, removes yet another aspect of control from the composing Subject. Can these characteristics be a reflection of *écriture féminine*?

She has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the other language speak. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible. (LM:889)

Second, the composing Subject has, indeed, put together something here: massive means of performance. But by assembling the massed elements of the work into an installation through which the listener (viewer) can wander, Stäbler takes another step away from the composing Subject. The listener now has the freedom, and

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<sup>128</sup> The unpublished note on this project were kindly furnished by the composer; it is reproduced in the appendix.

<sup>129</sup> This tactic was recently used by Alvin Curran in his piece *Oh Brass On The Grass Alas* for 300-500 brass band musicians composed for the Donaueschingen Festival 2006 (duration 40 min.); excerpts visible at [http://www.alvincurran.com/Curran\\_works.html](http://www.alvincurran.com/Curran_works.html) retrieved 22 Oct 2007.

the responsibility, to create her own experience of the piece. A new relationship to the listener is achieved; the hierarchy of composer/listener is reduced. Like the poststructuralist Subject, Stäbler's composing Subject as well as the listener constitute themselves in a temporal process. Moreover, by adding a version of earlier performances on video (*kalt-erhitzt*), Stäbler mixes up composing Subject and composed Object; he further opens up the notion of the Subject by accepting the challenge of working with others as co-author – there are actually two authors of the bunker sculpture (Pit Kroker). Every reduction of the composing Subject implies a deconstruction of the phallogocentric order.

Finally, the reduction of the composing Subject's control weakens the binary opposite pair 'play this; don't play that'. Because the composing Subject has ceded control, the phallogocentric hierarchic binary opposites are softened. In its long lineage, the musical composing Subject is always seen in relation to its Object. As long as this relationship remains, the opposition is intact; the status quo of Subject and Object is maintained. Thus, in reducing the Subject by the means described above, Stäbler has renounced mastery over his material. He has taken the hierarchical concept of domination out of the equation. If the subject dissolves into its background, or absorbs background, or becomes one with it, the opposition also dissolves. The barriers of the self have become porous, and new models are slipping through

Could we have studied and compared these aspects by using only to the paradigm of the poststructuralist Subject? No, because while the poststructuralist Subject has a long history of writing to draw on, it doesn't have a history of composing. Could we have studied this evolution only by examining the composing Subject? No, because that Subject has not undergone the changes reflected in the philosophical discourse of recent years. Could we have compared developments by referring only to Cixous? No, because while Cixous evokes a vision of *écriture féminine* – a new kind of writing by a new Subject – she does not plug us into music history anymore than the general poststructuralist vision does. It's not as though we have Composer A who is Subject Adorno, and Composer B who reflects Derrida's Subject, and Composer C who is Cixous'. No, we have one composer who goes through all these stages. To make our study possible, we needed to make a hybrid of Subjects, grafting one onto another, mixing up DNA, in some way making it one – just as Stäbler himself changed as Subject, living through his own evolution and development, grafting onto his trunk new experiences and new methods. So, I suggest that this hybridization, this *métissage* of theories, was necessary to treat the changed composing Subject. Stäbler's path, complex and convoluted, demands a hermeneutic approach of its own.

A *métissage* of Subject notions can combine traditions and help trace the continuum of a shimmering Subject. Stäbler started composing in a closed and structured system, sought opening for his composing vocabulary, learning to let sounds and events speak, and letting objects, musicians, amateur musicians, interact with them. Did he abandon his identity? His Own Subject? Of course not, he grew, the organic growth of the artistic Subject. We see a composer who has gone the trajectory from a phallogentric Subject dominating his notes to a pluralistic entity who trusts materials to make whatever sound they will and open to sharing the work of creating the experience with others – amateurs, listeners, architects...<sup>130</sup> The domination of composer over material is breaking down – 113 grand pianos are offered, Stäbler creates something for them. A bunker is offered, he goes to the bunker, listens to it, and makes a proposal. In doing so, Stäbler also does away with the hierarchy between listener and composer. The listener is no longer forced into a seat to listen, she can choose her place. While still com-posing, Stäbler has sought and found ways to remove elements of phallogentric Subject and of hierarchy. It would seem to be a step toward *écriture féminine* – breaking down boundaries and hierarchies; instead of creating artifacts through domination over material, working with nature, space, and amateurs.

Stäbler's roots in history are laid bare, but the experience of sound is all today. The defunct author can evidently still provide an aesthetic – scriptible – experience for the reader or concert-goer. Exactly how, is the unrelenting question the current generation of composers must wrestle with. It may be easier for young composers who have grown up with Cage, minimalism, and ambient music, but for the high Modernist generation of composers who inherited the “mantle” of composing greatness, the responsibility of furthering the (oral and written) traditions of the European composing Subject, the task of switching paradigm was, for many, paralyzing. Stäbler was one of the few of his generation who managed to stay in motion.

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<sup>130</sup> Did this opening occur at the same time Stäbler was ‘coming out’? If so, an examination of the interplay of causes based on queer theory might reveal further interesting aspects. The same question can be posed with regard to his acquaintance with non-hierarchical, Asian thought.



I began this chapter with Cixous' quote, "the struggle for mastery [...] can end only in at least one death (one master – one slave, or two non-masters ≠ two dead) – all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values" (LM:893). We can now see that the openings Stäbler has operated on language, social structure, institutions, and forms of music are part of the deconstruction of a centuries-old phallogocentric concept of music, also of New Music. These then, I suggest, are some of the insights a *lecture féminine* can reveal about the composing Subject today. Now that we have a new view of the Subject, how does that change our view of the Object?

### 3.2 MÉTISSAGE OF MATERIAL

Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnoses that would reduce your generative powers. "Common" nouns are also proper nouns that disparage your singularity by classifying it into species. Break out of the circles; don't remain within the psychoanalytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through! (LM:892)

When we consider a composition, we consider not only the composing Subject, but also the Object of composition: musical material. Some passing remarks on musical material have already been made in the sections above. In this section, I will first sketch the concept of musical material as Stäbler received it<sup>131</sup>, then I will examine specific points of Cixous' theory relevant to musical material in Stäbler's works. We will take a second look at *drüber...* and *Das Sichere*, investigating their musical material as well as in *Fotomusik* (1997). To conclude, I will suggest a further path for the development of a notion of musical material based on Cixous' thought that will be picked up again in the final chapter on Miss Kittin.

#### 3.2.1 Adorno's Concept of Musical Material

In 1854, Eduard Hanslick proposed that the matter at the composing Subject's disposal was *musical* material: tones, melody, harmony, rhythm, and color. Hanslick also pro-

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<sup>131</sup> A complete and excellent account can be found in Paddison (2004, 1993). Excellent recent partial treatments include: serialism critique and concept of beauty in Nonnenmann (2000: 233-246); aesthetics in the 50s in Dahlhaus (1985); Adorno and postwar music in Zagorski (2005) and Borio (1987); the crisis of musical material in Borio (1994) and Dahlhaus (1984db); autonomy in Wellmer (2005); and new aspects of musical material in Essl (1994 and 1992).

posed an aesthetic, an a priori value based music and beauty that grew out of the musical canon of the time:

Frägt sich nun, was mit diesem Tonmaterial ausgedrückt werden soll, so lautet die Antwort: Musikalische Ideen. Eine vollständig zur Erscheinung gebrachte musikalische Idee aber ist bereits selbstständiges Schöne, ist Selbstzweck und keineswegs erst wieder Mittel oder Material zur Darstellung von Gefühlen und Gedanken.<sup>132</sup>

In the evolution of Hanslick's notion of musical material toward Adorno's, Arnold Schoenberg's influence (from his *Harmonielehre*, 1911) makes itself felt.

What Schoenberg brings to bear on the notion of the 'natural' material of music is the concept of historical evolution and of historical necessity. [...] Implied in Schoenberg's position is the idea that the material [...] is already 'pre-formed' and contains the necessity to go beyond its present stage of development in order to become more appropriate to the expressive needs of the creative Subject<sup>133</sup> (Paddison 1993:71-72).

Adorno concretized his concept of material in the debate (1929 - 1932) with Ernst Krenek.<sup>134</sup>

TA: Wenn wir von Arbeitsproblemen des Komponisten reden, so haben wir dabei nicht technische Einzelaufgaben im Auge und nicht solche der individuellen Verfahrungsweise, sondern möchten die prinzipiellen Bedingungen diskutieren, unter denen eine fruchtbare Arbeit des Komponisten heute überhaupt zu allererst beginnen kann. Diese Bedingungen sind selbstverständlich nicht ausschließend musikalischer Art, sondern enthalten notwendig Kategorien der allgemeinen Zeitsituation in sich. Diese allgemeinen, vorwiegend soziologischen Momente aber werden konkret fasslich und messbar allein im musikalischen Material. Das Material bietet gewissermaßen den Schauplatz, auf dem sich die geistigen Entscheidungen der Musik vollziehen, auch wenn sie ihrem Ursprung nach über das Materialbereich hinausweisen.

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<sup>132</sup> "If we now ask, what is to be expressed with this musical material, the answer is: Musical ideas. A fully realized musical idea, however, is already something beautiful by itself, is its own purpose, and is in no way merely means or material for the representation of feelings and thoughts" (Hanslick 1854: 31; original German version available online at: <http://www.koelnklavier.de/quellen/hanslick/index.html>).

<sup>133</sup> Although not a central concern of this investigation, I have tried to ascertain to what extent Schoenberg may have had acquaintance with Sigmund Freud's concept of the self (Subjekt). Aside from much conjecture and anecdotal remarks, I was unable to find any reference directly joining the two, including the list of the contents of Schoenberg's library, which is available online [http://www.schoenberg.at/6\\_archiv/books/books\\_f\\_e.htm](http://www.schoenberg.at/6_archiv/books/books_f_e.htm) retrieved 29 Aug 2007.

<sup>134</sup> This debate, comprised of meetings, letters, articles, and radio talks, is well documented in "The Adorno-Krenek Debate (in Paddison 1993: 81-97).

EK: Hier wäre zu fragen, in welcher Weise sich die außermusikalischen Bedingungen im Material selbst auswirken. Man muss sich zunächst über den Begriff des Materials verständigen. Ich würde darunter verstehen: die Gesamtheit aller musikalischen Ausdrucksmittel: also Harmonik, Rhythmik und Melodik, so wie sie als natürliche Gegebenheiten, als Möglichkeiten des Komponierens zu jeder Zeit vorfindlich sind. [...]

TA: Die Frage nach der Abhängigkeit des Materials von außermusikalischen Bedingungen setzt meines Erachtens eine etwas andere Fassung des Materialbegriffs selbst voraus. Wenn Sie den Begriff des Materials vom bloßen objektiven Naturmaterial abheben und dem menschlichen Bewusstsein unterstellen, dann ist es nicht zugänglich, ihn gänzlich von der Geschichte des menschlichen Bewusstseins loszureißen. Für Bewusstsein gibt es kein reines Naturmaterial, sondern nur geschichtliches Material. [...] Die Möglichkeiten des Komponierens enthalten also bereits den Niederschlag von Geschichte in sich (187-188).<sup>135</sup>

In the exchange above we can easily follow the way Adorno, resisting Krenek's more limited model of musical material, resets the boundaries of the term to include extra-musical sociological aspects and sedimented history.

Finally, in his *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (1949), Adorno expounded at length on his concept of 'musical material'. Going far beyond Hanslick's notion of "material for the representation of feelings and thoughts" and incorporating Schoenberg's notion of historical necessity, he aggregated a concept that tightly interwove musical, social, philosophical, political, and historical aspects and differentiated between natural matter ('Stoff') and musical material. History leaves its deposit in all compositional possibilities. A chord cannot be composed today in the same way it was composed 300 years ago,

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<sup>135</sup> "TA: When we speak of the working problems of the composer, we are not referring to technical exercises or individual practices. Instead, we seek to discuss the fundamental conditions under which the composer's fruitful work can begin at all. These conditions are, of course, not only musical; they necessarily contain categories of the general situation of the times. These general, predominantly sociological aspects, however, are concretely graspable and measurable only in the musical material. Material is, to a certain extent, the stage on which the intellectual decisions of music are made, even though the origins of these decisions may reach beyond the area of material.

EK: It should be asked here in what way the extra-musical conditions have an effect on the material itself. One must first agree upon the meaning of the term material. I understand it as the totality of all forms of musical expressions: harmony, rhythm, and melody, as they are to be found at any time as natural occurrences, as possibilities for composing.

TA: In my opinion, the question regarding the dependence of the material on extra-musical conditions presupposes a somewhat different concept of the term material. If you separate the term material from mere objective natural material and subject it to human consciousness, then it is not possible to wrench it out completely from the history of human consciousness. For consciousness, there is no pure natural material, rather only historical material. [...] Thus, the possibilities for composing already contain the sediment of history within them." "Arbeitsprobleme des Komponisten. Gespräch über Musik und soziale Situation" [Working Problems of the Composer. Conversation on Music and Social Situation] in (Adorno 1974: 187-193; originally published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 10 Dec 1930).

perhaps not at all. For human consciousness, there is no pure natural material, only historical material, and this material has a ‘tendency’ – “nichts Geringeres als der musikalische Weltgeist”<sup>136</sup> (Dahlhaus 1985:10).

### 3.2.2 Conflict with the Serialists

After World War II, however, there was history that composers weren’t eager to see sedimented in their work. On the contrary, they sought creative new ways to avoid historical deposits, choosing means like chance or serialism to do so. In “The Aging of New Music” (1954<sup>137</sup>), Adorno excoriated what he perceived as the “total rationalization” of the Darmstadt serialists, whom he accused of replacing “subjectivity” with “objective” serial means that eliminated every imaginable compositional freedom (187). Adorno understands that “Something in the total rationalization of music seems to appeal strongly to young people. They find their own reflection in the new widespread allergy toward every kind of expression” (187), but for him their means are pure “caprice” (187), and he is extremely critical of them. He finds that at times Boulez:

disavows subjectivity altogether [...] He and his disciples [...] have above all attempted to bring rhythm under the strict domination of twelve-tone procedure, and ultimately to replace composition altogether with an objective-calculatory ordering of intervals, pitches, long and short durations, degrees of loudness; an integral rationalization such as has never before been envisaged in music (187).

In similar fashion, an overemphasis on matter had almost led Webern in his late works to abandon meaningful musical material:

These last works attempt to organize the musical-linguistic means so entirely in accordance with the new subject-matter, the twelve-tone rows, that he occasionally comes very close to renouncing the musical material altogether and reducing music to naked processes in the material (187).

But the young composer generation has taken things even further, and in “integral rationalization” (serialism) lurks the demon and enemy of enlightenment, the irrational. The young composers have an:

infatuation with the material along with blindness toward what is made out of it resulting from the fiction that the material speaks for itself [...] Something purely ir-

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<sup>136</sup> “Nothing less than the world-spirit of music”.

<sup>137</sup> Page references are to the English edition by R. Leppert (2002).

rational is hidden in the midst of rationalization, a confidence in the meaningfulness of abstract material, in which the subject fails to recognize that it, itself, releases the meaning from the material. The subject is blinded by the hope that those materials might lead it out of the exile of its own subjectivity (189).

In his warning about the dangers of rationalizing material, Adorno has placed his finger on the site of the wound – what is the relationship between Subject and Object? It is up to the Subject to “release the meaning from the material”, to create and shape it. In this way, it fulfills Adorno’s Hegelian concept of the Subject, which objectifies itself as sedimented history in the Object. We glimpse here the overburdened dialectic between Subject and Object as poetics – as part of the practice of writing<sup>138</sup>; and we also glimpse a foretaste of Cixous’ “write yourself”, more precisely, write your *body*, to which we shall return in our last chapter. For Adorno, the Subject had failed as a shaper of material and history; it was “blinded” and cherished an “inflated idea of the material” (189). If Adorno’s Subject was not dead, it was at best moribund.

### 3.2.3 Material Aporia

The moribund composing Subject symbolized the theoretical aporia of serialism evoked by Adorno in 1954. The situation was complicated even further by a grave misunderstanding. While this is not the place to trace its details (cf. Zagorski 2005:689 ff., Boissière 1999, and Solomos 1996), it should at least be acknowledged; for, every attempt to analyze the developments that followed in the 70s will bump into it: serial composers *misread* Adorno’s concept. According to Zagorski’s account,

[P]aradoxically, it was largely their misreading of the conception of history presented in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* that induced them to equate serialism (and later, aleatory principles) with an objective historical dictate. This equation was made, in part, via the concept of musical material: Particular materials – that is, compositional techniques – were seen to be more legitimate because of their correspondence to the perceived state of history. But these composers ran afoul of the *objektiver Geist*, Adorno would claim, because they simply accepted their systems and did not direct their own subjective needs against the compositional tradition that history had bequeathed to them (689).

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<sup>138</sup> Lachenmann adept M. Hidalgo made poetics the theme of his Triple Concerto *Al Componer* [While Composing] 1983/86.

A new kind of pre-formed material and a new attitude toward this musical material rendered null the Subject's possibility of agency. If the Subject no longer had the will to put notes together, the result was no longer "subjective" music, rather "objective", in the negative sense; it was the music of "pointillist constructivists" (188). But what Adorno saw as negative – objective composing – came in the post-war era with its growing fascination and awe of science to be regarded as positive. This opaque state of music's material ultimately became critical, and even Adorno would call for clarity:

Contemporary aesthetics is dominated by the controversy over whether it is subjective or objective. These terms, however, are equivocal. Various, the controversy may focus on the conclusion drawn from subjective reactions to artworks, in contrast to the *intention recta* toward them – the *intention recta* being considered pre-critical according to the current schema of epistemology. Or, the two concepts could refer to the primacy of objective or subject elements in the artworks themselves, in keeping, for instance, with the distinction made in the history of ideas between classical and romantic. Or, lastly, the issue may be the objectivity of aesthetic judgment of taste. These various meanings need to be distinguished from each other. [...] (Adorno [1970] 2002: "Subject-Object" 163)

Adorno's previous views no longer squared with what was being composed in the late 50s and early 60s, and he was obliged to refine his concept of musical material. He did so in the essay discussed in the Introduction above, "Art and the Arts" (1966), as well as in the 1961 lecture held at Darmstadt, "Vers une musique informelle". Adorno recognized that serial and post-serial music seem to be based on a fundamentally different kind of temporal perception, which he had decried in 1954. And with his notion of musique *informelle* (which he expressly refused to define) he suggested a kind of music that cast off all abstract, inflexible external forms. Such an emancipated music would also banish all traces of schemata (such as composition matrices) in its core. But therein lay a new problem. Such residues enable the creation of musical context, even though they may seem annoyingly out of place as foreign bodies in the music. If excessive serial objectivity had reduced the composer's subjective role, too much subjectivity would remove the basis for creating musical meaning. Such were the contradictions and restrictions facing music (composition). As Marcus Zagorski sums up, "A musique informelle, as Adorno conceives it, is tasked with striking a balance. It must preserve the image of freedom but simultaneously embody the rationalized character of postwar musical material. It must find a way to give an 'objectively compelling' form to freedom, and yet avoid the tyranny of absolute systems" (Zagorski:698).

The paradigm was shifting, Adorno's notion of musical material was deconstructing itself, as mentioned above in the example of his use of the term *Verfransung* (cf. p. 28 above). Paddison traces this process in "The disintegration of Musical Material" (the last chapter of 1993:263-278). According to Paddison's consideration, Adorno's own concept of the tendency of material ultimately leads to its disintegration.

This leads to a reconsideration of Adorno's concepts of material and of form in relation to his theory of the avant-garde, in the context of the '*decline of modernism*' (264, my emphasis).

Paddison also points out that Adorno "had foreseen the decline of the avant-garde quite early on", possibly as early as 1932 (272). Reading in the *Aesthetic Theory* today, one week after the death of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Adorno's formulation is poignant:

It is thinkable, and not merely an abstract possibility, that great music – a late development – was possible only during a limited phase of humanity. The revolt of art, teleologically posited in its "attitude to objectivity" toward the historical world, has become a revolt against art; it is futile to prophesy whether art will survive it (3).

### 3.2.4 New Technologies and Influences

What happened then? Ligeti articulated the motion and direction necessary for moving forward:

Attempting to draw practical consequences [...] Ligeti claims that the task now (in 1966) is to learn how to move beyond the compositional methods of the past 15 years – to move beyond the mere structure to a form that respects musical *perception*. And he explicitly links this task to material, stating, "The question is: Is it possible to begin the composition where one should actually begin? – and that is *not* with material"<sup>139</sup> (Zagorski 2005:693; my emphases).

In the decades of the 60s through the 80s, the received notion of musical material had become so complicated, it seemed unnecessarily abstruse to young composers. Moreover, time had granted them the distance to view serialism differently – it was the 'grace of being born later'.<sup>140</sup> The aesthetics community could hardly continue to cling to the myth of a unified viewpoint; technology, speed, and nascent globalization were

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<sup>139</sup> Zagorski's quote: Adorno, et al., "Arbeitsgespräch" (in Metzger, 1999:325).

<sup>140</sup> This phrase ["die Gnade der späten Geburt"] was coined by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1984 and signals relief at being too young during the Third Reich to have made any decisions or commitments concerning it.

turning an old pre-war vision into a prismatic view: Now, multiple pathways opened, incorporating developments and personalities in various 'scenes' and countries.

On the path of 'serious' music, particularly in Western Europe, composers readily followed Ligeti's lead. They easily developed a 'subjective', more liberal way of composing using serial means; the notion of the composing Subject lost importance. For some composers, like Brian Ferneyhough, this process lasted long: "Certainly since the onset of the 1980s, I have sought to confront and reformulate the unfruitful pseudo-dichotomy of serial (or other) forms of order as against supposedly more subjective and spontaneous means of fixing musical meaning which lies at the heart of Adorno's concerns".<sup>141</sup>

Another pathway obviously opened through experimental tape, computers, and then microelectronics. Technologies were emerging, including visual and multimedia, that produced new kinds of matter (or material?). These means had a profound impact on ideas concerning the material at the composer's disposal.<sup>142</sup> In addition, with heightened awareness of acoustics and how sound waves act on the ear, music perception and cognition won prominence, a path that would pave the way for other considerations, like the new vistas neuroscience is opening today.

Yet another way of conceiving musical material evolved through currents involving Asian thought at their outset (Chinese Tao and *I Ching*; Japanese Zen). These philosophies sought to overcome dualities such as Subject/Object or music/noise, not to explain or defend them. Already in 1937, Cage had declared all sounds to be music. Let matter be matter and material be material. These currents of thought, combined with visual expressionist movements gaining influence on music, gave new importance to the spontaneous gesture, which in turn created fertile ground for the appearance of Fluxus on both sides of the Atlantic. Finally, through Fluxus Happenings, performance and different kinds of theater enjoyed a renaissance<sup>143</sup>. Admittedly, a small contingent of composers seemed to 'drop out' of what was once a main stream of composing. No-no performed concerts in factories; Boulez conducted and constructed elite music institutions; Harry Partch built instruments and Conlon Nancarrow made aesthetic

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<sup>141</sup> Brian Ferneyhough, "Adorno Presentation" (1998) available online at <http://www.entretemps.asso.fr/Adorno/Informel/Ferneyhough.htm>, retrieved 25 Dec 2007.

<sup>142</sup> As mentioned above, Don Ihde is one of the leading philosophers working on the topic of a philosophy of technology. Eberhard Hüppe, in his *Ästhetische Technologie in der Musik* (1994), devotes a long chapter to Adorno's concept of material and his cultural discourse. In their philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari indirectly touch on topics that lead into a philosophy of technology and music. We should not fail to mention the cyberfeminist icon Donna Haraway (especially 1991); but her treatments of technology and the body go far beyond the consideration here of the body in multimedia works.

<sup>143</sup> This has been traced in FeiBt (1997).

experiments using the player piano; Lou Harrison immersed himself in Gamelan; the New York School seemed to write quietly for itself and a few *conoscenti*, and so on.

Further pathways would soon explore the ‘process’ character of music and form, or the distanced, ironic, manipulated quotation of past musical vernaculars as ‘postmodern music.’ At the time, all of these – sounds, the new generated tones, new ‘isms,’ and spontaneous actions – seemed devoid of historical references or gestures, or they played deliberately with them, thereby escaping the yoke of historical tendency. But in retrospect, did they? For today, in the historical continuum of technological and performative possibilities, the question raises its head once again: What were all these new music-makers making their music and their multimedia art out of, if not musical material?

This spectacular panoply of pathways overwhelmed the academic community, and the multiplicity of its points of view splintered any remains of – or interest in – the notion of musical material. Adorno was not blind to these developments. In his posthumous *Aesthetic Theory* he conceded,

“Along with the categories, the materials too have lost their a priori value”  
(1970/2002:16).

Material’s decline now became canonic. In 1984, Carl Dahlhaus observed a rejection of material thinking – albeit with a question mark (Dahlhaus 1984). In 1987, Heinz-Klaus Metzger suggested that “there is no longer any material, if indeed there ever was any” (quoted in Paddison:274). In 1990, a no lesser authority than Adorno’s pupil Clytus Gottwald saw the logical necessity of abandoning Adorno’s notion of the tendency of material (Gottwald:39). And with his article written in 1992, “Material. On the Crisis of a Musical Category”, published in the last issue to appear of the venerable series *Darmstädter Beiträge* (1994), Borio hammered the last nail in its coffin. It became quiet on the material front. Was material decomposing? Was it returning to *Stoff*, to natural matter?

I do not see the question as a binary pair of options pitted against one another, as Dahlhaus did in 1984: “Adorno’s concept of material is a historical category, whereas Cage’s idea of matter is a natural one” (1987:277). More plausible from my viewpoint are interpretations like the disintegration of material described by Paddison above, leading to a dialectic sublation (*Aufhebung*) that might take material to a new level, or poststructuralism breaking in.

The answer to the question I posed above – “What were they composing with if not musical material” – is, “Of course it was still material, what else?” History had not come to an end, as American neo-conservative philosopher Francis Fukuyama had

postulated in 1992. Composers had not suddenly thrown over the notion of material and returned to matter, although in experiments with *musique concrète*, the *objets trouvés* were certainly partially regarded as matter. But why, in the musicological discourse, was the notion of musical material simply abandoned, and not modified to reflect the current states of musical creation? Rejection of the law of the fathers, overburdened terminology, other things to do... The catalogue of meaning Adorno had described in the *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, accurate at the time, now had become too burdensome. Situations, questions, problems no longer corresponded to those in the 50s and 60s.

Seen today, many interpreters (including myself) perceive indicators pointing at one thing: the necessity of redefining a concept of material – an expanded or extended concept, to quote Großmann's thought; a more supple concept; one that, without losing its own lineage and historical identity, without relinquishing its powerful capacity to reflect the transport of the politico-social into the musical material, would be capable of taking other aspects into account, first and foremost the body. The body that performs, the body that perceives and hears, and not just in the relationship of Subject/Object. As the composing Subject began to perform with the body<sup>144</sup>, the body became musical matter and the Subject – for better or worse – shaped it into material. As for the electronic composer who was creating, generating new matter for the first time – she, too, needed a new concept to define her relationship to the technology employed. A concept uniting composing Subject and composed material, a concept of the body: theoretically, the concept arrived from the cognitive sciences in the 90s with 'embodiment'. New postphenomenological approaches might expand our concept of musical material to include technology.

If the 'performing body' is one of the main materials of today's composer, why hasn't that body been grafted onto the trunk of musical material, to put it colloquially? How can we think material today and how the body, with all of its theory and history? For many, these are the questions of the hour. But before we try to point at some possible paths in the last chapter, let us return to Gerhard Stäbler in the 60s. Stäbler came of age in the aporetic situation of the 60s, with its schizoid concept of musical material. Let us see how the young composer confronted the notions before him.

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<sup>144</sup> Or more accurately, 'recommenced' – picking up the age-old traditions of troubadours, improvising church musicians, Romantic virtuosi, and jazz artists, for example.

### 3.2.5 Stäbler's Reaction

Stäbler came onto the scene at a moment when the constraints of serial composition with its notion of musical material had loosened and the new currents described above were coming into view. The influence of serialism, Artaud, Paik, Cage, Fluxus, and later, concept and visual art were all shaping Stäbler's attitude toward musical material. Adorno's notion did not seem adaptable to the demands made on it. Stäbler recounts having heard of Adorno in high school and having read him at conservatory (1968-73); but he became familiar with Adorno's thought through friendship with that icon of enlightened Modernism, Heinz Klaus Metzger, who had made Adorno's acquaintance at the Darmstadt Ferienkurse. Stäbler found Adorno's "radicalism impressive"; but as Hermann Danuser puts it, for Stäbler, the concept of musical material no longer sufficed<sup>145</sup>. Martin Iddon describes in his finely researched article how Stäbler was among the first movers who protested against the established hierarchy in Darmstadt (in Attinello and Shintani, work in progress); nevertheless, Stäbler never turned his back on Darmstadt and has continued to work there to this day. Gradually, Stäbler elaborated his own poetics with one foot in Modernism and one in musical performance and other new practices, a dialectic stance that continues to nourish his thought and to enrich deeply his composing vocabulary to this day. In doing so, Stäbler – along with many other composers – contributed over the years to the development of an emancipated notion of musical material, one that has also changed notions of subjectivity.

Let us take another look at Stäbler's opus 1, *drüber...* We saw above that it was firmly rooted in history, but allowed freedom in certain elements of notation and staging. How might we understand its instrumentation for "8 screamers"? On the one hand, Stäbler constructs extremely differentiated and defined sounds for mouth and throat noises and creates parameters for them in serial tradition, which "radically fit into a musical system" (Björn, KDG). They remind us of the material fetishism of the late 60s, epitomized by Lachenmann's experiments with musical material – his *musique concrète instrumentale* – utilizing similar parameterization. The material notated in the score displays two tendencies. On the one hand, the material is highly differentiated and notated in the serial lineage; but on the other hand, it has a tendency away from defined material, for it employs emotions and body sounds that, by their nature, are antithetical to the idea of mathematical parameterization. Screaming as conundrum.

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<sup>145</sup> Danuser, "Laudatio" in: Attinello, P. (2015) (25).

Does the screaming seek to dash an endless dialectic of styles? Is it the expression of an emotional reaction to permutation?

<p><b>Zur Notation</b> <b>Notation</b></p> <p>AS Aktive Schreier <i>active screamer</i></p> <p>Vcl. Violoncello</p> <p>⊖ Tonband <i>tape</i></p> <p>□<sub>1</sub> = L1 Lautsprecher <i>loudspeakers</i></p> <p>□<sub>2</sub> = L2</p> <p>⊙ Mikrophon <i>microphone</i></p> <p>◀ Luft einatmen (ziehen) <i>inhale</i></p> <p>▶ ausatmen <i>exhale</i></p> <p>⊕ hauchen <i>light breath</i></p> <p>⊕ pressen <i>tense (strained) breath</i></p> <p>* geräuschhaft <i>noisy</i></p> <p>Zw. Zwerchfell <i>diaphragm</i></p> <p>Z. Zunge <i>tounge</i></p> <p>⊕ Nase <i>nose</i></p> <p>⊖</p>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>○</td> <td>offener</td> <td rowspan="3">} Mund mouth</td> </tr> <tr> <td>○</td> <td>flacher</td> </tr> <tr> <td>○</td> <td>partly open</td> </tr> <tr> <td>●</td> <td>geschlossener</td> <td rowspan="2">} closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>●</td> <td>closed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☞</td> <td>Innenhand</td> <td rowspan="3">} palm of the hand</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☞</td> <td>Außenhand</td> </tr> <tr> <td>☞</td> <td>back of the hand</td> </tr> <tr> <td>St.</td> <td>Stimme</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>t.St.</td> <td>tiefe</td> <td rowspan="3">} Stimmlage voice range</td> </tr> <tr> <td>m.St.</td> <td>mittlere</td> </tr> <tr> <td>h.St.</td> <td>hohe</td> </tr> <tr> <td>o</td> <td>Falsett oder Fistelstimme</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>s.v.</td> <td>ohne Stimme = stimmlos</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>c.v.</td> <td>mit Stimme = Stimmhaft</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stb.</td> <td>Stimmbänder</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gl.</td> <td>Glottisschlag</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>~</td> <td>nasal</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Br.</td> <td>Brustresonanz (vorwiegend)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>~~~~~</td> <td>Stimmband-Knarren</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>vibrate vocal chords</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	○	offener	} Mund mouth	○	flacher	○	partly open	●	geschlossener	} closed	●	closed	☞	Innenhand	} palm of the hand	☞	Außenhand	☞	back of the hand	St.	Stimme		t.St.	tiefe	} Stimmlage voice range	m.St.	mittlere	h.St.	hohe	o	Falsett oder Fistelstimme		s.v.	ohne Stimme = stimmlos		c.v.	mit Stimme = Stimmhaft		Stb.	Stimmbänder		Gl.	Glottisschlag		~	nasal		Br.	Brustresonanz (vorwiegend)		~~~~~	Stimmband-Knarren			vibrate vocal chords	
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Figure 19 - Stäbler *drüber...*, musical material

*drüber...* uses the body not just as highly trained, even reified musical instrument, it also uses bodily *sons trouvés* (cough, gasp, spit noises).

The score shows a series of notes on a staff with various dynamics and performance instructions. Key elements include:
 

- Measure 4: *Z. weit zurückziehen. Pull tongue far back.* with dynamics *f*, *ff*, *mf*, *ff*, *sfz*.
- Measure 5: *schr t. St. very low voice.* with dynamics *p*, *fff*, *pp*.
- Measure 6: *(durch Schnute) (through mouth)* with dynamic *ff*.
- Measure 7: *husten cough c.v.* with dynamic *pp*.
- Measure 8: *ff*.
- Measure 9: *f p sfz*.

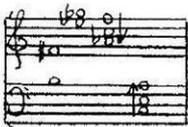
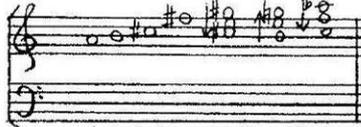
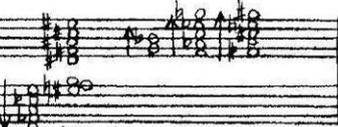
Figure 20 - Stäbler *drüber...*, deployment of material, penultimate page of score

Is it questioning handed-down (erroneous) concepts of *bel canto* and thereby tradition itself? Or simply proposing something new? The body is acknowledged as a body, not just as a tone-producing machine; the critique is implicit. We recall the dots of ellipsis in the title. Stäbler is moving from the past “to another side”. But where is he headed?

Ten years later, as we saw above, the work *Das Sichere ist nicht sicher* seems to indicate that Stäbler was headed nowhere but ‘back to Modernism’. Stäbler is con-

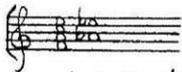
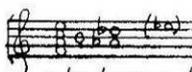
certainly working within the framework of musical material as it was understood at the time; and the work represents, by Stäbler's own avowal, the apogee of his use of structured material in a composition. With regard both to pitch and to timbre, he has begun with detailed material analysis and worked out a precise palette of material for composing. Pitch material is taken from the three fundamentals of the piece – d/g/b – and their partials. This material is then arranged into 'layers' and 'knots' which form the 'stock' of pitches and chords used throughout the piece. The stocks are displayed in the example below.

Material der Schichten

Teil I	Teil II	Teil III
 <p>5./7. Ober-/Unterton</p>	 <p>(mit Resten aus I zu Beginn) 10./11./13.-15. Ober-/Unterton</p>	 <p>(Überlappungen aus I) 17./19.-23./25./26./28.-31. Ober-/Unterton</p>

In den Schichten fehlen die Ober- und Untertöne, die den Grundfrequenzen entsprechen.

Material der Knoten

Teil I	Teil II	Teil III	Teil IV
 <p>3./6./9. Ober-/Unterton</p>	<p>= </p> <p>6./12./18. Ober-/Unterton</p>	 <p>9./18./27. Ober-/Unterton</p>	

Auch in den Knoten sind die Ober- und Untertöne weggelassen, die den Grundfrequenzen entsprechen.

**Figure 21 - Stäbler, *Das Sichere* (page 'b')**

This development of the overtone series with its partials is in a line with Schoenberg's remarks on *Klangfarbe* as an extension of harmony (*Harmonielehre*:503) and takes into account later post-serial work on timbre as material by the spectral composers in the 70s and 80s. In addition to this pre-formation of pitch-material, Stäbler has also worked out a spectrum of attacks and articulations for the wind instruments, reaching from diaphragm attack to flutter-tongue. This extreme differentiation of attack is evidence of the evolution of a further post-serial technique characteristic of the 70s – parameterization of attack – although Stäbler here, as elsewhere, shies away from total serialism; in-

stead, he creates material via matrices and other means.<sup>146</sup> Obviously, Stäbler has returned to a traditional concept of musical material (pitch and timbre),

Zw.	Zwerchfellstoß
Gl.	Glottisschlag
H◇	mit geringem Druck, hauchen
H◊	mit mittlerem Druck
H◆	mit hohem Druck, pressen
L◇	mit kleiner Luftmenge
L◊	mit mittelstarker Luftmenge
L◆	mit großer Luftmenge
[ki]	Artikulationssilbe
●	mit engem, gespannten Ansatz, hart
○	mit engem, losen Ansatz
●	mit weitem, gespannten Ansatz
○	mit weitem, loserem Ansatz
*	geräuschhaft, Geräusch, mit Geräuschanteil
Flz.	Flatterzunge

**Figure 22 - Stäbler, *Das Sichere* (page 'e')**

making permutational use of it in line with the historical development of material, even extending his material possibilities by inclusion of tape. The combination of these techniques is visible in the score (4) on the next page.

But having already taken the step he did in *drüber...*, are the sedimented history and historical tendency we see here still an accurate reflection of the contemporary situation? Or, was this 'step backward' not a regression? *Das Sichere ist nicht sicher* – What's Sure Isn't Sure: What was once a sure thing is no longer a guarantee, neither for musical-philosophical accuracy, nor for historical relevance. Regression/progress, progress/regression – in a clinch with binary opposites, the Modernist could only extract himself by breaking away from the system.<sup>147</sup> Although the sediment of structured material remained a constant in differing degrees in almost all of Stäbler's later works, I suggest in this narrative of his development that, in *Das Sichere ist nicht sicher*, Stäbler takes a last draught of Modernism before plunging into the direction hinted at in *drüber...*: using the body as transport to other materials and other subjectivities.

<sup>146</sup> Like his use of isorhythmic chord rows, tone rows and retrogrades in the opera *CassandraComplex*, as demonstrated and analyzed in Zuber (1999).

<sup>147</sup> As Attinello also concluded in "Imploding the System: Kagel and the Deconstruction of Modernism" in Lochhead and Auner (eds., 2002) pp. 263-285.



We now jump ahead to the work *Fotomusik* for organ, photos, video, and voice, created with photographer Wonge Bergmann for a Hessian Broadcasting film (1997; please see excerpts on YouTube<sup>148</sup>).



**Figure 24 - *Fotomusik*, Stäbler screaming**

Here, the body is not just recognized as a bodily *objet trouvé*, not only are the sounds that come out of the head used as permutable material; instead, the whole body with all its connotations is employed in the piece.

Die Performance am Fernsehturm war eine direkte Reaktion auf dieses phallische Symbol, Symbol der Hypertechnik [...] Die Reaktionen, die ich auf der Orgel gespielt habe, waren Reaktionen auf die Bilder, die ich davon sah<sup>149</sup>.

For the unspecialized musician, the term ‘performance art’ may be confusing, since every representation of a work that a musician does is referred to as a ‘performance’. Where does the difference lie? Simplistically said, ‘performance art’ is a historical term that associates spontaneous acts (of socio-political nature in the 60s), which are separated from a pre-written score or theater work. Performance art had a difficult go in mainstream musical venues, and it went quickly out of fashion there; even in experimental music circles, it was soon replaced by formats, such as technological concerts (acousmatic, electronic music), that made fewer demands on the performing ‘apparatus’ of conventional theaters. But it continued to grow in visual art circles, and with the advent of laptop computer technology, the two currents converged.

Stäbler no longer needs to ‘score’ screams for 8 screamers; he has acquired trust in his own body and reactions. Drawing on his own compositional history, as described above, the reaction of the body is then utilized as one of the materials of the piece. This is carried further in the second part of the work.

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<sup>148</sup> URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6oxYoZfVsA> 30 Dec 2007.

<sup>149</sup> “The performance at the TV tower was a direct reaction to this phallic symbol, symbol of hyper-technology [...] The reactions that I played at the organ were reactions to the pictures I saw of it” (film).



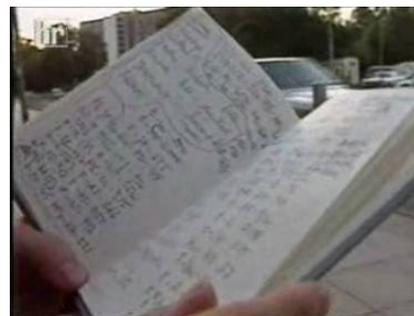
**Figure 25 - *Fotomusik*, Stäbler performing organ part**

In the second part, Stäbler uses his body as a kind of recorder, to imitate and define the sounds he hears at a particular location, which are then “translated into music”.



**Figure 26 - Stäbler ‘recording’ sounds with his body**

The sounds Stäbler has captured with his body at a particular location are noted.



**Figure 27 - Stäbler noting sounds**

Stäbler then translates these notes into “musical parameters – dynamics, tempo or tonal density” (HR film). (The sounds can also incorporate words or consonants, different carriers of meaning, even license plates.) When they are composed and then performed, the sounds that are performed have been literally inscribed into his body, into his neural networks, at the site where they were initially heard. The sounds bear the stamp of the place and moment where they were captured.



**Figure 28 - Stäbler performing noted, composed sounds**

Paradoxical as it may seem, we see that Stäbler's approach to performance is firmly rooted in the *écriture* of musical material. Types of notation we saw in the 70s, whether in the marginal group of works discussed here or in more mainstream works, reappear. The score has never disappeared. Stäbler incorporates performance art and improvisation but never completely rejects the score. Seen in this way, the line of development flowing from *drüber...* is continuous and organic. In decades of painstaking development of notation and form, Stäbler has rescued, or brought over the notions from music history into the present. It is with this material, then, that he composes. Is it *material*? Or *matter*? Or is it expanded (expanding) material? Is Stäbler writing his body? Or writing himself with the body? Stäbler takes an interactive approach to material. He doesn't try to objectify his own spirit, unless his screaming can be considered the 'objectification' of his spirit. He goes to where noise manifests the society of its own accord, combining the various kinds of matter, including the matter of his body at his disposal. In the inventive transformation of the various matters into compositional stuff, he makes matter into musical material. This is a different concept of material.

This style did not suddenly appear in Stäbler's *œuvre*. One could easily trace its emergence through other works that use the body and the senses in other novel ways, like the 'aroma works': *Geruchsmusik*, *theatralische Musik mit Zwiebel-, Kaffee- und Gewürzdüften* [*Aroma Music*, theatrical music with the scent of onions, coffee, and spices] (1969); *RUCHlos* [*SCENTless*], *Aroma-Performance* (1998); *Spices (3) für drei Schlagzeuger und Tonband – mit dem Gestank "heilsverheißender Kriegsgebete"* [for 3 percussionists and tape – bearing the stink of war prayers that promise salvation] (2001). These works seem almost to be the fulfillment of Cixous words:

Write! and your self-seeking text will know itself better than flesh and blood, rising, insurrectionary dough kneading itself, with sonorous, perfumed ingredients, a lively combination of flying colors, leaves, and rivers plunging into the sea we feed (LM:889).

Other works expressly involve other bodily or special sensations, like *Rachengold*. Geheime Partitur für einen Vokalisten, ein Glas Wasser und eine große Stoppuhr (ad lib.) [Gold Throat. Secret score for a vocalist, a glass of water, and a large stop watch] (1992); *HandStreiche*. Performances für Liebhaber [*Coups de main*. Performances for Lovers] (1999); *Supreme Particles "R111"*. Klangmaterial zu einem interaktiven Environment in vier Räumen und Web-Site für das Projekt "connected cities" [Sound Material for an interactive environment in 4 rooms and a website, for the project "connected cities"] (1999); or *enriched elements* für Sopran, Trompete, Tuba, Wasser, Licht und Surroundklänge [for soprano, trumpet, tuba, water, light, and surround sound] (2003).

What in almost forty years of serious musical study had overlaid my childhood love of classical music with such burdensome feelings of anxiety and obligation? (Subotnik 2004:281).

I wished that that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs (LM:876).

Heterogeneous, yes. For her joyous benefit she is erogenous; she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous (LM:889).



**Figure 29 - Stäbler performing**<sup>150</sup>

It is not possible to trace Stäbler's development through all these pieces, but the mere listing of these works demonstrates the broad web of uses, meanings, contexts, and connotations Stäbler has elaborated over time. Adorno had written, "the borders between art genres run into each other or, more exactly: the lines of demarcation have

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<sup>150</sup> Performing Paik's *Simple* (1960) in "The Sense of Synesthesia" in Stäbler and Shim (2005:13).

become unraveled” (1966, op. cit.) The unraveling of the borders between art genres, between musical materials, between electronic and acoustic media: All these are demonstrated by these works.

Going further, Stäbler demonstrates in these works that the body, the performing body, the *pleasurable* body – precisely *the* body ignored for so long since the Cartesian divide – is eminently historically laden with layers of sedimented repression, *jouissance*, and meaning. We can imagine the direction Stäbler is moving toward, and we can see the proximity of this movement to Cixous’ theory.<sup>151</sup>

There is not that scission, that division made by the common man between the logic of oral speech and the logic of the text, bound as he is by his antiquated relation – servile, calculating – to mastery (LM:881).

At the beginning of this chapter, I described a *métissage* of theories. Necessarily, I have draw a wide circle around theories that flow together in our investigation of Stäbler’s music using *lecture féminine*. My point should now be clear that there is a case to be made for approaching a work of music or a body of works that has its basis in New Music but transcends them into new media using a *métissage* of extant theories. For ultimately, the theories we are talking about – and the persons who created the works – have common roots in common notions, whether they come from Freud or from Hegel and Marx or Derrida and Cixous. Interpretations of these theories have been and will continue to be diverse. But their use together, even in a fuzzy relationship, can shed light on works that still pose many questions.

After crossing over this theoretical bridge, I now turn in the second half of this thesis to two artists who have no roots in New Music, but whose practice with new media is all the more susceptible to a Cixousian *lecture féminine*, and in the final chapter on Miss Kittin, we will return to the theme of the body.

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<sup>151</sup> A later investigation will trace the relationship of Cixous’ notion of *jouissance*, her rejection of Lacan, and contemporary musical developments.



## **PART TWO – WHERE ARE WE HEADED?**



## 4 SWITCHING GENRE. ELECTRONICA

In the preceding two chapters, creative areas having to do with electronic music as part of multimedia works have been examined. In the following two, we turn to two artists who work in a related genre, 'electronica': Terre Thaemlitz and Miss Kitten. The present chapter bridges electronic and electronica, and with it, it is my aim to demonstrate that many musical, social and philosophical concepts from classical music, already taken over into electronic music, are equally at work in electronica, thereby justifying the transfer of theoretical aperçus we have gained in electronic music to electronica.

Historically speaking, the musicological community is currently at an exciting juncture. Not only have gender studies and other areas contributed to the constitution of New Musicology, but a tendency is *en route* to reconcile the two principle currents that have dominated music in Western countries for the last half century, namely popular and classic (or serious). Contrary to what those (including myself) who grew up receiving, not creating, these two disparate genres in the 50s, 60s and 70s might have thought, precise musicological treatment is revealing that the genres are not separate. While the 'classical' current, drawing on the twelve-tone composers of the Second Viennese School, received and valued the serialists, most all other composers at work in the European-American tradition, were either ignored or relegated to second-class status in it. The integration now taking place of the once so-called 'popular' composers, such as Kraftwerk or Brian Eno, reveals that these composers drew heavily on just these 'second-class' composers – Erik Satie, Pierre Henry, Pierre Schaeffer – while at the same time integrating new influences like hip-hop culture, African rhythms, etc. Musicologist Matthew Shlomowitz notes this shift of hermeneutic perspective, saying that his own work – and reception history generally – are products of this Foucauldian shift; that is, the emphasis is on what has happened to the work of art, rather than on the work itself (Shlomowitz 1999). In accordance with this hermeneutic shift, the views of those 'second-class' composers have now taken center stage, and the New Music greats now share the musicological limelight with them.

The present period is exciting, too, because the tools and topics of New Musicology now permit a different kind of investigation than was previously possible. An example of this is the tracing of cross-gender dressing in Brian Eno and others, later of Terre Thaemlitz, to be seen below. To extend Schlomowitz' remark, our definition of what belongs to the work of art – as part of a broad palette of social comments – being made by the artist has vastly expanded; and we can now consider and look for meaning in all the wrinkles and folds surrounding the work of art, perfectly in keeping with notions of *écriture féminine*. John Cage was, once again, the beacon that helped expand awareness of what constitutes the work of art; and he was inspired in this by none other than 'second-class composer' Erik Satie.

Here, I hope to show that these divisions of electronic-electronica, E and U music<sup>152</sup> are chimeras. Whatever the nature the split between E and U was, today technology and 'globalization' have the effect of closing the gaps (social, intellectual, economic, access to technology) that separated classes. We see music today as a whole cloth, and the disparate genres deserve to be woven together. Since electronica does not have a definition that is uniformly accepted, I will first sketch a historical overview of it, bringing into relief aspects salient to the current investigation. But before discussing exactly what the music genre 'electronica' is and what distinguishes it from the genre 'electronic music', let us reflect a moment on the nature of musical genres.

#### 4.1 NOTE ON GENRE

Within the music industry, different genres of music are produced and marketed by different agents, each of whom is a specialist in that particular genre. To maximize sales, market segment targeting (the primary method for selling music used until the advent of internet dissemination) was used. For this, it was necessary to target the audience to which a particular music genre would be sold. This seemingly small aspect of the way

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<sup>152</sup> For the distribution of copyright payments, distinctions are made between different music genres. Originally, this distinction was made in order to assist composers whose music did not initially bring in royalties, but might over a long time span, as opposed to composers of commercially successful but possibly short-lived music. In Germany, the distinction is made between serious and entertaining music (Ger.: *ernste Musik* and *Unterhaltungsmusik*), hence E and U Music. This distinction runs through all funded and commercial music institutions, such as radio programs, conservatories, the press, etc. While the division exists in other countries under other names, like high/low art, *l'art savant/l'art populaire*, etc., the German division has been particularly rigid and was for decades aggravated by the importance accorded to Adorno's view of the superiority of serious music over entertaining music.

the music industry functions carries more weight than a first glance might suggest. What exactly is the musical genre at the base of this system?

“The usual approach to defining musical genres is ‘to follow the distinctions made by the music industry which, in turn, reflect both musical history and marketing categories,’” as Roy Shuker sums up in his dictionary of popular music (Shuker 1998:145-6), quoting music sociologist Simon Frith as he goes along (Frith 1987:147). Visibly, not the music industry alone, but the entirety of music history comes into play in answering this question. The musical canon is constructed and maintained using genres. There is the ‘opera’ radio broadcast, the ‘symphony orchestra’ concert, or the ‘experimental music’ class. All of these institutions base their offerings on genre classifications. Without genre, there is no classification, and hence no entrance into the canon, as we saw in Chapter 1 above.

As for the music industry, how does the marketing category ‘genre’ affect its functioning? Two examples illustrate ramifications.<sup>153</sup> If an artist approaches a major label and offers his work, if its genre is unknown or unfamiliar to the label, the music is often rejected as being ‘not salable or marketable’. A remark not uncommon might be, “It’s good music, but I don’t have a market for it.” If accepted by the label, the artist might encounter another quandary – pressure to remain in the genre she was originally hired in and discouragement for making an artistic shift into another genre. Again, the argumentation is based on the ‘bottom line’ or the amount of profit that can be made with the ‘product’ (industry parlance for the artist). A genre switch might alienate the existing market segment; moreover, an equally profitable new market segment is not guaranteed. The extent to which this forces an artist into a commercial straitjacket can be ascertained by imagining what impact it would have had if the Beatles had not had the liberty to evolve their style culminating in their *White Album* – thereby affecting all of pop and its genres; or the difficulty encountered by a classical artist like Yo-Yo Ma attempting to produce cross-over albums.

Next to the music industry, music criticism also plays an important role in the formulation of genres. “The critic wields considerable power. This power derives not only from the message itself but from the asymmetrical position the critic occupies in

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<sup>153</sup> My description of the internal workings of the music industry are based on eight years I spent working in the media industry (1996-2004) followed by subsequent research and teaching I have conducted on this subject. See also “Genre Rules” in Frith (1996: 75-95).

relation to the work of art – one of subject to object – and from the ambiguous constituency the critic represents” (Citron 1993:194). The significance of the attribution to a particular genre can be surmised in the avowal of renowned pop music critic Milo Miles<sup>154</sup> speaking on National Public Radio’s podcast *Music* of 1 August 2007. “Usually, I am put off by instrumental albums when I can’t quite decide what type of music is being played”, i.e., what genre it is. Miles’ conclusion is, “Either the performers lack personality, or, by doing a little bit of this and a little bit of that, they’re trying to be all things to all listeners. On occasion, though, an elusive style is not a muddle, but a harmonious, unfathomable fusion.”<sup>155</sup> Apparently, if a genre is new, its style is immediately suspected of being of inferior value, “a muddle”, given a bad review; the consequences are clear. Thus, whether or not a work can be ‘fitted into’ the existing categories of dissemination and reception often represents a ‘K-O’ criterion that determines whether a work will benefit from future hearings or fall into desuetude. That, at least, is the way it’s been until recently. While Shuker observes rigid boundaries between genres prior to 1985, he sees musical genres “becoming increasingly fluid” (i.e., in 2002, loc. cit.). But crossovers don’t always produce happy results. An interview, broadcast as I write, demonstrates a ‘cross-over’ from pop to classic with fatal consequences:

[Hauber:] We in the record industry are looking for those [classical] artists who want to invest their time actively marketing the CD they just recorded... because we don’t have any benefit from artists who sing wonderfully but do nothing to sell their CDs.

[Moderator:] Not artistic ability, but marketing energy determines the rhythm of the career. Classic labels today are marketing like the pop industry. [Wottrich:] Behind the scenes, only one interest exists: not to further a young artist, but to insure that the same people always collect the same money. Singers and instrumentalists are reduced to interchangeable marionettes for collecting that money. [Moderator:] Record labels throw artists onto the marketplace and squeeze them for what they’re worth. [Hauber:] It’s a hard job... The artist who wants to have a career must be prepared to collaborate.

[Moderator:] Mediocre singers are inflated into star bubbles. [Wottrich:] Actually, it’s unbearable to work under these conditions, but the fight serves a higher purpose. What we need to do is find the way back to an audience that loves music,

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<sup>154</sup> For background on Miles, cf. <http://www.rockcritics.com/interview/milomiles.html>, viewed 3 Aug 2007.

<sup>155</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=12373458>, retrieved 3 Aug 2007.

instead of an audience thirsty for sensational gladiator games. [Moderator:] In classic, what counts today is to be the best show with the best profits.<sup>156</sup>

Perfidious is the fact that the industry – including institutions of education and training – are fully aware of these conditions and appeal to the young artist’s ambition in meeting the challenge of the “hard job” without, however, offering the ethical guidance to strengthen the ongoing artist to voice criticism of the industry, or to make decisions other than to become *collaborateurs*. The few who possess the courage and endurance to accuse the industry from the inside, like conductor Gustav Kuhn (1993), most often pay for their vociferousness with professional ostracism. More recently, music sales over the internet have opened new channels of reaching potential music audiences, as Chris Anderson explains in his book, *The Long Tail. Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More*<sup>157</sup>.

Having seen how important the genre label can be, I turn to the difference between the genre ‘electronic music’ we have treated previous to this and an examination of the genealogy of electronica, which will be treated now.<sup>158</sup>

## 4.2 ELECTRONICA OVERVIEW

Today, the term ‘electronic music’ is familiar to most. It can be traced back to the experiments of Werner Meyer-Eppler in the 1940s, followed by Herbert Eimert and Stockhausen in the WDR-Cologne studio, Pierre Schaeffer’s *musique concrète* in Paris and to Max Mathew’s development of MUSIC at Bell Labs in New Jersey, all in the 1950s. One could trace electronic music’s origins further back – to earlier vocoder research at the Bell Labs in the 30s, to Leon Theremin’s theremin (1919), to Thaddeus Cahill’s Telharmonium (1897), or even back to the beginnings of sound recording (Berliner 1887, Edison 1877, Scott de Martinville 1857). Indeed, one website covers all of

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<sup>156</sup> Extracts of a report by Stefan Braunshausen on “Commerce, the Sell-Out of Classic and the Beauty of the Artist” broadcast on 3Sat’s *Kulturzeit* 31 Aug 2007, with Per Hauber, Universal Records and Endrich Wottrich, tenor.

<sup>157</sup> For more on this concept cf. <http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html> and <http://www.thelongtail.com/>, both retrieved on 4 Aug 2007.

<sup>158</sup> An exhaustive history and musical analyses of electronica and related genres are beyond the scope of this discussion. Here, only those genres are discussed whose comprehension is germane to the discussion of the artists’ works that follow. For a fuller discussion, the works referred to in the text are recommended. Snoman’s excellent *Dance Music Manual* provides brilliant and exhaustive technical, formal, and sonic analyses of dance genres from ambient to techno to hip-hop and trip-hop.

these stations – just as starters! Ishkur takes the history of electronic music, humorously and not implausibly, back to prehistoric stone banging.<sup>159</sup> As these versions demonstrate, the narrative of electronic music's history, although familiar, is disputable and disputed.

The definition of the less familiar term 'electronica', emerging around the mid-90s, is even more disputed. Many books and websites present their different versions; thankfully, all agree on a few milestones: that the term electronica covers a wide range of music made using electronic sound production; that it has its roots in techno dance music; and that the defining moment was the appearance in 1992 of a CD compilation of music that would come to be called electronica. In the dictionary cited above, Shuker differentiates between subgenres, genres, and meta-genres, and finds that electronica constitutes a 'meta-genre', a 'rather loose amalgam of various styles'. Before turning to the details and points of contention, let us examine three tables presenting three different views of electronica's genealogy. While they don't necessarily agree, together they provide important frames of reference for putting this emerging genre into a context.

In particular, I will consider three genres emerging after 'electronic music,' whose development is of interest to our study of the development of electronica: electro, techno, and ambient (although it is an important genre, I do not consider house separately, since it is not germane to my study; cf. note on Figure 36 - Sherburne's Chart.) At the same time, developmental lines are pointed out for the discussion of a fourth genre in the next chapter on Miss Kittin: rave. I begin with the representation by Ishkur of the meta-genre 'downtempo', in which concentric time circles mark off the lineage of disparate genres.<sup>160</sup> While Ishkur's is certainly a highly personal view, it has the advantage of presenting the largest chronological scope. (The reader is referred to the online original, which is much easier to read and navigate and has some 1189 clips as examples; but for quick reference, the screens are reproduced here.)

Let us begin with a familiar reference: Visible in the purple field on the left hand side of the chart on the next page, we see the 'electronic pioneers.' Below this, from

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<sup>159</sup> Kenneth John Taylor, *Ishkur's Guide to Electronic Music V. 2.5* at <http://www.di.fm/edmguide/edmguide.html>, retrieved on 31 July 2007. Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishkur's\\_Guide\\_to\\_Electronic\\_Music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishkur's_Guide_to_Electronic_Music), retrieved on 4 Aug 2007. Taylor makes no mention of our 'local hero' Charles Cros (1842-1888) and his paleophone.

<sup>160</sup> The meta-genre 'downtempo' represented here covers '40 years' of 'listening music', discussed below. This term is not encountered frequently, and the other two charts below do not mention it at all, however an explanation for it can be found on Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtempo> retrieved 7 Feb 08.

the blue button of '*musique concrète*'<sup>161</sup>, one line leads upward to the button 'minimalism' (M. Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells', T. Riley, S. Reich, P. Glass), which then goes on to the buttons 'classical' (I. Tomita, Wendy Carlos), and 'ambient' (Tangerine Dream,

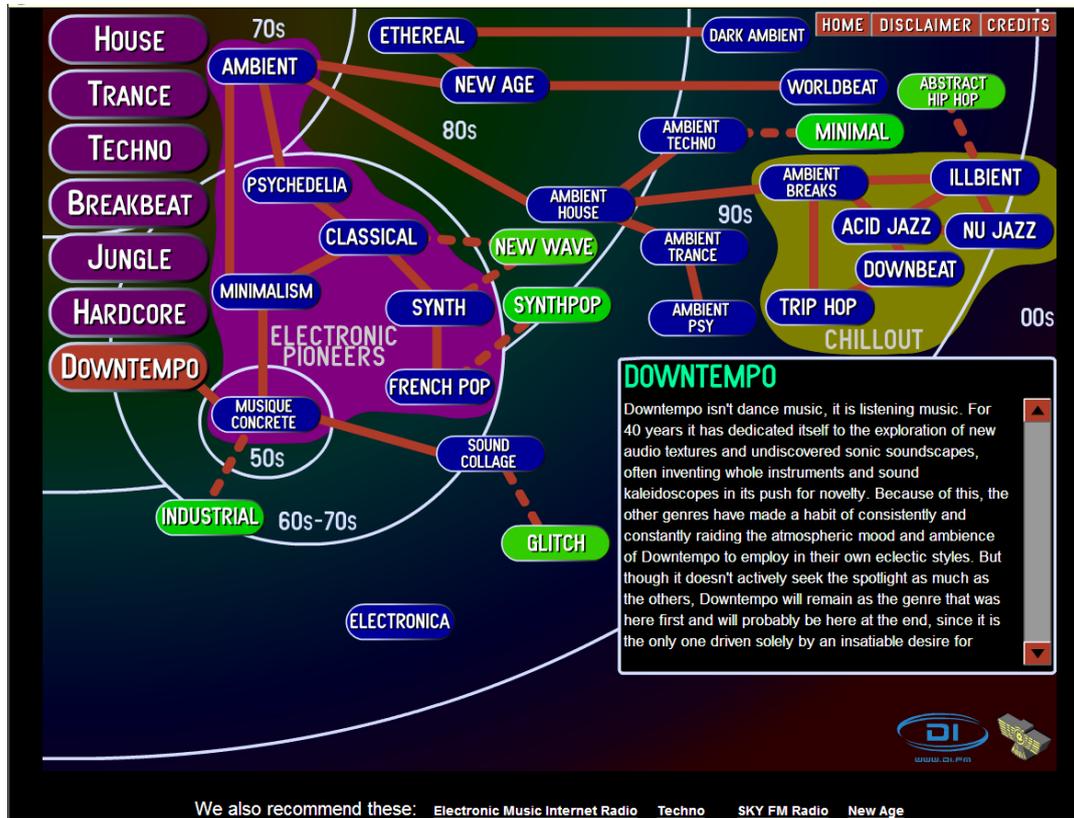


Figure 30 - Ishkur's Chart 'Downtempo'

Sylvian/Fripp, Klaus Schulze, et al.). From *musique concrète* another line leads to the right to 'sound collage' or sampling, as it can also be called (Negativland, Tape Beatles, Evolution Control Committee, Justified Ancients of Mu Wu) and from there via dotted line to the green button 'glitch'. To the lower left of glitch, within the concentric circle representing the 90s, is the blue button 'electronica'. The button is unconnected, meaning that it is a meta-genre that covers all other buttons in the outer 1990s circle; this indicates electronica's influence as being from around 1995 onward.<sup>162</sup> Thus, we can see that glitch is a subgenre within electronica.

<sup>161</sup> I cannot resist quoting Ishkur's highly colored syntax, which simultaneously demonstrates his personal opinion of *musique concrète* and his view of musical matters: "I personally think that the guys, being musicians first and technologists second, got their hands on all sorts of musical equipment that they didn't know how to use, but they were intellectual enough to bullshit their way through using it by pretending their post-modern crap compositions were really nouveau 'art'. Of course, in 20 years the tables would be turned: electronic music would be made by science and math nerds who didn't know a shred about music. There's probably a poignant lesson to be learned from all this, but I can't think of one without sounding like a pretentious fucktool."

<sup>162</sup> Although Ishkur polemicizes against the term electronica, its chronological placement is nevertheless correct.

If we now click on the 'glitch' button, the 'Jungle' screen opens, reproduced below. Here we again see glitch, which is included in the khaki-green color field of 'braindance.' The music genre glitch takes its name from the discipline of electronics, where a glitch is a short-lived fault in a system. Glitch music exploits just such unintended, 'erroneously' produced glitches – clicks, scratches, skipping CDs, scratched vinyl records, circuit bending, and other noise-like distortions. These sounds can also be ordered and structured by cutting and splicing to create beats and rhythms. And precisely that is the subgenre 'clicks-and-cuts,' one of Thaemlitz' main creative genres. We can count these three subgenres – glitch, experimental and clicks-and-cuts – to electronica. (The other form relevant for our study is 'rave', the green button in the middle of the screen, which influenced Miss Kittin's beginnings.)

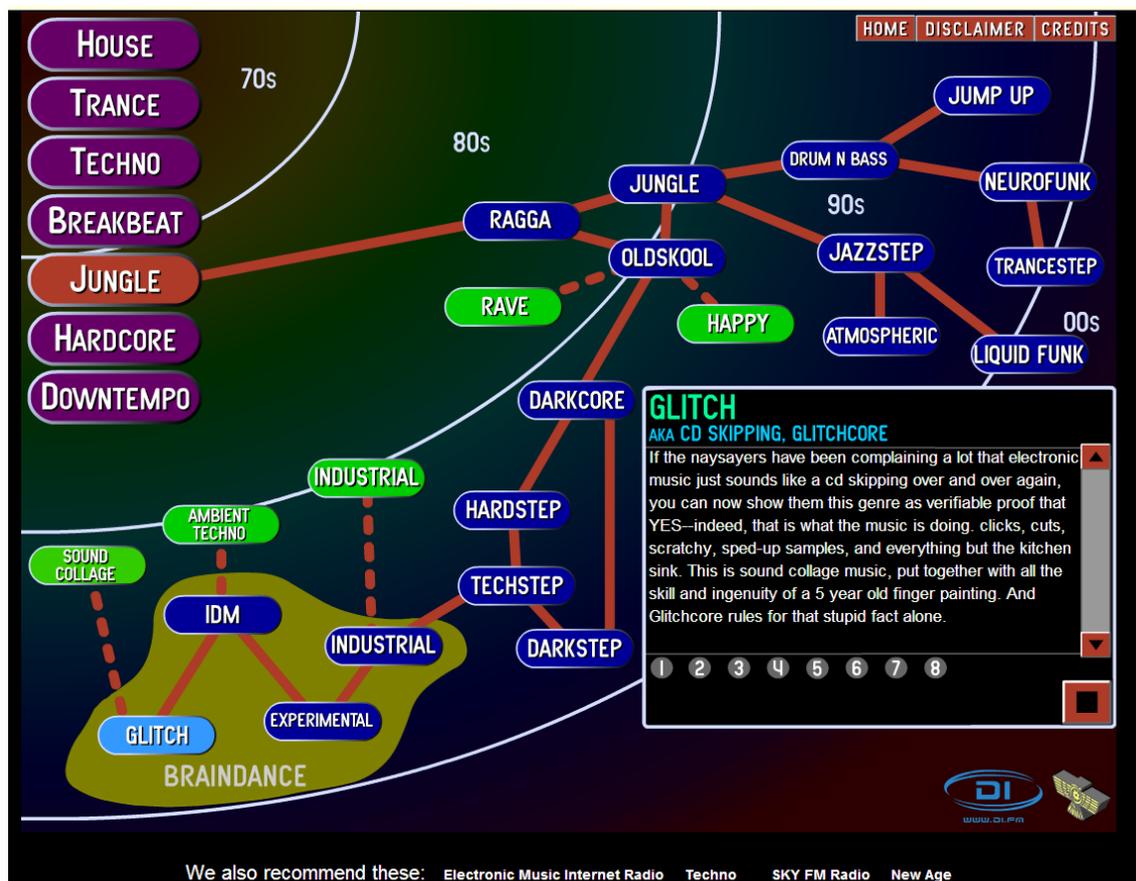


Figure 31 - Ishkur's Chart 'Jungle'

On the chart above, we see that glitch is related to IDM (intelligent dance music), a term that merits our brief attention in its polyvalent relationship to electronica. In the vocabulary of the 'popular', as opposed to serious or savant, genres discussed here, terms often crop up that suggest a cerebral quality (intelligent techno,

braindance), or to its opposite, a body quality (electronic body music). These terms undertake a kind of division within the 'popular' genres into more and less serious styles, thereby mimicking and prolonging the separation. The description of electronica in the German Wikipedia article emphasizes this characteristic:

Electronica pieces are characterized by a certain abstraction. They often utilize neither acoustic instruments nor a typical melody, but rather synthesized sounds and rhythms liberated from conventional structures. Electronica is often characterized by slow dynamics [sic]: patterns (sounds or rhythms) are repeated regularly, but develop in different directions. Thus, pieces can change greatly from beginning to end, without this being immediately noticeable. It is only the contrast that renders these sometimes minimal developments evident. Due to their slow rhythms, electronica pieces are *usually not dance music and not primarily intended for this purpose*. Instead, the minimal changes demand increased awareness from the listener. Fans of the genre enjoy discovering unusual sounds and rhythms in it. For this reason, electronica is sometimes referred to as home listening music and is thereby an *opposite* of techno or house, which are heard primarily in clubs.<sup>163</sup>

Here, the authors have firmly put the emphasis of electronica on 'abstraction', making it a 'demanding' form of music, for really serious 'home listening', and, unlike techno or house, not to be listened to in the social situation of a club. It is a form of genre separation all too familiar in Germany. Moreover, the authors have created a binary opposite out of it. Is this necessary?

While numerous critics might readily agree with the notion of discovering unusual sounds and rhythms, the other emphases are not universally shared. Sean Cooper, in his article in the massive reference work *Electronica. The Definitive Guide to Electronic Music* takes this view:

Electronica in its broadest common significance refers primarily to artists *drawing heavily on dance music styles* such as house, techno, electro, and EBM (electronic body music) in ways not simply derivative of the dance floor. [It] tends to involve an adaptation or mutation of dance music compositional elements to other-than-DJ/dance floor ends. Many of the artists credited with innovating the music were interested in producing music designed for other uses – home listening, primarily, – which allowed for a wider range of influences (ambient, classical, jazz, non-western musics, etc.) and a higher index of experimentation. A key

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<sup>163</sup> [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronica\\_\(Musik\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronica_(Musik)), retrieved 4 August 2007, my italics.

component in the growth and popularization of the style was the *Artificial Intelligence* series released by the Sheffield-based Warp label starting in 1992. In the United States, it wasn't until 1997 that electronica was appropriated. In the European usage, the defining feature of electronica was usually its 'listenability' (a value gauged within the context of the experimental electronic music underground), [whereas] in America the distinction seems to turn instead on the music's potential for popularity (read: profitability) via mainstream success (Bogdanov 2001:635-636).

Cooper speaks not of mutually exclusive opposites, rather he suggests electronica is "not simply derivative"; i.e., Cooper sets up a non-exclusive 'not only, but also' relationship. Cooper's is thus a more inclusive view that admits both lineages. While Cooper acknowledges that many artists produced electronica designed for other uses, he emphasizes that the 'home listening' aspect served to *open* the music to a wider, more catholic range of sources than dance music ordinarily could, an open attitude that many electronica artists retain today. But most importantly, in contrast to the Wikipedia authors, Cooper places first and foremost the fact that electronica stems from the dance floor and types of music that emphasize the body, like electronic body music. (We will return to this aspect of electronica's genealogy regarding the final artist, Miss Kittin, in the chapter "Corporeal Electronica".)

Electronica's double lineage of electro and dance floor is made even more evident in the chart accompanying Cooper's article. Although it has no dates, the chart (on the next page) has the advantage of clearly representing the lineage of both 'electro' and 'disco,' or music with a dance beat (whereby electro *also* stems from the dance floor, as we shall see).<sup>164</sup> As can be seen in this view, both genres will receive important impulses from 'ambient' music before they go on to influence electronica. Its heritage in dance notwithstanding, electronica is noted for "far higher production values than others, featuring more layers, more original samples, and fewer 'presets,' and more complex rhythm programming"<sup>165</sup>.

This then is a first broad genealogical overview of electronica. But we haven't yet connected the dots between the electronic pioneers of the 50s in the first chart above and electronica in the 90s. Is there a direct connection between them? Before we zoom in on the new genres electro, techno, and ambient, we turn to this question.

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<sup>164</sup> For a timeline of individual steps in the development of reggae, disco, hip-hop, electro, techno, and house including photos, cf. [http://www.gridface.com/features/an\\_electronic\\_dance\\_music\\_timeline.html](http://www.gridface.com/features/an_electronic_dance_music_timeline.html) retrieved on 12 Aug 2007.

<sup>165</sup> English Wikipedia article 'electronica' <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronica>, retrieved on 1 Jan 2008.

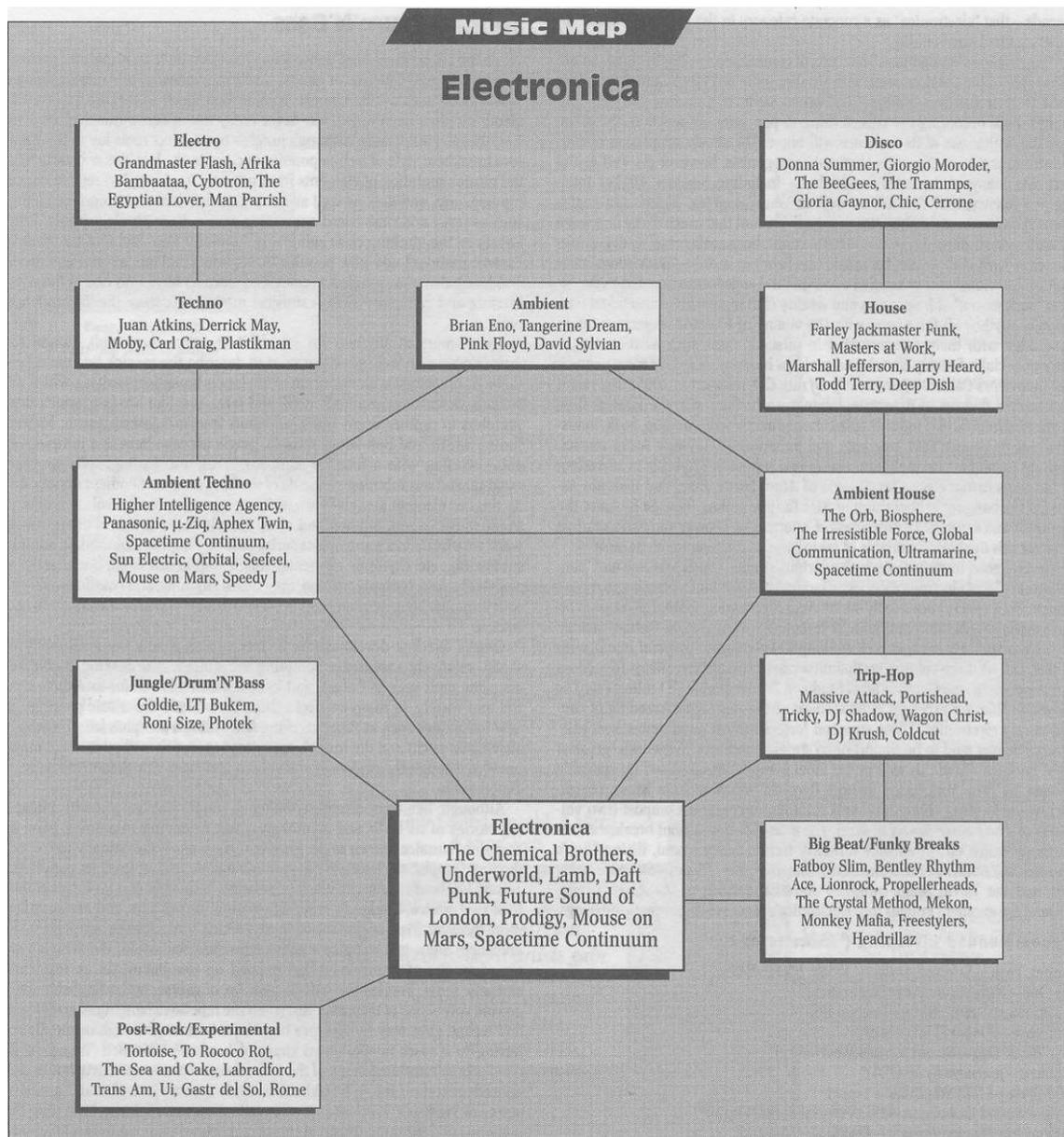


Figure 32 - Electronica (Bogdanov:635)

### 4.3 INFLUENCE FROM OLD EUROPE

Indeed, what is missing from these charts for our current discussion is the decisive impulse electronica received from German music. How did German music come to play such a prominent role in American ghetto music? How did it get into the music of electro pioneers Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa? Are there aesthetic, or even social and ideological factors that join these seemingly disparate worlds? The group Kraftwerk embodies the missing link between *musique concrète* and hip-hop, electro,

techno, and electronica. Kraftwerk was one of the first pop-oriented acts to record using pure electronic (or electronically processed) instruments and sounds exclusively.<sup>166</sup> “Considered the most influential group to come from Germany during the 1970s, Kraftwerk went out of their way to fashion a pure electronic aesthetic which encompassed all aspects of modernity... They had a direct effect on the music of David Bowie, and, with Afrika Bambaataa’s 1982 club smash ‘Planet Rock’ (which sampled the rhythmic sections of *Trans-Europe Express* and *Computer World*), they became hip with young black Americans. It was their adoption by Detroit Techno musicians that made Kraftwerk gurus of the new Ecstasy generation, their sleek, machine-like creations at one with the new culture of cyberspace” (Prendergast 2003:297).

What did founders Ralf Hütter (born 1946) and Florian Schneider-Esleben (born 1947) bring to Kraftwerk? In Prendergast’s eyes, “both were ‘*hoch bourgeoisie*’ [sic], gentlemen of the refined and affluent German classes”. A far cry from the Bronx! Both sons of upper middle-class professionals, they met at the Düsseldorf conservatory. They shared a common background and an interest in Pierre Henry, Karlheinz Stockhausen, the futurists, electronic music, and the Beach Boys. As they explored different artistic possibilities, “their focus became an evocation of the North Rhine industrial heartland of the New Germany” (298), as the following quotation details:

It was a problem for us to make music in [West] Germany. After the war, the vivid music that accompanied daily life disappeared. It was wiped out. Our generation had to start completely new. Because we live in this [coal-mining] ‘Rhine-Ruhr’ situation, the music is more influenced by urbanity and machines than by rural stuff, so it reflects those things. Maybe that happened at a time when so-called pop music dealt mainly with leisure time things; whereas, we are mainly about working processes and real situations, urban situations like showroom dummies, robots... that is part of our existence. We’re standing around, on exhibit. We’re showroom dummies.”<sup>167</sup>

Both of their hit songs “Autobahn” (1974) and “Trans-Europe Express” (1977; from the eponymous albums) use short, repeated motives; inescapable, monotonous, hypnotic 4/4 meters; and rhythmic recitation. There are no modulations, only abrupt key shifts (transpositions). They employ simple, cumulative chord harmonies within a tim-

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<sup>166</sup> Other top other bands working at this time in Germany also contributed to the transportation of German ‘sound’ at the time: Tangerine Dream, Can, and Neu!

<sup>167</sup> “Kraftwerk – Die Mensch-Maschine” TV Documentary, Part1  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c90Dlwngylg>, retrieved on 16 Aug 2007. Many old Kraftwerk clips are viewable on YouTube.

bre that is dominated by electronics and high-frequency noise. The basic structure of the songs is repetitive, each preceded by a simple instrumental introduction before the lyrics begin. And, similar to rap, which was emerging around the same time in NY, the texts are very socially critical.

Violently cut off from a living culture, feeling desperate and subjected to harsh urban realities, but with a thirst for immediate communication, seeking a new identity, and fascinated by the possibilities of new technologies – these are themes and experiences that were not unknown to the emerging hip-hop culture. Prendergast sums up British musicologist Ian MacDonald's description of Kraftwerk's influence and gives possible reasons for affinity with groups outside of Germany.

There was a strong revolutionary spirit among Germany's youth since 1968. They disliked rich Anglo-American groups playing in their country... The concept of the 'revolutionary head' was paramount, a concept which 'challenged every accepted English and American standpoint'. The roots of new German rock were thus traced to a rejection of all previous forms, an acceptance of open improvisation, with 'no leaders'. Hence, guitar heroes and singer-stars were out, group instrumental expression was in. MacDonald dubbed the resultant music 'tonally free sound improvisation'.

In this setting it was no wonder that electronics took over, 'the other-worldly capacities of the synthesizers' as MacDonald described them. He [MacDonald] feared the dematerialization of humans as machines became more and more important to the Germans, Kraftwerk of course following the 'Man Machine' concept to its furthest extreme as they famously celebrated the coming of 'The Robots' and a 'Computer World' in their music (Prendergast 2003:279).

But Kraftwerk's message was ambiguous, ambiguous with the victim/perpetrator paradigm (that constantly muddies the water of self-image in post-war Germany... and of Black America). On the one hand, a fear of alienation and domination by omnipresent, inhuman machines; on the other hand, a kind of 'if-you-can't-beat-em-join-em' mentality that sought identity and salvation in total acceptance, in embrace, in *totaler Verschmelzung* with the threatening 'machinism.' Their pieces were chart hits in a disco-dance atmosphere becoming attuned to similar sounds. People had Donna Summer's epochal "I Feel Love"<sup>168</sup> in their ears, produced by Giorgio Moroder using sequencers in 1977. An anecdote told by Grandmaster Flash reveals his mindset:

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<sup>168</sup> Portions viewable at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I6iLzj4bYE> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SzRO7Cnfjzo> retrieved on 12 Aug 2007.

**Grandmaster Flash:** I was this 'B Boy', this Black Boy who came out of the ghetto. Looking for something different. And in looking for something different, I found a club like Studio 54. (Studio 54 was a legendary New York City disco nightclub from the Seventies.) In the club I began playing the music that eventually made me famous.

**Q:** How did that occur?

**Grandmaster Flash:** I was entertaining another class of people and that other class of people was anybody else who was other than Black. Because before I was playing in Studio 54, I was playing records in clubs that were strictly for Black and Latino people. The particular dance music on this new CD opened up to me that fact that white people liked funky dance music. Germans, Italians and French people all liked funky music by black recording artists. When I went to Studio 54, I realized that.

**Q:** You were the only DJ to take the electronic music of the German techno rock band Kraftwerk and invented the music which later would become today's hip-hop genre.

**Grandmaster Flash:** Kraftwerk was a hip-hop record for me. At the hip-hop parties, the music on the albums by Kraftwerk was a way for me to take a brief break after playing twenty records in five minutes time or even two hundred records in twenty minutes time. No one at these parties had ever even heard of Kraftwerk or the music by Kraftwerk, so I would play the record to take a break.

**Q:** Why was that important?

**Grandmaster Flash:** The key was that I'd keep the crowd at those parties moving. I'd never let them be idle, I'd never let them take a break. That is how I was the innovator of hip-hop. I always wanted to keep the crowd moving on the dance floor. And that is still my point today, I don't ever want to let the people on the dance floor be idle. And there were very few records that passed that test. Kraftwerk had music that happened to be one of those records. I was the only person who they ever licensed the record to. So, that was a very important moment in history for me.

**Q:** While you were the recording artist who discovered and virtually invented rap music, you did not continue with rap. Why did you not explore the further possibilities of rhymes and rap music?

**Grandmaster Flash:** Because I couldn't do both. I tried it for a very short period and I was terrible. I just couldn't do both. I was so scientific into vinyl (recorded music). So scientific into how amplifiers work and electronics and electronic mu-

sic. That led me towards the DJ aspect of music. The (record) turntable, mixing (board), speakers, crossover equipment and headphones are all electronic. I was so much better with that element, and looking back, I wanted to do both good. I was better at one so I dropped the other.<sup>169</sup>

But it was Afrika Bambaataa who would make an album that propelled Kraftwerk to the top and leave an impression on every electro and techno DJ to come. With its sample, "Planet Rock" sounds like "Trans-Europe Express" at the opening, but it is more complex, the rhythms and timbres are Bambaataa's, as is the deep bass sound that is mixed in. "He was a big fan of 'Trans Europe Express', and he used to play the song on the parties they organized in the late 70's. Funny enough, this was parties that was mainly for black people, and Kraftwerk being white guys from Germany makes this a real unique combination at the time. When Kraftwerk released 'Numbers' in 1981, Bambaataa fused that track with 'Trans-Europe Express' and made the song called 'Planet Rock,' the first electro-hip hop song."<sup>170</sup> On his album *Planet Rock* (1982), Afrika Bambaataa brought together tracks in a way "that suggested a kind of universal electronic sound" (says music writer/author Kodwo Eshun in *Modulations* 1998). Arthur Baker, producer of *Planet Rock*, explains, "With *Planet Rock* we married that [Kraftwerk] sound with the Bronx, with rap, with that whole other thing... You could hear previously disconnected worlds imploding together. You could hear Kraftwerk imploding with the world of the Bronx, and that seemed very exciting. At the time those two worlds seemed very far apart, but Bambaataa connected them" (*Modulations*).

The implosions were heard not only in the Bronx. For younger kids who had grown up with science fiction (e.g., *Star Trek* 1966-1969), this sound opened up a door to new sonic worlds. Juan Atkins, Detroit techno pioneer, emphasizes similar inner reactions the two groups had to similar external circumstances: "The music is based on the experience of survival, of impressions that we had [in the Detroit riots of the 60s]. Detroit is such a desolate city; you almost have to dream the future to escape the reality of your surroundings. And I think that was incorporated and instilled into the music" (*Modulations*).

What brought Kraftwerk to a kind of artistic expression that resonated with African Americans in ghettos? There was something that hindered Kraftwerk from looking too deeply into Germany's 'wiped out' past, just as there was something one didn't talk about in Black America in the 60s: the ignominy of being losers, either on the world

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<sup>169</sup> In "Interviews with Recording Artists" at <http://www.mcapozzoli.com> retrieved 15 Aug 2007.

<sup>170</sup> <http://www.cheebadesign.com/perfect/kraftwerk/follow.htm> retrieved on 11 Aug 2007.

stage, or on the domestic one. The blues spoke of the pain of that ignominy, but a new generation was seeking its own vocabulary. Yet neither in Germany nor in the Bronx or Detroit was there the desire to shake out one's heart. Instead, it chose machinism. Similarly, the composers who had shaped New Music in Europe after World War Two, among them Kraftwerk's venerated Karlheinz Stockhausen, had lived through the destruction as well as the emotional devastation of the war. They, too, chose *thought* structures over emotion or sentiment, in the sense of *sentire* (to feel). We recall the affinity Boulez initially had for Lévi-Strauss' structuralism and are reminded of Lachenmann's *Affekt-Aspekt* dualism (Lachenmann 1983). Was everyone suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder? Quite likely, if we follow Schulz.<sup>171</sup> But they were also all too aware of the exploitation and accompanying voiding of musical content of music through its use by Nazi propaganda, which had perverted patriotism by turning it into nationalism, by turning simple folk melodies, the 'property' of the masses, into propaganda songs in Nazi youth groups, thereby destroying the 'vivid music that accompanied daily life.' These audio snapshots of what music was associated with in Europe during the Third Reich escaped none of those musicians. So it was natural that they distrusted music's emotional content and chose instead to develop its structural aspects. The legacy of that awareness – which had now become a 'sensibility' – had been passed on to Kraftwerk's founders. The serial composers didn't choose emotional music; neither did Kraftwerk.

In the early 70s, an entire generation of block and warehouse dancers had found a sound they wanted to move to, a sound whose origin owed much through Kraftwerk to the heritage of Karlheinz Stockhausen. His music "became an important influence on the group of electronic music producers who emerged in the 1990s with roots in house and techno" (Cox 2004<sup>172</sup>:381). Put differently:

The white, European community had taken techno into their own hands. It was from this point (through the 1990s) that ambient, downtempo, and electronica were developed into the scene we know today – which is indeed predominantly a white, suburban [European] one. It is clear that the African American influence played a major part in the creation and development of techno. It is [just as]

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. Schulz 2004 "Avantgarde und Trauma"; cf. also Kutschke in Bendikowski (2003). Trauma theory, nascent in the 70s and 80s and emerging in cultural studies today, can be situated at the intersection of poststructuralist, feminist, social, and psychoanalytic theoretical approaches.

<sup>172</sup> In the chapter on Stockhausen, Cox publishes for the first time in book form an exchange between Stockhausen's and four techno music producers initiated by reporter Dick Witts in 1995. Stockhausen's self-centeredness and denigrating remarks stand in stark contrast to the openness and curiosity demonstrated by the young music producers and are, unfortunately, not atypical for the relationship between these two musical worlds.

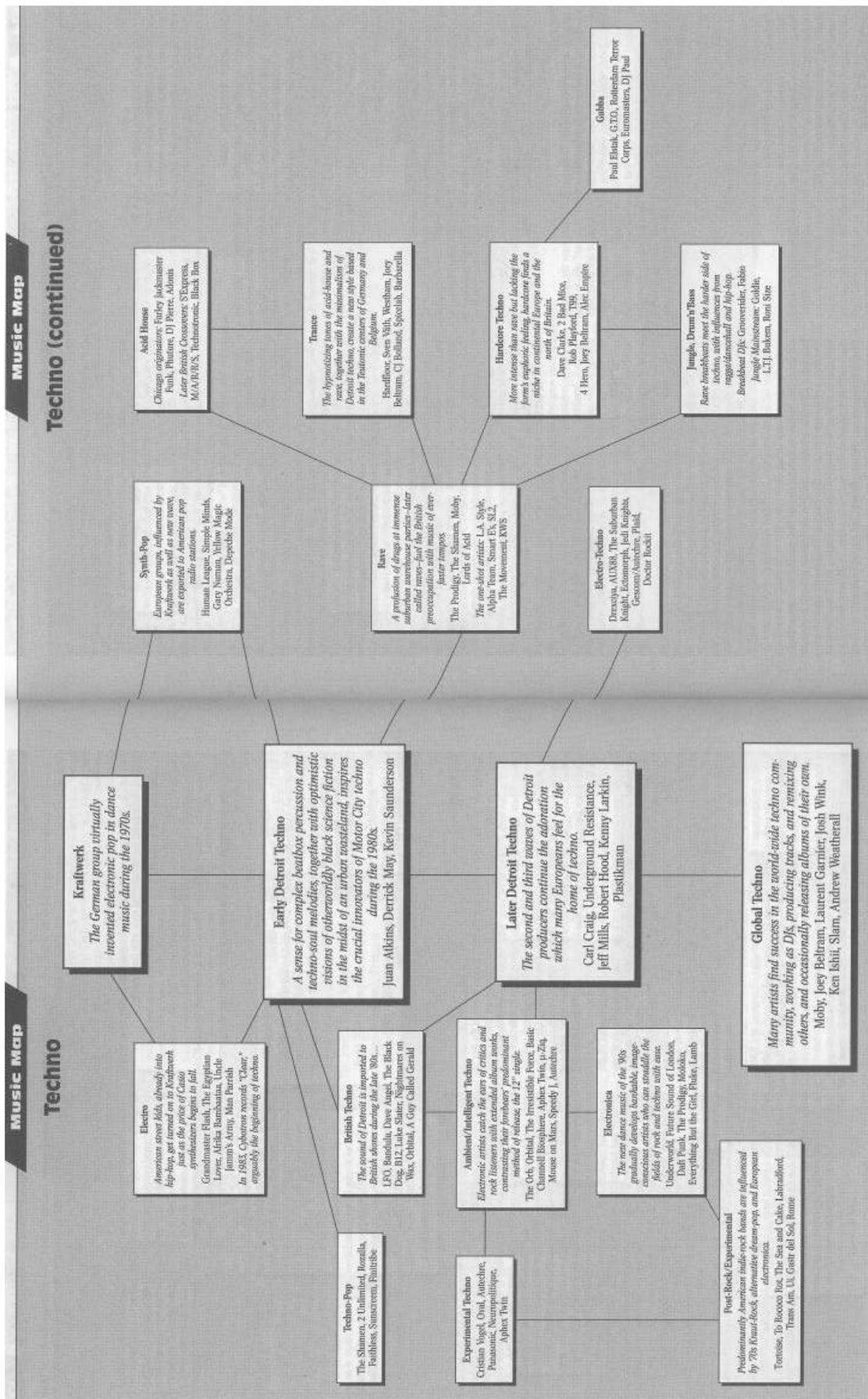


Figure 33 - Techno (Bogdanov:632-3)

certain, that without the work of the avant-garde – *musique concrète*, futurism, and early electronic music – musical thinkers like the Detroiters would not have had a starting point from which to invent their forward thinking style (Morton 2006).

Kraftwerk's dominating influence is seen on the chart on the preceding page. On this chart, Kraftwerk stands on top as mother-of-it-all. (Also visible here as descending from 'early Detroit techno' is 'rave', Miss Kittin's early genre.) Be that as it may, electronica has obtained its strongest following in Germany. This may be due to the influence of Stockhausen and the Cologne studio, or by simple coincidence with the fact that an early influential group that embodied a notion of electronic music and electrified musicians was also German, Kraftwerk. For, in Germany, electronica in the general meaning just staked out above has found its largest audience and its main producers.

#### **4.4 ELECTRO**

Electro (aka electro pop, electro funk, robot hip-hop, robot pop, techno pop, electro hop) – “Kraftwerk invented it in 1971. Hip-hop hijacked it in 1981. Everyone forgot it by 1991”, Ishkur puts the history of electro in a nutshell. The genre that was to spawn a myriad of electronic forms after it was “a curious fusion of 70s funk and disco, German and Japanese techno-pop, and everything from the futurism of Alvin Toffler to kung-fu movies, video games, and the Smurfs,” as Sean Cooper puts it (Bogdanov 2001: 644-5).

Its 'German roots' were one element that made its growth possible. The other was the advance of portable, and now affordable, electronic sound synthesis devices, to begin with, the Roland TB 808. “The Roland TR-808, a programmable drum machine released in late 1980, formed the distinctive sound for the entire electro genre and was used in countless early techno and house tracks” (Arnold 1999). Since electro is unthinkable without the Roland 808 and the 303, I reproduce here extracts of the excellent Wiki articles on them.



Figure 34 - Roland TR-808

The **Roland TR-808 Rhythm Composer** was one of the first programmable drum machines ('TR' serving as an acronym for 'Transistor Rhythm'). Introduced by the Roland Corporation in late 1980, it was originally manufactured for use as a tool for studio musicians to create demos. Like earlier Roland drum machines, it does not sound very much like a real drum kit. Indeed, because the TR-808 came out a few months after the Linn LM-1 (the first drum machine to use digital samples), professionals generally considered its sound inferior to sampling drum machines; a 1982 Keyboard Magazine review of the Linn Drum indirectly referred to the TR-808 as sounding like 'marching anteaters'. However, the TR-808 was more affordable, at \$1000, than the LM-1, which was priced at almost \$5,000) (Wikipedia).



Figure 35 - Roland TB-303

The **Roland TB-303 Bass Line** is a synthesizer with built-in sequencer manufactured by the Roland Corporation in 1982 and 1983 that had a defining role in the development of contemporary electronic music. The TB-303 (named for 'Transistor Bass'), for which Tadao Kikumoto served as head designer, was originally marketed to guitarists for bass accompaniment while practicing alone. Production lasted approximately 18 months, resulting in only 10,000 units. It was not until the mid- to late-1980s that DJs and electronic musicians in Chicago found a use for

the machine in the context of the newly developing house music genre. At the time they were very cheap, which helped to contribute to their popularity...

Pouter's 'Acid Tracks' is widely acknowledged to have been the first Acid House recording to incorporate prototypical TB-303 sounds. In the early 90's, as new Acid styles emerged, the 303 was often overdriven, producing a harsher sound. The well-known 'acid' sound is typically produced by playing a repeating note pattern on the TB-303, while altering the filter's cutoff frequency, resonance, and envelope modulation. The TB-303's accent control modifies a note's volume, filter resonance, and envelope modulation, allowing further variations in timbre. A distortion effect, created either by using a guitar effects pedal or by overdriving the input of an audio mixer, is commonly used to give the TB-303 a denser, noisier timbre – as the resulting sound is much richer in harmonics. (Wikipedia)

Electro's proper heyday was the brief period 1982-88, following the explosion of early hip-hop culture in a number of American inner-cities, with its principle proponents Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa being in the Bronx, as described above. Initially designed as break-dance music, with distinctive drum patterns modeled, in part, on the style of early hip-hop DJing (which involved the "manual looping, using two turntables and a mixer, of drum breaks from funk, soul, jazz and rock records"), the style itself was characterized by a "strong backbeat, often with sparse rapping (particularly through a vocoder or talk box), scratching, odd electronics, and frequent rhythm breaks" (Cooper).

The initial appearance of a variety of small and affordable electronic devices had made electro possible, and precisely their continued development was responsible for electro's sunset, making its actual life-span short. Due to the availability of this new, inexpensive technology, DJs grew bored with the relatively static musicality of electro's machine aesthetic and began the explosion of forms seen on the charts above. The next one of these we will examine is electronica's immediate successor, techno.

#### **4.5 TECHNO**

Techno, classical techno, or Detroit techno as it is sometimes called, has been described as a "depressing, gritty dystopian genre, a musical personification of the industrial, recession-sacked automotive industries of Detroit in the late 80s" (Ishkur). We

recall Detroit's heyday as focal point of the American automobile industry and the rise and positive identity of Motown Records there<sup>173</sup> from 1959, followed by Detroit's economic collapse in the late 70s and Motown's move to Los Angeles in 1972. "The term 'techno' was lifted by Juan Atkins – one third of Detroit techno's 'first wave' – from sociologist Alvin Toffler's books *Future Shock* and *The Third Wave*, which examined how societies evolve. Toffler identified 'techno rebels,' groups who mastered technology yet refused to let it separate them from their past roots or essential humanity. Since 1981, the compositions of techno visionary Juan Atkins have sent shock waves through contemporary music. On the heels of the German group Kraftwerk, he and partner Rick Davis formed Cybotron, fusing austere European techno-pop with street-level funk. By 1990, techno had become the music press' fancy word for everything electronic."<sup>174</sup>

In the wake of the civil unrest and civil rights movement of the 60s, blacks were thirsty for a new, positive identity. In the ghettos of Detroit and New York (Bronx), block and warehouse dance parties offered a low-cost alternative to (white) clubs with high entrance or cover charges. At these parties, economic necessity proved to be the mother of invention: the cheapest and most easily accessible 'technology' was used as a basis for amplifying music. In the Bronx, it was old, discarded turntables, which would pave the way for scratching. In Detroit, "the music's oft-copied ruddy production and stripped-down aesthetic were largely a function of the limited technology available to the early innovators" (Bogdanov 2001:631). Thus, already the creativity of music makers in those areas was familiar with electronic possibilities.

Unlike much electro, however, which playfully explored themes of the video age, space travel, block parties, and b-boy braggadocio, techno's minor-key melodies and spare, repetitive rhythms exhibited a tragic, melancholic edge that seemed to more directly engage the political and cultural issues of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century urban America. Tracks [...] often expressed a *disdain with the same technology they hoped could deliver a culture* in the latter stages of decay. And while techno's concern for the liberating potential of human-machine interface is often traced back to such European avant-garde figures as Luigi Russolo and Luciano Berio, the music's urban orientation and historical and cultural roots clearly distinguish it sharply from those traditions (Cooper 2001:631).

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<sup>173</sup> Detroit = 'Motor City' = MOtor TOWN → 'Motown'

<sup>174</sup> Bogdanov 2001: 631. See also: Sicko, D. (1999) *Techno Rebels: The Renegades of Electronic Funk*, New York: Billboard Books and Savage, J. (1993) "Machine Soul: A History of Techno" in *The Village Voice*, New York, online at [http://music.hyperreal.org/library/machine\\_soul.html](http://music.hyperreal.org/library/machine_soul.html). Compositional techniques are also described at Wikipedia 'Techno'.

In the quote above, Cooper, too, remarks on the ambivalent relationship the artists had to technology. He also stipulates that techno is not directly traceable to the European avant-garde figures, he names. But, since techno was influenced by electro, and electro was strongly influenced by Kraftwerk, who in turn were directly influenced by numerous European avant-garde, it seems permissible to suggest that these entered the gritty Detroit sound of the 70s at the very least as *sedimentierter Geist*, an intellectual layer, as Adorno might have seen it.

Techno became more of a phenomenon in Europe than in the United States, especially as the genre mutated into rave. The movement peaked in the late 90s with the Berlin 'Love Parades,' which drew attendance of over one and a half million. In the late 1980s, different subgenres of techno music began to emerge, including hardcore techno, an intensified style typified by a fast tempo (around 160 bpm) and the rhythmic use of distorted beats and samples, and ambient techno, with artists such as The Orb and Aphex Twin producing dub music and ambient influenced techno that later had an influence on artists dabbling in the minimal techno and what was originally techno's experimental offshoot, IDM. Today, producers and DJs such as Laurent Garnier, Dave Clarke, Richie Hawtin, and Jeff Mills continue to explore newer sounds (Wikipedia, 'techno').

Still another view of techno's lineage can be seen in the second column on the chart on the next page, prepared by music critic Phil Sherburne for an exhibit at the Centre d'Arte Santa Monica de Barcelona.<sup>175</sup> On Sherburne's chart, the genres 'electro' and 'electronica' do not appear. Electro could be situated just below 'synth[esizer]-pop' and electronica after IDM in the next column 'ambient'.

To sum up, what are differences and similarities between electro, disco, and techno? All use electronics, all are dance-centric. Electro inserted rhythms and a 'feeling' from the New York basis into Kraftwerk's German roots, while disco was created as a product to sell to the dance floor and never lost its 4/4 dance rhythm. While disco had soul/blues sources, many white established groups also created disco-style hits. Electro, created in the New York Black scene, went on to influence classic Black techno of the first generation in Detroit (the second generation of Detroit techno including also white figures). Disco went on the influence the DJ artists in Chicago's house. It was at this juncture that both techno and house began to feel the influence of a genre,

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<sup>175</sup> Exhibit in March 2005 curated by Javier Blánquez and Oriol Rossell; chart reprinted in *Trax Magazine*, Barcelona 2005. Sherburne's graphic suggests that House was the generator first of techno, then of most all other form on the chart. Since the present study is concerned with the lineage through electro, this view is not relevant here.



## 4.6 AMBIENT

A third new genre that had a formative role in electronica, the genre that Terre Thaemlitz began his work in is 'ambient.'<sup>176</sup> In the electronica chart Figure 32 - Electronica (Bogdanov:635) above, Brian Eno and Pink Floyd seem to float in disconnected, from nowhere. In the overview Figure 30 - Ishkur's Chart 'Downtempo', we saw that ambient arose from minimalism. Sometimes 'New Age' music is referred to as ambient; however, ambient was a predecessor of New Age music and is not synonymous with it. Mark Prendergast describes at length (90-92) the interconnected lineage of ambient from minimalism, beginning, as do most other sources, with Erik Satie's concept of *Musique d'ameublement* (1917)<sup>177</sup>, which bears a striking similarity to Eno's *Music for Airports* (1978); to John Cage's awareness of the sounds around (4'33" 1952); through minimalism, as cited by Steve Reich in his "Music As a Gradual Process" (1969); and influenced by John Coltrane's open jazz explorations in the 60s.

The minimalists Reich, Glass, and Riley had all three studied classical music composition (Reich studied with Berio, Glass with Persichetti), but none was enthusiastic about serialism, finding it nutty and unappealing (Reich), a one-way-ticket – to nowhere (Glass) and neurotic (Riley) (Prendergast 2003:92). Together, they had poised classical New Music for the jump across the gap separating orthodoxy from music that was more congenial to them. The main proponents of ambient music on the chart, Brian Eno and Pink Floyd<sup>178</sup>, completed it.

The achievements of the Briton Eno, born in 1948, are today universally recognized. "From Roxy Music's synth totin' glamourpuss to oblique strategist, ambient godfather, installation artist and award winning dad-rock producer, Brain One (sic) remains

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<sup>176</sup> Thaemlitz maintains that there are three branches of ambient: the branch describe here descending from Eno, in which often a sick, dark side is emphasized; a kind of spiritual, world-music kind of ambient; and the kind of intellectual, abstract ambient he and a few others work in. Conversation with Thaemlitz on 27 Oct 2007, Karlsruhe.

<sup>177</sup> Satie was a pioneer in more than musical matters, also in gender identity. For a brief period at the end of 1888, he published articles under the pseudonym 'Virginie Lebeau.' Ornella Volta has surmised that Satie contributed, under the *nom de plume* of Virginie Lebeau, to the *Lanterne japonaise*, a short-lived illustrated weekly (October 1888-April 1889) modeled after the house journal of the Chat Noir; see Erik Satie, *Ecrits*, ed. Ornella Volta, 3rd edition, Paris: 1990: 344. She also traces the effect of Jean Cocteau on the development of the concept of *musique d'ameublement* (1994:162). Moreover, I am astonished to discover that Satie has a MySpace page with blog; Schopenhauer is one of his friends there: <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=51675020> retrieved 16 Aug 2007.

<sup>178</sup> Pink Floyd's influence on ambient came from the albums *Ummagumma*, *A Saucerful of Secrets*, and *Meddle*. Since the band remained primary in the rock genre, they are not treated here, in spite of their association with the ambient genre.

one of the most influential figures in rock” (BBC)<sup>179</sup>. “Brian Eno's seminal influence on contemporary music cannot be understated. By introducing minimalist, surreal, and abstract models, he turned the rigid structures of pop music into something far more fluid” (SonicState).<sup>180</sup>



**Figure 37 - Brian Eno with make-up 1974 (© Preston/CORBIS)**

Prendergast sums up Brian Eno's role:

It was down to Brian Eno to synthesize the work of the primary minimalist composers and bring it into the mainstream. He had seen Philip Glass perform and was impressed by the music's form. He had heard Steve Reich and found fascinating the accidental beauty, which came out of Reich's tape-loop experiments. He was intrigued by Riley's use of tape delay and was generally enamored of La Monte Young, whose music he performed when he was at art college. He fused all this with the philosophy of John Cage and in 1975 invented Ambient music – music that would take on the hues of environment 'just as the color of the light and the sound of the rain' (Prendergast 2003:93).

Without wishing to reduce Eno's importance to a few impulses, for reasons of space I will cite here only four events in Eno's early formation that are of particular in-

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<sup>179</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/artist/w963/> retrieved 16 Aug 2007.

<sup>180</sup> <http://www.sonicstate.com/articles/article.cfm?id=110> retrieved 16 Aug 2007. See Eno playing synth in “Editions of You” with Roxy Music in make-up: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UODv3aCVxg>.

terest for the development of ambient. First were his early years of school training at Ipswich Art School and the Winchester Art School from 1964-1969. He was exposed to sound technology and read Cage's *Silence*. Of particular import was Cage's discussion of Satie's *musique d'ameublement* and the mingling of Satie's music with 'ambient sounds.' Other influences were the Dada and Surrealist movements, Allen Ginsberg, Buddy Holly, later the music of the Velvet Underground and La Monte Young. After graduating, he joined the Scratch Orchestra, led by Stockhausen pupil Cornelius Cardew. All before he was 22.

The second event was his work with Roxy Music from 1970-1973. With this group, Eno primarily 'twiddled' the knobs of a synthesizer and made 'shocking' appearances on stage in full make-up, feather boa, and shiny satin.<sup>181</sup> It's the moment of 'glam rock'. This largely British phenomenon of the post-hippie early 70s used sexual ambiguity as its shock tactic. In the wake of recent homosexual reforms in the United Kingdom and the militant Stonewall Riots in the U.S., there was a conflation of bisexual, omnisexual, pansexual (at any rate sexual) personae with aliens, of which David Bowie, Alice Cooper and Kiss were prime exponents<sup>182</sup>. Here was a true 'other,' defying all categories. We will explore the significance of this phenomenon in the section below 'Interstices of Gender'

After this phase, in the early 70s, Eno heard Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* and was thunderstruck by his simple use of tape-delay montage. This sparked the collaboration with Robert Fripp (guitarist of 'King Crimson') for the album *No Pussyfooting*, which had 21 minutes of looped guitar notes using two tape machines rigged to create drones, backwash, and an almost infinite repeat-delay effect. "This new approach led to Eno's being hailed for bringing Reich's minimalist technique into rock for the first time" (Pren-dergast 2003:119).

The final event, a sort of epiphany, transpired in 1975 when Eno was hospitalized and listening quietly to a gift of eighteenth century harp music.

[Eno] listened to the quiet music mingling with the environment – the sounds of rain outside and the approaching darkness. Early that summer he applied the idea of quiet, environmental music to a series of sounds he'd fed into a synthesizer. Rigging up a delay system using the two Revox tape machines (as on *No Pussyfooting*), he wished to make some background music for himself and Rob-

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<sup>181</sup> Both can be seen on the clip of "Editions of You" with Roxy Music retrieved 16 Aug 2007 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3UODv3aCVxg>.

<sup>182</sup> Wikipedia 'Glam Rock' [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glam\\_rock](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glam_rock) retrieved 1 Jan 2008.

ert Fripp. With the occasional adjustment of timbre through a graphic equalizer, he created a soothing, balming music, which stayed mostly in the same key and sounded like horns heard through a soft fog.<sup>183</sup> The resultant album, *Discreet Music*, became one of the enduring icons of ambient instrumental music (Prendergast 2003:119).

This album was followed by his *Ambient Series 1-4* till 1982.

For an understanding of the implication of what ambient music means for a new way of grasping the work of art, let us take a closer look at Cage's discovery of Satie's *musique d'ameublement* that was so important to Eno. We recall that one of Cage's great struggles and achievements was the removal of the music work from the concert hall to 'everywhere'. (I follow here the reasoning and quotes of Shlomowitz.) Cage, in his "Defense of Satie" (1948), "wants to show that form, method and material have radically developed in the twentieth century music, whereas structure, aside from Satie's innovations (and also Webern's early works), has not". What innovation does Satie's *musique d'ameublement* bring? Let us consult the program notes for the première in 1920, which took place as intermission music for a lost comedy by Max Jacob:

We are presenting today for the first time a creation of Messieurs Erik Satie and Darius Milhaud, directed by M. Delgrange, the *musique d'ameublement*, which will be played during the intermissions. We urge you to take no notice of it and to behave during the intervals as if it did not exist. This music, specially composed for Max Jacob's play, claims to make a contribution to life in the same way as a private conversation, a painting in a gallery, or the chair, which you may or may not be seated. You will be trying it out. MM. Erik Satie and Darius Milhaud will be at your disposal for any information or commissions.<sup>184</sup>

Listeners should behave as if the music did not exist; but it positively makes a contribution to life! That's innovation enough for one composer, all right. Shlomowitz comments the effect of *musique d'ameublement* on Cage: "It was a new context for music, and a context that broke from the traditions of the concert hall." And yet there is an important difference between Satie's posture and Cage's: For Satie, *musique d'ameublement* would be a part of the sounds of the environment, whereas for Cage, the noise of the

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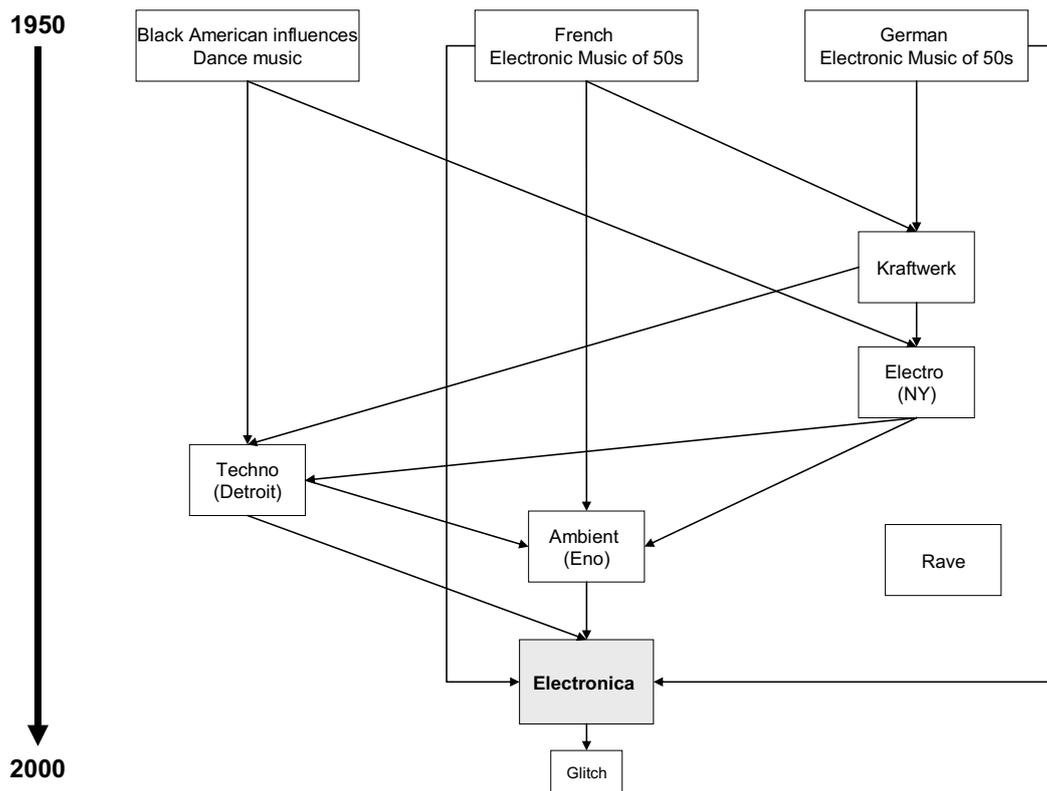
<sup>183</sup> It was an "atmospheric sonic wash that utilized the unstable oscillation of an aging EMS synth processed through a tape driven Gibson Echo Delay and bounced between 2 Revox A77's (SonicState, loc. cit.).

<sup>184</sup> Shlomowitz' reference, "Erik Satie quoted in: Pierre-Daniel Templier, Erik Satie (trans. Elena L. French and David S. French), MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1969 (original 1932)". Shlomowitz devotes a lengthy section of his article to the translation and reception of Satie's works.

environment would be the music. We cannot trace what note or notion of Satie or Cage influenced Eno at precisely what moment. But we sense his intellectual and artistic ties. This is one of the reasons, the deep rooting of the musical part of multimedia works in the history of music, that such works are able to achieve such depth of meaning for us today. “The emergent audio culture has achieved a new kind of sonic literacy, history, and memory” (Cox and Warner 2005:xiv).

#### 4.7 SYNOPTIC VIEW OF ELECTRONICA

After having followed the various interpretive views of electronica’s lineage, none of which seemed to quite fit the present consideration, I posit my own (the orientation on the time axis is only approximate).



**Figure 38 - Electronica Synoptic View**

What I find most evident in this figure is the crisscrossing of the many lines, and this is precisely what gives electronica its richness: a broad musical vocabulary, a wide pal-

ette of technology, an open, inventive spirit, and the combined heritage of ‘corporeal’ and ‘cerebral’ musics.<sup>185</sup> Its emergence was one of the moments in music history when a single spark seems to ignite different creative fires on both sides of the Atlantic. (This music was also quite appreciated in Japan.)

I have omitted England from this discussion of the lineage of electronica. For, while England was an enthusiastic audience for all the genres discussed here (electro, techno and electronica), Britons have tended to receive these forms creatively by changing them, for example into jungle; another example is dub of different kinds that are evolving today through the continuing influx of immigrants to Britain from the Anglophone Caribbean. Perhaps there is also a remnant of the division between ‘the continent’ and ‘the island’ in this reception. Whatever the reason (which cannot be adequately explored here), British musicologists and journalists have played an inestimable role in the reception and ‘canonization’ of electronica and other forms of popular music, as the many references in this paper testify.

One of the most remarkable transformations that took place in the course of the development of electronica was the shift from music consumer to music creator. The music consumer, the DJ, was a connoisseur and collector of music. Broadly speaking, we can ascertain here the strong creative drive, the search for a musical identity, and the communicational rapport with an audience that was driving the music consumer. Thanks to his own creativity in utilizing analog (turntables), then electronic media, and to his will to achieve new creative ends, the DJ forced the existing technology to change its role. The turntable (and later synthesizer) no longer simply reproduced music (Benjamin); a consumer good, it became the means to create new music (scratching, generating beats, creating and storing samples). We recall the explanation from the introductory chapter regarding cultural studies: the consumer is not merely duped by capitalist consumption – he creates anew with consumer goods.

As for the current state of electronica, in the United States and Australia, electronica remains popular, although largely underground, while in Europe it has become one of the most dominant forms of popular music. “Während das Genre zu Beginn der 90er Jahre die Wahrnehmung elektronischer Musik völlig veränderte (siehe auch Intelligent Dance Music) und als revolutionär galt, hat sich Electronica-Musik in den letzten

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<sup>185</sup> Thaemlitz takes the creative potential of this mixture as his one of the themes in his new album. “*Routes not Roots* is about the decontextualization of being a white DJ in Japan who has a history of DJing at Puerto Rican and African-American sex-worker clubs in New York. Deep house culture’s [cf. Sherburne’s chart above] association with African-American culture and at the same time European white producers creates an interesting conundrum around the identity of the music” (Crispy 2006).

Jahren zunehmend zu einem Teil europäischer Populärkultur entwickelt. Besonders Modedesigner nutzen Electronica immer wieder als musikalische Untermalung von Modeschauen oder von Werbeclips. Darüber hinaus sind sie ein beliebtes Mittel für sogenannte Klanginstallationen.<sup>186</sup>

I would like to sum up this sketch of electronica with a final, this time verbal, view on the genealogy of electronica by two philosophizing musicologists of contemporary music, Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. For them, electronica represents a “body of electronic musicians whose experimental sensibilities reflect the whole history of electronic music, from Schaeffer and Stockhausen to Techno and beyond”. They see a “new breed of electronic experimentalism that is taking place outside of the academy and the pop mainstream alike. *Electronica* represents the unlikely meeting of several genealogical strands: the sonic and intellectual concerns of classic electronic music; the do-it-yourself and bruitist attitudes of punk and industrial music; and beat-driven dance floor sounds from disco through house and techno.” A technologically adept generation has recapitulated the experiments and discoveries of early electronic music. “It’s not surprising, then, that this generation has come to hear the whole history of electronic experimentation as vital and contemporary: to learn from Stockhausen, Pauline Oliveros, and David Tudor as well as Kraftwerk, Afrika Bambaataa, and Juan Atkins, and to draw upon these sources to make experimental music that lands squarely between the concert hall and commercial pop radio” (Cox 2005:365-366). And at that very juxtaposition we find Terre Thaemlitz, to whom I now turn.

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<sup>186</sup> Although at the beginning of the 90s the genre completely changed the perception of electronic music (compare also Intelligent Dance Music) and was regarded as reactionary, in the last years electronica has increasingly become a part of European popular culture. In particular, fashion designers use electronica in fashion shows and advertising clips. In addition, electronica is frequently used in sonic installations.

## 5 BATTLE ON ALL FRONTS. TERRE THAEMLITZ

In this section, I investigate how Cixous' *écriture féminine* may help us gain insight into the different activity areas of the multi-faceted artist, Terre Thaemlitz. I will first sketch Thaemlitz and his various areas of activity; in the remainder of the chapter I will discuss the areas in which Thaemlitz' activities coincide with Cixous' ideas, approaching examples of Thaemlitz' music through a *lecture féminine*.<sup>187</sup>

### 5.1 BIOGRAPHY AND CONTEXT

Terre Thaemlitz is an award winning multimedia producer, composer, audio remixer, DJ, writer, cultural theorist, as well as owner of the Comatonse Recordings label.<sup>188</sup> His work critically combines themes of identity politics – including gender, sexuality, class, linguistics, ethnicity, and race – with an ongoing critique of the socio-economics of commercial media production. As a speaker, he concentrates on issues of non-essentialist transgenderism and pansexual queer sexuality; as a performer, he blurs the lines between human performance and digital composition, between genders, and between musical genres. Asked about his primary role, Terre Thaemlitz once jokingly replied, “post-Marxist anti-essentialist spiritual-debunkifier?” (Spiderbytes 1998).

Born in 1968 in Minnesota, of Pomeranian (now one of the ‘new’ states in reunified Germany) and Italian descent, Thaemlitz passed a ‘typical’ alienated queer childhood growing up in Springfield, Missouri. After high school, he moved to New York in 1986 to study at the Cooper Union School of Art (Bachelor of Fine Art 1990). There, he was drawn into left-wing activism, primarily in the realms of sexual political issues, and

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<sup>187</sup> Thaemlitz, like Stäbler, was “not so familiar” with Cixous but commented, “I like the connections you drew” (email to this writer on 2 Jan 2008).

<sup>188</sup> Where not otherwise specified, biographical information is from Thaemlitz' official biography at the Comatonse website, <http://www.comatonse.com/thaemlitz/profile.html#english> retrieved on 10 Aug 2007.

he began DJing (Young 1999). Starting in 1991, he was resident DJ at the infamous transsexual club Sally's II and became known for his unique intermixing of musical genres and moods. In 1997, Thaemlitz left New York for Oakland, California, and began producing his own tracks, thereby expanding on his concept of DJ-ing as a form of tape manipulation and collage. In 1993, Thaemlitz started his own record label, Comatone Recordings, which emphasizes custom colored and audiophile collectors' vinyl records. In 2001 he relocated to Kawasaki, Japan, where he lives and works today.

Thaemlitz has released 15 solo and collaboration albums and countless tracks, compilations, and remixes.<sup>189</sup> He worked with the Mille Plateaux label in Germany and makes frequent appearances elsewhere in Europe. His musical output comprises activity in the following areas: a) DJing deep house style dance music live at clubs and concerts; b) performing and producing serious experimental, socio-critical music under the name of Terre Thaemlitz on Comatone and other labels (like Mille Plateaux); c) occasional other, often lighter themes (the Comatone sound: 'fagjazz'; on the album *G.R.R.L.*: drum and bass) performed as other personae under the pseudonyms DJ Sprinkles, Teriko, Social Material, Chugga, Kami-Sakunobe House Explosion (K-S.H.E) on Comatone and other labels (Thaemlitz' name on his Japanese style 'cute' homepage is 'Tebbe Tubbitz'); and d) producing other projects and the work of other artists for his Comatone label. In addition, Thaemlitz works with two artists, Jane Dowe<sup>190</sup> and Laurence Rassel, who have the avowed aim of 'subject suicide'. These artists are difficult to track on the internet and elsewhere. In attempting to erase traces of themselves as artistic subjects, they explore the declared poststructuralist death of the subject. Other musical activities include music performances on DVDs and a radio play that Hessian radio produced then withheld (it has since been jointly released by Comatone/Constant VZW/Public Record). In addition to musical activities, Thaemlitz also regularly gives lectures. Most recently, he has participated in conferences on pornography (*Queer Feminist Perspectives on the Politics of Porn Performance and Sex as Culture Production*, 14-15 Oct 2006, Volksbühne Berlin; *(C)lick Me. Public Display of Internet Pornography*, 2 June 2007, Paradiso, Amsterdam). A publication of his writings is due to appear in 2008 (cf. Bibliography).

His explorations in electronic abstraction focus on themes of abjection, alienation, fracture, and contradiction. Not only gender but also socio-sexual themes stem-

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<sup>189</sup> Complete list including reviews available at [www.comatone.com](http://www.comatone.com); a compact work list is available at <http://www.kompaktkiste.de/thaemlitz.htm>, retrieved 14 Aug 2007.

<sup>190</sup> Assuming she exists as all, cf. <http://www.comatone.com/thaemlitz/collaborative.html> retrieved 4 Oct 2007.

ming from the years spent working in the sex-trade milieu in New York continue to infuse his work. His experiences as *gaijin* in Japan have underscored his experience of alterity, another theme he treats musically in recent works. Thaemlitz' varied experiences are received with a high social sensitivity and filtered through critical eyes, then distilled into audio works, lectures, and writings. Sean Cooper hears in Thaemlitz' music the influence of "ambient-leaning industrialists", as well as 'deep listening' composers like Pauline Oliveros and Robert Rich; he hears Thaemlitz' origins in House but quickly moving into "genre defying fusions of funk, soul, disco, and *musique concrète*" (Bogdanov 2001:514). The dense nature of his work, his extraordinary productivity, and his piercing cultural analysis have opened for Thaemlitz the doors to high-art technology temples where he has worked such as Ircam (1995-96), the Linz Ars Electronica festival (Honorable Mention, 1999), the German Transmediale, and ZKM (2004).

The vast range of his activities and personae hints at the slipperiness of defining either Thaemlitz or his activities. His reflection on the nature of genre, gender, identity, music, and the economics of the music industry are all more serious than some of his light-hearted pieces would suggest. Recent CD productions are in the subgenres of 'glitch' and 'clicks-and-cuts', but Thaemlitz is a nomad between genres. He uses gender to make many of his points – but not serendipitously. The iridescence of his various identities is part of a considered and carefully executed strategy that Thaemlitz elaborates in the *interstices* of canonic categories. This tactic of variability renders the task of 'defining Thaemlitz' for academic purposes daunting, for it is a tactic designed expressly to confound categorization of all types, including scientific. Nonetheless, it should not be taken for obfuscation; for, Thaemlitz is lucid and forthcoming with information about his tactic, what goals it serves, and how he elaborates it.

How might Thaemlitz create music that would defy genre categorization – and later gender categorization? And how might we approach this music using *lecture féminine*? To answer, I choose to read three examples of Thaemlitz' activities: a) interstitial compositional technique and track genre classification based on '*in between*s'; b) the dedication of Thaemlitz' music label to 'non-categories', and c) the extension of the interstitial tactic from genre to include gender and sexuality as *lieu*, as site for his phallogocentric deconstructive actions. The chapter ends with a discussion of artistic and philosophical implications of the interstitial Subject. Although Thaemlitz has recorded remixes ranging from Debussy to Kraftwerk, I restrict music analytic references to his album *Interstices* (2001). Let us begin to examine how Thaemlitz performs his subversion.

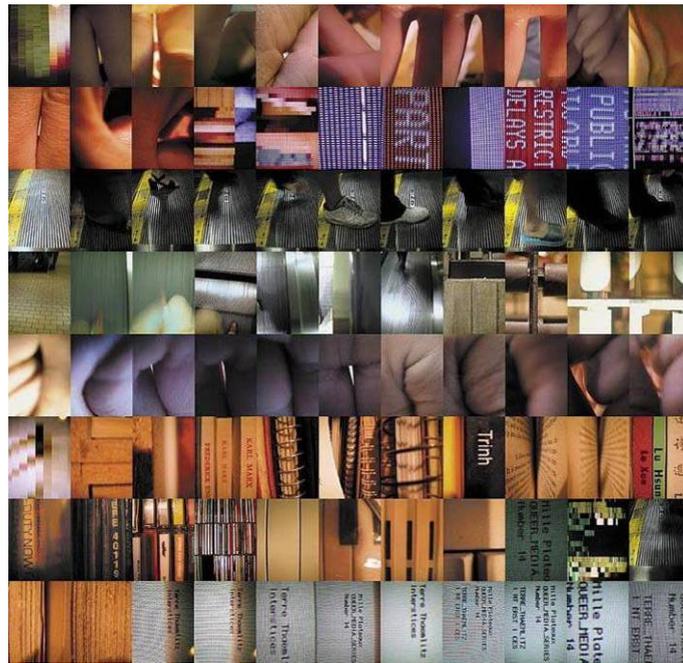


Figure 39 - Cover of CD *Interstices* (2000)

## 5.2 INTERSTICES OF MUSICAL GENRES

... “the missing piece in the analysis of Western rationality and individualism is the structure of gender domination” (Benjamin 1990:188).

As has been made clear in the discussion of genres above, classification is inherent to the professional practice of music. Thus, in its innermost workings, the practice of music furthers the use of categories and thereby the Western European system of categorization. When we ‘categorize’, we put things into those very convenient boxes that help us think and find things, buying into a rigid system that creates hierarchical dualities. Thaemlitz, like many other artists, was suffering from precisely this kind of boxing in on the artistic level, as he makes clear repeatedly. “*Instinct* [Thaemlitz’ label at the time] wasn’t really into this idea of ‘speaking out’ – they were very adamant about me keeping my mouth shut. They had lots of truly nice and professional ways of telling me this, but the result was mostly dissatisfying for me” (Spiderbytes 1998). Could such a system be dismantled or subversively infiltrated? How could such a system be changed? The world – above all young music aficionados and the music industry – witnessed one such attempt in 1999 with the introduction of Napster. The dissemination of

music changed with the introduction of Shawn Fanning's Napster's software<sup>191</sup> that, indeed, effectively disseminated music without the music industry and its restrictive system of sales classification. Nonetheless, even Napster continued the classification of music genres, in order to assist users find the kind of music they sought. What other type of system could disrupt and begin to dismantle the existing system based on categories?

Thaemlitz' first reaction to being boxed in by the music industry was to make tracks and CDs that defy classification into genre categories. In critical response to a music marketplace which attempted to pigeon hole artists, Thaemlitz deliberately sought to produce in a variety of unexpected genres. For example, his 1997 anthology of electronic dance music, *G.R.R.L.*, critiqued the rigid separatism between dance genres and subcultures by juxtaposing tracks of various styles, so that the CD itself could not be properly placed in a single category by dance music distributors or shops. This gesture played into Thaemlitz' larger interest in unveiling social processes behind the construction of social identities and the cultural flow of identity-based information. *G.R.R.L.* is "the first CD on Comatone. Each track is a different genre of electronica, from old-school breakdance electro through drum'n'bass. I was getting a lot of pressure from labels to do dance music in different genres, so I figured I'd shut everyone up." (Spiderbytes 1998).

Thaemlitz was discovering how he could use the 'in between's' to confound the industry. His next step was to take this tactic into the compositional practice itself. In the preceding chapter, we saw a broad genealogy of glitch and its general characteristics.<sup>192</sup> In *Bad Music. The Music We Love to Hate* (Washburne and Derno, eds; 2004), glitch is taken to designate "music that is somehow unwanted, played in the wrong contexts for the wrong reason; music that is forced upon us in all kinds of possible and impossible situations as we attempt to navigate through the saturated soundscapes of our complex postmodern lives. Yet, even such a tentative definition would seem to ignore the complicated logic of desire and agency at stake in the discursive use of the term" (1-2).<sup>193</sup> Already in his *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966), Pierre Schaeffer had spoken

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<sup>191</sup> I assume that the present-day reader is sufficiently acquainted with these events and therefore do not supply background on them. From my vantage point as employee at the Major that first supported, then litigated against Napster, I find that the Wikipedia article on 'Napster' is a reliable source of information on this phenomenon: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napster>, retrieved 10 Aug 2007.

<sup>192</sup> A more detailed history of glitch can be found in Cascone (2000).

<sup>193</sup> The volume is full of *bon mots* (Ferdinand Léger: "In the United States, 'bad taste is [...] one of the valuable raw materials'" (1), as well as worthy *premières*: the first English translation of the preface and first chapter of Carl Dahlhaus' *Trivialmusik* (1967). The volume is concerned with the "discrepancy between the

of sounds “due to some technical fault”, calling them “incidents”<sup>194</sup>. The incident “is a parasitic disturbance”, which is “neither desired nor heard as a property of the sound”. “Cette impureté peut être un bruit de fond excessif, un mauvais collant, un défaut de copie, une distorsion, etc. (465).”<sup>195</sup> We note that here, Schaeffer’s terms to attribute value to the ‘incident’ are all negative: excessive, bad, fault, *dis*-tortion. However, what is to be made of these new sounds?

Un tel travail fait intervenir, convenons-en, un certain sentiment esthétique. Notons cependant qu’il s’agit d’une esthétique encore instinctive, peu raisonnée, quasi sensuelle. [...] Ainsi le musicien expérimental dira vite et sans équivoque que tel son est « très bon », tel autre « convenable », tel autre enfin « sans intérêt » [but never “bad” – js]. [L’]exécutant [...] se plie [...] à retrouver une invention du sonore. Est-il nécessaire d’ajouter que, sans une pratique assidue, jointe à des dons originaux, on n’attendra jamais un niveau suffisant pour susciter une esthétique collective ? (471-472)<sup>196</sup>

In their articles in *Bad Music*, authors Sangild and Bates pick up Schaeffer’s tangent: They undertake an aesthetic revision of the negative, dualistic view of clicks. They cover “an array of more recent phenomena which deals self-consciously in perceptions of musical badness; from an aesthetics of badness that blurs the boundary between noise and music, to a technological badness that becomes reshuffled into the basic building blocks of a new emergent genre, and to the central role of a discourse of authenticity in the assessment of value” (11). Both authors are concerned with a new aesthetic value of glitches. Sangild is concerned with the transformation of perceived malfunctions into desirable – even beautiful – musical gestures, docking onto an aesthetic trope that conflates *Bataille* with machinism, often encountered in media art; while Bates questions the implications for the musical work when “machine-additions, degeneration, and playback malfunction are taken into consideration”. He answers,

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music addressed in the scholarly literature and what most people in this world actually listen to. With only few exceptions, scholars tend to focus on music that has special value in terms of influence, competence, and historical genealogy [that is to say, in terms of its canonization potential] all the while avoiding the mundane music of the everyday” (ix).

<sup>194</sup> I am indebted to John Dack for putting his as yet unpublished translation of Chion’s *Guide* to Schaeffer’s *Traité* at my disposition.

<sup>195</sup> “This impurity might be an overpowering background noise, bad glue, a faulty copy, a distortion, etc.”

<sup>196</sup> “This kind of work leads, we admit, to a sensation of the aesthetic. But let us note that this aesthetic sense remains instinctive, inchoate, almost sensual. [...] The experimental musician will tell you quickly and unequivocally that a particular sound is ‘very good’, another ‘adequate’, yet another ‘not interesting’ [but never ‘bad’ – js]. The performer must comply with the necessity of rediscovering the invention of sound(s). Must one add that, without diligence combined with natural gifts, one will never attain a level sufficient to arouse a collective aesthetic sense?”

among other things, that recording and playback idiosyncrasies and their obnoxious defects have always had a profound effect on musicians and listeners, and that unsolicited glitch and its artistic alter ego simultaneously worsen the work of art and make listening to recordings a unique experience (12).<sup>197</sup> It is from this historical perspective that he traces the emergence of glitch music as a separate genre”.

Let us take a closer look at the album *Interstices* and the glitch technique used in it. *Interstices*, like other Thaemlitz CDs, is narrative. It is not a piece to hear shuffled on your iPod; it is a work with a planned beginning and a definite ending. (The keys that are mentioned in the ‘description’ column are either sustained notes or strongly prepared cadences in the indicated key. **P** = pause; ↑ = sharp less than a semitone.)

**Figure 40 - *Interstices*, tracks and durations**

Track	Beginning	Duration	Title	Section	Form + Description
CD		56:44:45	<i>Interstices</i>		
				<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
1	0:02:00	0:12:35	left waiting	<i>text</i>	“stay awake” over Bb buzz
2	0:14:35	0:57:54	frames 001	<i>arch</i>	<b>P</b> ; G/C; D; <i>p</i> piano; subito <i>f</i> ; voice; glitches; vln G/C; <b>P</b>
3	1:12:14	0:35:10	frames 003	<i>suspension</i>	w/high glitches over pf ambient; <i>ppp</i>
4	1:47:24	0:32:13	frames 005	<i>theme exposition</i>	glitches <i>ff</i> ; noise; silence; 8-note loop theme F-Eb-Bb; <b>P</b>
5	2:19:22	1:42:46	systole 001	<i>sequence repetition</i>	Morse B/sinus waves+downward cascades over bass ambient pulsation
6	4:02:08	0:34:02	frames 002	<i>repetitions &amp; interruptions</i>	piano; M7 rep.; muzak; bits of Tr. 5; dirty recap of 4
7	4:35:55	1:29:20	systole 010	<i>arch: repetitions &amp; interruptions</i>	dirty radio; pre-24/25 mixed; 4-note repetition; dirty radio
8	6:05:00	0:12:51	there was a girl / there was a boy declamation	<i>refrain exposition</i>	glitchy text
				<b>2</b>	<b>Interludes</b>
9	6:17:51	1:06:17	systole 009	<i>Interlude (through-composed)</i>	Brazil beats + all pitches <i>ff</i> ; broken with quotes from above; <i>dim.</i> ; <b>P</b>
10	7:24:08	1:16:12	frames 004	<i>Interlude</i>	<i>d</i> ; sawtooth Morse over ambient <i>pp</i> ; noise; Morse; loud burst; ?? music; <i>dim.</i> ; <b>P</b>
11	8:40:05	1:52:59	systole 008	<i>Interlude</i>	<i>d</i> ; glitches; Maj. ‘happy’ orchestrated music+flute; glitches
12	10:32:49	0:43:32	systole 004	<i>Interlude</i>	glitchy orchestrated music; <b>P</b> ; record end glitch
13	11:16:06	1:10:32	systole 011	<i>Interlude</i>	glitchy piano & vc, etc., inter-

<sup>197</sup> Thus implying tantalizing potential for a redefinition of the art work’s *aura*.

Track	Beginning	Duration	Title	Section	Form + Description
					rupted melody; "only shades of gray" G7; horn; <b>P</b>
14	12:26:38	1:05:08	systole 005	<i>Interlude</i>	filtered, cut-up combo + glitches; <b>P</b>
15	13:31:46	1:17:56	systole 006	<i>Interlude</i>	<i>ff</i> 70s disco fragments vivo; <b>P</b>
16	14:49:27	3:10:43	systole 002	<i>Interlude</i>	sleepy 70s fragments; orchestrated light jazz; long <i>decresc.</i> ; <b>P</b>
17	18:00:10	1:58:11	systole 007	<i>Interlude; ends with repetitions &amp; interruptions</i>	glitch/noise; <i>cresc. molto</i> ; Latin beats; steel drums + glitches
18	19:58:06	0:43:51	systole 003	<i>arch</i>	low freq. buzz; slow blues dance & sigh fragments; low freq. buzz; <b>P</b>
				<b>3</b>	<b>Arabesques (Transition)</b>
19	20:41:57	1:25:06	entre l'action et le deuil 002	<i>Arabesque</i>	piano music fragments (reminiscent of Debussy, Satie, Chopin, blues); E Major end; glitch; <b>P</b>
20	22:07:03	2:13:26	entre l'action et le deuil 001	<i>Arabesque</i>	as above; minor; dirge; consonant fragments; crescendo, <i>subito p</i> ; B minor end <b>P</b>
21	24:20:14	1:26:23	entre l'action et le deuil 004	<i>Arabesque</i>	ditto; lento 'englouti'; glitch; minor/Major; <i>ff</i> minor end <b>P</b>
22	25:46:37	1:07:42	entre l'action et le deuil 003	<i>Arabesque</i>	a minor; arpeggiation; as above with word fragments <b>P</b>
23	26:54:04	2:22:37	entre l'action et le deuil 005	<i>Arabesque</i>	andante triste, a minor; combo. crescendo to noise; F sinus tones <b>P P</b>
				<b>4</b>	<b>Highpoint</b>
24	29:16:41	5:28:44	there was a girl / there was a boy intersex	<i>Documentary narrative</i>	refrain (ritornell) and glitches over spoken text clips on intersex problems <b>P</b>
25	34:45:10	2:15:24	there was a girl / there was a boy wendy (15 minutes of shame)	<i>TV show</i>	<b>P</b> TV show episode with feminine 'make-over' of a boyish young woman; longest, loudest noise; refrain
26	37:00:34	2:20:47	there was a girl / there was a boy analsex	<i>'Dramatic' sequence</i>	anal sex episode (pegging) with silences and distortion; refrain <b>P</b>
				<b>5</b>	<b>Retransition</b>
27	39:21:06	0:50:09	homeward 002	<i>Episode</i>	background scratchy 'religious' Hammond organ; <b>P</b>
28	40:11:00	1:01:16	homeward 003	<i>Episode</i>	distant country music <i>pp</i> , ends with glitches <b>P P</b>
29	41:12:16	1:43:56	homeward 001	<i>Episode</i>	country guitar picking & sliding, systoles, glitches; 70s disco chorus; <b>P</b> (23 sec.)
				<b>6</b>	<b>Epilog</b>
30	42:55:72	12:07:11	homeward 004	<i>Chill-out ambient</i>	↑Bb theme in endless reprise; plagal F-Eb-Bb <b>P</b>
31	55:02:68	1:43:52		<i>montage</i>	Bach Vc Suite; Japanese TV

*Interstices* can be perceived of in six sections. The first half of the piece is com-

prised of sections 1-3 (ca. 29'), the second half of sections 4-6 (ca. 28'). For ease of reference, I have assigned each section a descriptive name. The overall structure is arranged graphically on the chart (191). I characterize the sections as follows.

**Section 1, Introduction** Tracks 1-8 (ca. 6 minutes). The very short (12") to short (90") episodes are generally without 'instrumental' texture; among the elements used are sinus waves, buzzes, loops, bits and pieces... In Track 4 the major melodic 'theme' is introduced as a compressed loop; Thaemlitz refers to this kind of diminution as 'systolic' composition (more below). Track 8, the declamation of the work's central refrain, "there was a girl / there was a boy", marks the end of the introduction.

**Section 2, Interludes** Tracks 9-18 (ca. 14 minutes). In this major section, the individual tracks are longer, from 43" to 3'10". Interludes evoke different musical styles – blues, Latin, disco – while the scope of instrumentation increases successively.

**Section 3, Arabesques (Transition)** Tracks 19-23 (ca. 8,5 minutes). All bear the title "*entre l'action et le deuil*" (between action and mourning). They are composed using systoles of lulling music recalling Debussy, Satie, Chopin, and blues. The 5 tracks are successively slower and lead to the central section (29 minutes elapsed).

**Section 4, Highpoint** Tracks 24-26 (ca. 10 minutes). The section is comprised of three tracks, each of which presents an 'intersex narrative' of a different type: documentary, TV show, 'acted-out' sex episode.

**Section 5, Re-Transition** Tracks 27-29 (ca. 4 minutes). These 3 tracks ("homeward") mark the beginning of the ending and all have a country music flavor.

**Section 6, Epilog** Track 30-31 (ca. 14 minutes). Track 30 virtually ends the piece with a 12-minute, mind-numbing solid loop of the 'refrain'. The final track is a mélange of incongruous elements, including Bach's first Cello Suite in G (Prelude) and a Japanese monologue that sounds as if it could have been taken from TV or film.

Each section has a particular consistent character. Thaemlitz makes this clear himself in sections 3, 4, and 5/6, where tracks within the section all bear similar titles. The introductory section presents in condensed or germ form many of the elements that will later be developed: glitches, the musical theme, the piano, and the refrain; the Epilog, with its endless loop, stops the activity of the piece, bringing it to a close.

The sections I have dubbed 'Interludes' and 'Arabesques' are both internally homogeneous groups. Interludes employs different styles of music and Arabesques features predominantly piano music. While Interludes grows in instrumentational intensity throughout its ten tracks, Arabesques takes the other direction, going from major to minor tonality with increasingly slow tempi. The Arabesques form nine minutes of *lento*, a sad passage, evocative of many pianistic styles from the past. Thaemlitz wrote of

them, “those are the Nina Simone pieces [...] the French title is an obtuse hint (she fled to France), translates as ‘between action and mourning’, which is part of her conundrum as someone I see as ‘political’ but also distanced by necessity from the social relations that haunt her [...]”<sup>198</sup>. They form a bridge to the central ‘intersex’ passages.

By virtue of the way they prepare the Highpoint section, I call the two sections before and after ‘Transition’ and ‘Retransition’. After the quickly changing and more upbeat sounds used in the preceding section Interludes, the tracks in Arabesques relax (or bore) the listener, allowing the next section to catch the listener off guard, so to speak. After the tension that is built up in the highpoint, the tracks of Retransition (Thaemlitz’ title is “homeward”) produce a dénouement of the intensity, almost as if comic relief, whether evocative of fundamentalist Hammond organ or country guitar.

The Highpoint section begins at the half-way mark of the piece and contains three sections. The endlessly looped refrain “there was a girl/boy” opens the section, slowly sung over a glitchy pedal tone that is off by less than a semitone. The result is a sort of constant chafing ‘not quite in tune’, a metaphor for the situation of the intersex persons being spoken of. The narrative of the problems of the intersex individuals that emerges is shaking. This is in stark contrast to the banality of the TV sequence that follows. The remaining content and context of the third Highpoint section is discussed in the Section “Sex As Weapon” below. The mind-numbing Epilog, described above, is abruptly cut off. Fade out loop and fade in rustling noises and a brief fragment of the first Bach Cello Suite in G (Prelude) that turns into a buzz, overlaid with melodramatic sounding Japanese film or TV text. The piece finishes with 20 seconds of a soft glitch reminiscent of bird twitter disturbed by a brushing sound over the microphone. We have left the imaginary narrative of *Interstices* and are in post-production.

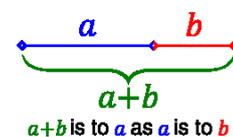
From a formal point of view, *Interstices* functions on the basis of the golden ratio<sup>199</sup>. The total length of the piece is 57 minutes (rounded off). The section “Highpoint” begins at minute 29 and lasts 10 minutes, to minute 34. The ratio of 57 to 34 is 1.68..., very close to the exact value of the golden ratio 1.62...

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<sup>198</sup> Email from Thaemlitz to this author dated 21 Dec 2007.

<sup>199</sup>

“In mathematics and the arts, two quantities are in the golden ratio if the ratio between the sum of those quantities and the larger one is the same as the ratio between the larger one and the smaller. The golden ratio is approximately 1.6180339887”, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_ratio#\\_note-quadform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_ratio#_note-quadform) retrieved 1 Jan 2008.





Remarkable in the overall texture of *Interstices* is the perfectly controlled overlapping of layers, which enables a subtle play with intertextual effects. The musical stylistic means Thaemlitz uses are fairly simple: straightforward crescendi and decrescendi, pauses, *subito forte* and *subito piano* for emphasis. As for the glitches, these repeatedly serve as *trompe l'oreille*: Was that really supposed to be like that? Wasn't that perhaps an accident? Occasionally, there is an unexpected (and unpleasant), but intentional, switch in dynamics: suddenly 'too loud', for example ("turn it down!"). These new materials enrich the musical and structural basis; but, the glitches, systoles, white noise, and framing also serve another purpose; they sweep the floor clean for a sober use of sound – a tried-and-true trope of Modernist music:

If the visual art of this century since the ready-mades and conceptual objects of Marcel Duchamp has moved toward the realm of the *anti-retinal*, so Thaemlitz' music - and that of contemporary terminal pharmacists exploring the social meaning of sound - is *anti-aural*. Noise and disturbance are generated, while digitally processed sample-ready-mades are ploughed and seeded with conceptual landmines. Sound eviscerates itself, mangles its conventional bodyform, pattern, development, proportion and rhythm, fleeing its romantic role as a pathway to the psyche of its own creator (Young 1999).

When we analyze the piece thus, we can see that the structure of the piece, with its overall form, stylistic consistency, internal thematic references, and metaphoric messages, is not far from familiar forms and themes. Probably the most irritating is the 'highpoint' section with its theme of intersex, particularly the anal sex 'pegging' sequence<sup>200</sup> (track 26), which risks being perceived in the vicinity of pornography. It is perhaps here that the 'traditional' listener will have the most difficulty in contextualizing the message. Suffice it for the moment to recall the pegging sequence in Gore Vidal's satirical 1968 novel (and the subsequent film) *Myra Breckinridge*, of which critic and Harvard professor Dennis Altman wrote, "It is tempting to argue that Vidal said more to subvert the dominant rules of sex and gender in *Myra* than is contained in a shelf of queer theory treatises".<sup>201</sup> Finally, let us hear how Thaemlitz describes his composition process in *Interstices* in a web broadcast<sup>202</sup>:

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<sup>200</sup> The neologism 'pegging' (2001) describes a sexual practice in which a woman penetrates a man's anus with a strap-on dildo; cf. Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pegging\\_\(sexual\\_practice\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pegging_(sexual_practice)) retrieved 18 Dec 2007.

<sup>201</sup> Loc. cit. Cf. also: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis\\_Altman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dennis_Altman) retrieved 18 Dec. 2007.

<sup>202</sup> Lecture held in 2001 at VJ5, fifth edition of the new media festival *Jonctions* of the association Constant, Brussels, available online at <http://www.constantvzw.com/vj5/terretalk.html> retrieved 5 Oct 2007.

Programming-wise, I use two processes. One, I call *framing*, the other I call *systolic composition*. Framing refers to the idea of 'frames': A digital sound file consists of very small frames, depending upon the resolution of your sound (44100 samples per second for a regular CD), more or less. If you select those individual frames, and repeat them – either through programming or manual selection – you can create very simple buzzes or click and glitches (or delay effects, if you select larger segments of a sound file). So, for this composition, the process was taking the beginnings and endings of sound files that were on my computer when I started this project. Part of the idea is making the project in the interstice between conceiving the idea for a project and the moment of putting it into the marketplace by turning it over to the label and distributors, etc. So, the actual production process is an interstitial process. [...]

Then it goes into a process of systolic composition. A systole in writing is when you shorten a phrase. For the heart, a systolic compression is when the heart pumps blood out of the heart. For composing, what I did was take pop songs, country, jazz, rock soul-funk, and delete the vocals out of them with rather hard edits. The idea for this was both to compress the file and to eliminate the dominant verbal discourse of popular music (represented by the vocals). What you're left are the little notes between words, so you catch the breath of the vocalists before and after they actually say a word. Then, the idea is to draw attention to the little melodies that occur at the periphery of dominant discourse. That's the dominant metaphor in these compositions. The glitch, or the acoustical residue for digital composition, can be seen as a metaphor for the cacophony of the cultural periphery.<sup>203</sup>

Here, Thaemlitz explains the implications of these two interstitial aspects: first in CD production as his personal '*j'accuse*' of the music industry's politics and economy; then in systolic composition. By drawing "attention to the little melodies that occur at the periphery of dominant discourse", Thaemlitz moves out of the normal cultural orbit. He is creating his own 'exorbitant method'. His systolic composition here aims to "eliminate the dominant verbal discourse of popular music (represented by the vocals)". We recall what this has to do with the artwork's function as part of the musical canon:

The musical composition does important cultural work. For society as a whole it can function as a discourse that *reproduces* societal values and ideologies. Through that process, it also *constructs* values and ideologies. Important social

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<sup>203</sup> Thaemlitz provides much more background *Interstices* in his lengthy essay available at [http://www.comatone.com/writings/interstices\\_install.html](http://www.comatone.com/writings/interstices_install.html) retrieved 8 Oct 2007.

variables such as power, class, and gender can be inscribed in a work” (Citron 1993:121; my emphases).

Here, Thaemlitz de-constructs the reproduced societal value of the relationship of discourse and periphery.

And Cixous? I suggest that with systolic composition, Thaemlitz might fulfill the aspects of *écriture féminine* Cixous describes below, reaching for a dismantling of the Western categorization system.

To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death – to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of the one and the other [see bisexuality below], not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another [see rhizome Subject below]. (LM:883).

If she is a whole, it’s a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organized around any one sun that’s any more of a star than the others (LM:889).

In the moving, open, transitional space, she runs her risks (LM:893).

Ways in which *Interstices* also dismantles old concepts of Subject will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

### 5.3 OWNING THE MEANS OF PRODUCTION

Judging by the overwrought relationship between Thaemlitz and the music industry, it does not come as a surprise that he decided to found his own label. Owning his means of production, part of Thaemlitz’ strategy, was a logical consequence toward dealing with the music economy. In this, he is not alone today; the internet 2.0 economy has provided the platform for the easy founding of interactive, participatory web-commerce sites. Today there is even a trade fair for electronica (in the broadest sense): Since 2004, *c/o pop* (cologne on pop) is an annual festival “focusing mainly on electronic club

music” – and commerce.<sup>204</sup> But at the time, in 1993, the context was different. “A major part of the rave and electronic movement was an outcry against the ‘media machine’, and many ravers and musicians did not wish for the music industry to have a large part in their lives”<sup>205</sup>. Whatever the prevailing situation, the strength of Thaemlitz’ creative drive led him to found his own means of publication, answering with this action what Cixous pled for in 1976:

Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relay-ers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not *yourself*. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don’t like the true texts of women [or those of transgenders – *js*] – female-sexed texts. That kind scares them. (LM:877)

The creation of a label is not so commercially banal as it might seem. As articulated on its website, Thaemlitz’ record company has an express mission: “Comatone Recordings is dedicated to the production and dissemination of non-categorical contemporary electronic music”.<sup>206</sup> This step has implications in three areas: a) intellectual property; b) anti-commoditization of the artwork; and c) the label as performance of a philosophical position.

We saw above how Bates put into question the aesthetic implications of glitch concerning not only the work of art, but also the act of listening: “unsolicited glitch” makes “listening to recordings a unique experience”. What about ‘solicited’ glitch? Is listening to it also a unique experience? And with what means is it made? Many glitches are sampled out of existing works. We saw above how samples enrich the semantic layers at the disposition of the composer; the system of referentiality it opens is immense. However, the process of sampling – what Thaemlitz calls “processes of cultural appropriation” rather than mere ‘remixing or sampling’ (Spiderbytes 1998), – often involves using someone else’s intellectual property; and in order to release a work containing such samples, the rights must be obtained from the copyright holder. As Thaemlitz and many other artists have woefully discovered, this is a long and difficult

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<sup>204</sup> The festival program is strongly indebted to the ‘Sound of Cologne’, electronic music, and the diverse urban pop culture that goes with it, but it also reflects contemporary trends in the indie pop and rock scene; <http://www.c-o-pop.de/press.429.en.html> retrieved 10 Aug 2007.

<sup>205</sup> Wikipedia ‘electronica’ retrieved 26 Dec 2007.

<sup>206</sup> <http://www.comatone.com/mission.html> retrieved 10 Aug 2007. “The idea behind the name Comatone (pronounced ‘coma-tones’) is about the passive-aggressive nature of Ambient music – conventionally relaxing, but also potentially violent in its inversion of melody and noise. A coma could be seen as a passive-aggressive state imposed on the victim” (Thaemlitz in Spiderbytes 1998).

endeavor. Since the rights of the sample can even be denied if the product using it doesn't please the copyright holder, the potential to thwart publication of creative works is great.

The 'traditional' composer seldom has occasion to think about such issues of copyright or intellectual property. She is perhaps more concerned that the world pay attention to her work at all. A more realistic concern may be along the lines of Ligeti's, whose works Kubrick used in *2001: A Space Odyssey* – without asking him or paying royalties. The fact that copyright can effectively thwart dissemination of the creative work is a recent quotidian occurrence. It is also at the base of much pending legislation and litigation; for, our notions of copyright and intellectual property are canonic. They lie at the base of our notions of society. In challenging them, the basis – the laws – of our society are put into question. And not just laws, our very political systems are put into question. "House culture [...] is about *imperialism* as music forms move across international borders and get played and recontextualized in new ways," says Thaemlitz (in Brunner n.d., my emphasis), drawing the simile 'music Major = imperial power'. The results for the creative process are devastating:

I think it's a shame that it's so difficult to reference audio, as compared to writing, etc. A lot of my tracks have ended up much more ambiguous than intended, simply to mask the source materials – at which point you lose referentiality. (Spiderbytes 1998)

When we consider how government (law-makers) and corporations combine to define and maintain monopolies on patent and copyright – allowing only Microsoft to profit *at the price it alone sets* from copying and distributing its software, or pharmaceutical manufacturers to profit *at the monstrous price they alone set* from selling AIDS (or any other expensive) medication in the third world – then we notice how monolithic their power is. With the founding of his own label, Thaemlitz speaks to these problems by creating a platform from which he is at liberty to launch alternative courses of action – the production and dissemination of non-categorical contemporary electronic music, for example, or its non-commoditization.

In the chapter on *écriture féminine* above, we read Cixous' remark about a 'feminine economy':

Because in spite of everything and for historical reasons, the economy said to be feminine – which would be characterized by features, by traits, that are more adventurous, more on the side of spending, riskier, on the side of the body – is more livable in women than in men. (Cixous in Conley 1984:133).

Cixous also employs the term 'libidinal economy' to emphasize an economy that functions on the basis of *jouissance*, desire, and giving, rather than on profit and exploitation, a notion that challenges commoditization and takes us to the very heart of *écriture féminine*.

V.C. What do you mean by 'libidinal'?

H.D. Something extremely precise which has been defined by Freud in his numerous writings on libido. It is something that can be defined from the body, as the movement of a pulsion toward an object. [...]

I can use the analytic vocabulary, since I do not have to enclose myself in its system: oral, anal, genital. A full, total, accomplished individual goes through all the stages and arrives at the genital stage that assembles everything. As for the intermediary stages, one knows, for example with Freud, that the anal stage corresponds to an anal economy, which is an avaricious economy of retention, of hard exchange. There are people in whom there is a dominance, an insistence. They stop at a certain stage, at the oral stage, for example, and have a censoring relationship to others. The ideal harmony, reached by few, would be genital, assembling everything and being capable of generosity, of spending. That is what I mean when I speak of *écriture féminine*, that is what I talk about (Conley:130-31).

Without pretending to know where Cixous' notions cross from metaphor to real, let us here take her words to guide our reading of Thaemlitz with regard to his 'non-categorical' economy. Is his initiative not moving in the direction of a libidinal economy? If we adopt Cixous' description of the 'anal economy', which only seeks retention and hard exchange – the currency for that economy is the commodity. that commodity only serves when it can be rationalized (cf. Adorno and his material fetishism critique of the serialists) and optimized for maximum profit. An ideal economy – Cixous' libidinal economy – capable of generosity, one that gives freely (mp3 downloads not used as part of a bait-and-hook sales technique) has no use for the commoditization of art. Aware of the various economic possibilities as manifest in the music industry, Thaemlitz takes the path of 'writing' a new economic path. The organization of his website and the numerous free downloads are further indicators that he is writing toward a libidinal music economy.

Finally, Thaemlitz' activity with Comatonse can be understood on a hyper or meta-level: not just as writing, but as a performance of a philosophical stance. The rejection of the commoditized work of art takes a new turn with poststructuralist 'evanescence'. This is close to Derrida's concept of the 'event', which we referred to in an anecdote early on. It is something that is not planned, it occurs spontaneously. It can-

not be intended, for intention negates the nature of the event. It occurs. It is a sort of gift from life. In this notion of 'fleeting-ness', we may see a corollary of the disappearance of 'eternal truths'. In contemplating a work of art, we do not so much appreciate universal values in it, as experience a fleeting aesthetic moment. Perhaps it is the moment in which our neural synapses spark, who knows. This new understanding of the aesthetic experience is reflected in the remarks and aims expressed by the curators of this year's Documenta in Kassel and the Venice Biennial, both of which stress the immediate, sensible aesthetic experience. The huge exposition area in the new Tate Modern, the Turbine Hall, also gives testimony to this new understanding. As large as an airplane hangar, exhibits there are made to be gone through, thus providing room for the aesthetic experience. Recent examples, such as Carsten Höller's huge slide<sup>207</sup> earlier this year, or the current exhibit by Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, a chasm than runs 170 meters through the hall and almost 1 meter deep<sup>208</sup>, illustrate this principle.

How does the aesthetic experience occur? Can the artist intend it? Obvious similar aesthetic space in music are the club, with dancing under lights and electronic music, and the audio sculpture or installation, made to be walked through, passed by, or lay down in. In the specific case of glitch, Deleuze points to the occurrence of this aesthetic moment as an instant that takes place within repetitions (*Répétition et différence*) – a kind of 'glitch'. Picking up on this, the German glitch producer and author Achim Szepanski founded a music label named after Deleuze's massive work *Mille Plateaux*. In doing so, Szepanski docked the notion of musical glitch onto poststructuralist philosophy. He also asserts claims for the label producer as artistic 'doer' – he is the co-realizer of the aesthetic experience. Only a few decades ago, we saw the realization of philosophic notions in the composer's act (Nono, Lachenmann). In Szepanski's case, we can see the expression of philosophy in the music producer's role. This fact is not lost on Thaemlitz, who worked with Szepanski from 1998 onward and released his first tracks in Germany on Szepanski's Mille Plateaux label (now defunct).

We return to the notion of 'solicited glitch', to resume our genealogy from Benjamin to Schaeffer to Bates. Is listening to it also a unique experience? I offer two statements by Szepanski that point to one response.

Even though every noise can be coded in the digital channel and digital music today actually works along certain standards, one has to show with the productions themselves how a potential machinism produces features in music, which are

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<sup>207</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/carstenholler/default.shtm> retrieved 11 Oct 2007.

<sup>208</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/dorissalcedo/default.shtm> retrieved 11 Oct 2007.

more than mere translation of binary codes. Elements of expression, which only a programmer could have imagined. Sound machines, which are more than computers, produce musical effects when they are driven by proto subjectivities.

Clicks, glitches, so called mistakes become sound. Sound events which are made audible by arrangement. The cut-copy-paste-funk of the actually most irrelevant sounds – the clicks – emerges: the movement of zero and one made audible. Clicks are a value, the money, law, communication and sound of the medial itself. They are the introduction into the minimalism of the 21st century, a tool for the next millennium. (Szepanski *Manifesto*)

When reading Deleuze, we encounter phrases such as: “Making the inaudible audible”..... The sound appears in its pure form..... In sound only the intensity counts, which usually is monotonous and always a-significant.... We are listening to this-nesses, singularities, intensities, forces, and emotions. And Deleuze speaks not only of time, as music is always an art of time, but also of tonal spaces. When the fast joins the slow, at the best creating something enormously molecular, not only the time is disjointed - it is motion-subordinated - but the spaces too become porous and crossed by whirls. What kind of spaces are those, what is their status in Deleuze’s philosophy? There is a smooth and notched space. Both spaces relate to a transcendental field, as an infinite plane of immanence, but also a finite empirical world. In the smooth space, events, tonal events and sounds are distributed according to a nomadic distribution. All possible events are distributed on the plane of immanence, which constitutes a condition for any art. It may be assimilated to a desert where small centers set themselves up or nothing is set up around a center, while taking in account the *nomos*, a nomadic distribution. And this is not a homogenous space, moving through permanent variations.

Electronic tracks are set up similarly to tonal deserts, on which virtualities and diversities are distributed. An outstandingly delicate topology exists, based not on points or objects, but rather on this-nesses, on a combination of situations (winds, the wavy movement of snow and sand, the singing of the sand, the crashing of the ice), the tactile properties of both. [...]

When, how, and under which conditions within this jungle of questions, are we looking for an event that has nothing to do with an object, relates to no reference? At best it could be said: It shows performativity. It changes the face of the world and asks: How do we proceed from here? (*Electronic Music*)

I’m not at all sure Cixous would appreciate the *métissage* that is skulking here in the wings; so instead I suggest the juxtaposition or intersection of two notions. Starting with Cixous and looking at Thaemlitz, could we have arrived at Szepanski’s view of

glitch without passing through Deleuze? No, no more that we can avoid Deleuze in the last subsection on the rhizome Subject with its notion of 'becoming-woman'. These disparate notions belong to where we stand today and need to be thought together. In the speed at which change occurs today, it is not feasible to keep genealogies clear and untangled; that would be the illusion of Truth. Hybrids occur spontaneously, perhaps *métissages*. I submit that Cixous mediates, she prepares, especially in 1976, at the time of her writing. She allows us to start with *écriture féminine*, and, going through Deleuze's 'becoming-woman', offers us a different vantage point to view glitch and Thaemlitz' activities. She sensitizes us for topics and offers us perspectives that will gain in importance through the decades to come.

I maintain unequivocally that there is such a thing as *marked* writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected or admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction; that this locus has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and not sexual difference), where woman has never *her* turn to speak (LM:879)

A feminine view of Deleuzian ideas is another way *écriture féminine* takes us to new schemes. Among concepts of anti-commoditization from Adorno to Lachenmann, from Marx to Derrida and Deleuze, Cixous offers us a feminine view of 'utopians'.

Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. (LM:880)

Thaemlitz doesn't just participate in discourses through his contributions, he creates his own. He *performs* it. He *writes* (publishes) his own discourse. He thus writes himself. Writing it makes it real. In writing, he becomes himself. In creating the label – in making his body heard – he becomes 'his self'. With this in mind, we turn now to another way Thaemlitz writes his identity, to his radical 'transgenderism'.

## 5.4 SEX AS WEAPON

I want vulva!<sup>209</sup>

La femme [...] cherche à jouir de l'écriture de façon érotique. Elle fait vraiment l'amour avec le texte (59). Je ne travaille [...] que sur l'interdit (61).<sup>210</sup>

So far so good, Thaemlitz transforms the everyday glitch that clogs our ears into his musical material and performs his philosophy by founding a label. But he takes the notion of glitch many steps further, weaving in explicit poststructuralist notions of alterity and subjectivity; added to this is the notion from *écriture féminine* of using sex as a weapon, as Thaemlitz does:

With all this going on, it then comes down to my interest in transgenderism or queer pan-sexuality. The metaphor I was going for was the idea of queer/pan-sexuality, transgenderism, inter-sexuality, as identity concepts that occur between dominant constructs of sexuality – heterosexual vs. homosexual, gender (with male vs. female) – and kind of trying to find positions that occur in these kinds of 'hollows' of culture. At the same time, though, by defining an identity, you start to make something concrete that then would be a removal away from this idea of a space between things. Sometimes this is done in really literal ways, like taking interviews of intersex people talking about the problems of the medical community making decisions on children's gender at birth and operating on them (VJ5 lecture, loc. cit.).

While informing us of his primary focus on gender and sexuality and of his tactic of playing the interstices, Thaemlitz also admits the limits; he describes the aporia of trying to capture evanescence in the hollows of culture. By composing in the interstices, he simultaneously creates accretions, thereby filling up the interstices, closing them, and eliminating their potential.

I have amply described musical genre and the effects of genre classification on the creative artist above, as well as Thaemlitz' initiatives to deconstruct them. What are the effects of a related notion, *gender*? I stated in the introduction that this *lecture féminine* of musical multimedia works is not primarily destined to deal with gender issues. Nonetheless, Terre Thaemlitz reflects on and uses gender as a tool in his performanc-

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<sup>209</sup> Cixous (1976:110; quoted in Kogan:81).

<sup>210</sup> Cixous quoted in Rambures (1978). "Woman seeks to derive (sexual) pleasure from writing in an erotic fashion. She really makes love with the text". "I only work on what is forbidden".

es, recordings, and writings. He ties it to musical, economic, and sociological issues; so in his case, we will treat this aspect. Thaemlitz advances his deconstruction of marketability by mixing genres, but also by mixing genders through his own transgender appearances. To disrupt gender, he has created several aliases to perform as: male, female, transvestite, unidentifiable. Up to now, I have not mentioned to the English reader that the French word for 'gender' is 'genre'.<sup>211</sup> So, in fact, we are discussing two separate ideas that, in French, have a single name. The origin of the English word 'gender' stems from Old French 'gendre' (kind, gender, from Latin *genus*), so it is not surprising that both gender and genre involve the separation of things or persons into 'kinds' or categories.

What exactly is transgender? "A transgender person is someone whose gender display at least sometimes runs contrary to what other people in the same culture would normally expect. Transgender folks come in several flavors, including: FTM (female to male): born female but see themselves as partly to fully masculine; MTF (male to female): born male but see themselves as partly to fully feminine; genderqueer: born with any sexual physiology, choosing not to identify as male or female" (Nangeroni 2007). Through transgenderism, Thaemlitz foils gender expectations and thereby the associated economic results.<sup>212</sup>



**Figure 42 - Thaemlitz (Comatense)**

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<sup>211</sup> For a detailed discussion of these two terms with regard to French literature and Cixous, cf. "Gendre/Genre Confusion" in Hoffer (2006: 83-105).

<sup>212</sup> Not stopping there, he advances a critique of the emerging so-called 'Pink Economy', the commoditization of Lesbian and Gay identities (VJ5 lecture from ca. 17:00 - 19:00).

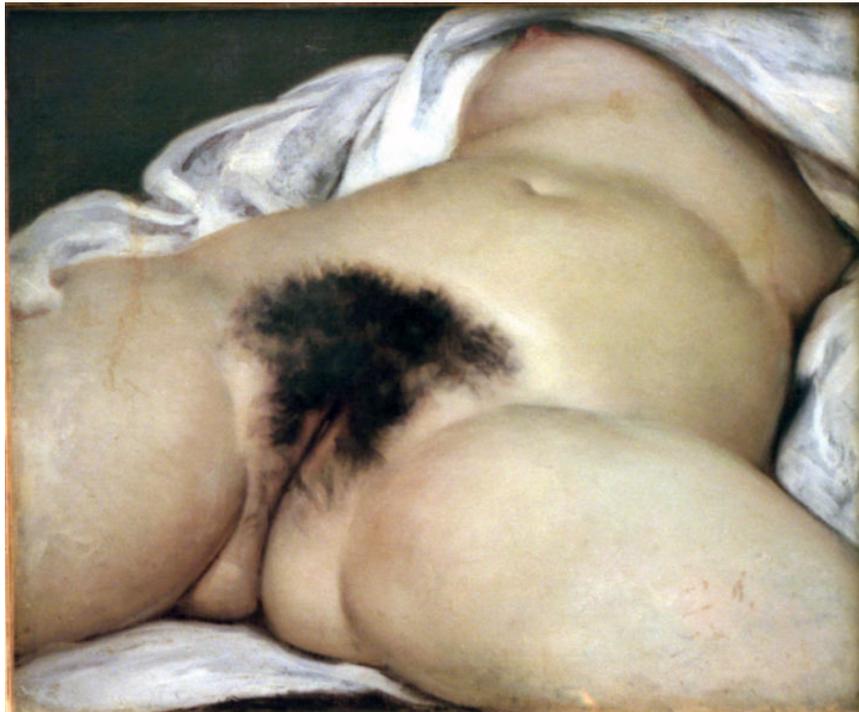
Now, gender, while not sexuality, depends on sexuality to function. I cannot define gender without mentioning, without ‘using’ sexual identification, hence sexuality. Thus, in using gender and transgenderism as tactics or ‘tools’, Thaemlitz has already come very close to using sexuality as a tactic. The use of sex as a weapon is documented in the Western canon since Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, at the latest. From Baudelaire and Rimbaud to Marilyn Manson, *épater la bourgeoisie* has been an accepted and recurring method of making an artistic point. In this context, the provocative cross-dressing of Brian Eno and David Bowie<sup>213</sup> seem mild compared to shock-rock, sado-music, and the sex performance art of today. As Rob Young put it, “Since the industrial revolution, sexuality has become the prime site for discussing and enacting rituals of liberation, domination, suppression, retention and release – and for the chaining or unshackling of identities”.<sup>214</sup>

But let us try to think “I want vulva” in the context of the poststructuralists’ Paris in the 1960s and early 70s. We must remember that the sexual revolution was nascent; although the students were rioting, it took many years for sexual liberation to become commonly accepted. José Bénazéraf films were moving toward pornography, and the first soft porn film, *Emmanuelle*, was released (society was light years distant from today’s SexArt, e.g., Marie-Claire Cordat). Lacan and his adepts spoke incessantly of the phallus, the phallic order, etc. without embarrassment. But what about... the vulva? A moment of irritation arises. Why? It would almost seem that the two words, phallus and vulva, have not emancipated themselves equally. If man is constantly erecting phallic towers, why shouldn’t we speak about woman’s sex? Or use sex more explicitly as a weapon, instead of brushing it under the carpet? This is precisely what *écriture féminine* does. And Thaemlitz does, too, as we saw in *Interstices*. The moment in *Interstices* where the anal sex incident takes place is extremely irritating. Is this still art? Haven’t we slipped into porn? It’s kind of on the border. What about other borderline cases, like Gustave Courbet’s *L’Origine du monde*?

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<sup>213</sup> Mike Kelley has traced that development in “Cross Gender/Cross Genre” (2006).

<sup>214</sup> The entire quote furnishes some other fascinating examples and aspects: “At moments of innovative pressure, where the shape and form of culture itself is being called into question, gender too gets caught in the quake. It was a woman, Mary Shelley, who anticipated and formulated robot-age mythology when she novelized the Frankenstein monster; and another, Ada Lovelace, who bolstered Victorian computer engineer Charles Babbage with the intellectual fire that lifted him through years of despondency. Later, at the end of the First World War, conceptual artist Marcel Duchamp’s playful personae anticipated modern music’s one-person population explosions, by inventing the feminine alter ego Rose Selavy. John Cage once reminisced about cruising the Palisades of Santa Monica during his formative years in LA; and Walter Carlos reconfigured Bach as a sequence of automated arpeggios on the Moog synthesizer, tricking him/herself out as Wendy into the bargain. Since the industrial revolution, sexuality has become the prime site for discussing and enacting rituals of liberation, domination, suppression, retention and release – and for the chaining or unshackling of identities” (Young 1999).



**Figure 43 - Courbet, *L'Origine du monde* (1866)**

At the time it was painted, was public opinion sure it was art? Is it that today, when the painting needs its own separate security guard at the Musée d'Orsay? What about Joyce's *Ulysses*, which was declared pornography and banned by an American court from 1921 to 1933; or *Myra Breckenridge*, mentioned above, which was also seen as pornography when it appeared in 1968? Today, via cell phones and internet, pornography has become so banal, so omnipresent even on the schoolyard, that it threatens to lose any last vestige of shock value, argumentum ad nauseum.<sup>215</sup> Gradually, sex has fought its way to being a legitimate means of expression in painting, literature, and film; also, the relationship of rock music to sexuality has been explored<sup>216</sup>. However, to date, the genre 'porn music' doesn't exist in musicology (although some might consider Neo-Nazi rock pornographic in the sense of "without socially redeeming qualities").

Where are the borders between mainstream entertainment, art, and porn? Thaemlitz has found another interstice to *play* with, to play *in*. At the same time, having found a topic that remains foreign to music and music criticism, he touches us listeners at a point that is really unaccustomed, if not to say uncomfortable. And at that point, where our customary listening habits encounter enough inner resistance to make us

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<sup>215</sup> Cf. Ariadne von Schirach's (born 1978) recent book on the 'pornografization of society" (2007); the protagonist of the new television + social network format on the internet, the life-style comedy *Quarterlife* (<http://www.quarterlife.com>), just launched on 11 November 2007, is a young woman who writes porn.

<sup>216</sup> Cf. "On the Expression of Sexuality" by S. Frith and A. McRobbie and "On the Representation of Sexuality" by J. Taylor and D. Laing in Scott (2000: 65-76).

really 'listen up', Thaemlitz forces us to pay attention and reflect on his themes. As British critic Ian Penman (2001) put it tongue-in-cheekily:

There's humor here and dare that could unsettle many safe nerdboy assumptions about cyber music as a safe place to go from the trouble and strife of gendered life, of sexual want, of lived lack. [...] It may well be time ask: what ARE you doing with that laptop? What are you keeping hidden under there? The whole of *Interstices* might be subsumed under one question: How do we count? Or perhaps: Do we still count? [...] How do we count when it comes to sex? As Lacan once said, how many of us really know how to count beyond two? (And approach sex from any other angle than simply "both" sides now?) How do we count sex in, when it comes to (male) music? How does sex count in music? Why does music rub us up the right or wrong way? (*Interstices* sent someone I know screaming out of the room.) How predetermined are we in our responses? What do we use to count on? (Starting from which all-too-solid One?) You can already see how fruitful a starting point this might be.

Is Thaemlitz not using 'sex' as a weapon? It must be pretty hard stuff that sends someone screaming out of the room. Thaemlitz already used gender as a weapon with his transgenderism. He has adopted gender and sex as the *lieu* for his artistic 'battles'.<sup>217</sup> I would like to point out three aspects of 'using sex' with regard to Thaemlitz. First, Thaemlitz uses transgender as a tactic. Second, he uses explicit sex in a musical context, where it is fully unexpected (and therefore retains an impact it has long lost in other areas). Third, these tactics are aimed at breaking down phallogocentric hierarchies, just as Cixous suggested.

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<sup>217</sup> Terre Thaemlitz commented on this sentence, revealing much about his attitude toward 'art' and his relationship to media. For this reason, I gladly include his remarks here: "I would personally say the media I produce are flares in the dark fired during very real (material) gender and sexual 'battles'. I am not interested in 'art', and do not believe in 'art' as a social arena – only as an economic construct. From my perspective, 'artistic battles' are inherently masturbatory and subjugated by the liberal pretense of 'art' being open enough to host/sponsor its own deconstruction. When I do need to intersect with 'the art world' I am more interested in the battle against art-economics (although, within artistic discourses, these activities are always reframed as 'artistic battles', once again directing attention away from social actions originating outside of art economics and replacing them with subjective artistic gestures, which are self-contained within art economies). [...] If I were to use your sentence structure to describe my own actions, I would be inclined to say, 'I have adapted the audio marketplace as the lieu for my gender and sexual "battles". The focus is quite reversed. Marketplaces (economics) are the location, gender and sexuality are themes, and the 'battle' is manifest through actions within the economic landscape. In your construction, the lieu is inherently non-material (i.e., impossible to be a location – gender is not a location, but interpretation/obfuscation of the incomprehensible 'body' as location). I understand how gender/sex as location functions metaphorically (as on page 183), but in this paragraph I think your point would be strengthened by incorporating reference to a material site of action, or *lieu*" (in an email to me dated 2 Jan 2008).

For the phallogocentric sublation<sup>218</sup> is with us, and it's militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored in the dogma of castration. They haven't changed a thing: they've theorized their desire for reality! Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts! (LM:885)

When the "repressed" of their culture and their society returns, it's an explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the Phallic period comes to an end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence. Muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dreams, in bodies (though muted), in silences, in aphonic revolts. (LM:886)

Cixous, for her part, demands several things with regard to sex, which I sum up as 'sex as weapon' and 'polymorphous bisexuality'. How literally Cixous means it with 'sex as weapon' can be measured by the explosive quality of her text. A few examples:

What I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy... (LM:875). We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation (LM:878). At times it is in the fissure caused by an earthquake, through that radical mutation of things brought on by a material upheaval when every structure is for a moment thrown off balance and an ephemeral wildness sweeps order away, that the poet slips something by, for a brief span, of woman (LM:879). Now, I-woman am going to blow up the Law: an explosion henceforth possible and ineluctable; let it be done, right now, *in* language. (LM:887).

Or in the "language" of music. And Cixous explicitly names 'her weapon' for this explosion:

An act that will also be marked by woman's *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression*. To write and thus to forge for herself the **antilogos weapon**. To become *at will* the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process (LM:880; my emphasis).

Another indicator of Cixous' aim is the central role she ascribes sexuality, as Cooper has observed:

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<sup>218</sup> Standard English term for the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, the French *la relève*.

Hélène Cixous shares with queer theorists a deep concern to question the limitations of identity categories.<sup>219</sup> Cixous' texts perform a continual troubling of categories that position through exclusion. Such challenges to discrete categorization align Cixous' writing readily with that of Butler, Sedgwick, and Fuss, but in contrast with the work of these queer theorists, Cixous' line of questioning is pursued almost exclusively with reference to categories of sexual difference and gender (Cooper 2000:189).

And she does so in ways that may have crossed borders of the time, for example, with personal 'graphic details', admissible for contemporaneous American feminist confessional poetry, but fully unexpected for poststructuralist 'theory':

A world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation of her erotogeneity. This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off. And then as soon as we come, we go and make ourselves feel guilty (LM:876-7).

As for her notion of bisexuality, Cixous considers it not as a combination of two opposing sexual dualities; she wants nothing of a "self-effacing, merger-type bisexuality". Instead, she proposes "the other bisexuality", a non-exclusionary location of both sexes in the self.

To this self-effacing, merger-type bisexuality, which would conjure away castration (the writer who puts up his sign: "bisexual written here, come and see", when the odds are good that it's neither one nor the other), I oppose the *other bisexuality* on which every subject not enclosed in the false theater of phallogocentric representationalism has founded his/her erotic universe. Bisexuality: that is, each one's location in self (*repérage en soi*) of the presence – variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female – of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this "self-permission", multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body.

Now it happens that at present, for historico-cultural reasons, it is women who are opening up to and benefiting from this vatic bisexuality which doesn't annul differ-

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<sup>219</sup> Cooper's quote: "For a reading that brings out Cixous' proximity to queer theory by indicating similarities between the work of Cixous, Butler, and Sedgwick, see Emma Wilson, 'Hélène Cixous: An Erotics of the Feminine', in Hughes and Ince, eds, *French Erotic Fiction* (121-45)".

ences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number. In a certain way, “woman is bisexual”; man – it’s a secret to no one – being poised to keep glorious phallic monosexuality in view. By virtue of affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallocratic ideology has claimed more than one victim. (LM:884)

In fact, her new ‘definition’ of bisexuality is an oxymoron; for ‘bi’ means two; yet Cixous proposes a sexuality that abolishes a notion of only two poles and includes numerous expressions of sexuality, and of a self “variously manifest”, “non-exclusionary”, that “multiplies” the effects of desire in the self. This coincides with Thaemlitz’ stance, “No, I am not Bisexual. I am Queer. The language of Bi-sexuality reinforces the binarism of Heterosexuality and Homosexuality. There are more than two forms of sexuality, and more than two genders”<sup>220</sup>.

In Cixous’ ‘other bisexuality’, the notion of *jouissance* plays a large role:

Heterogeneous, yes. For her joyous benefit she is erogenous; she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous: airborne swimmer, in flight, she does not cling to herself; she is dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirous and capable of others, of the other woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn’t, of him, of you. (LM:889-90)

Cooper points out that, far from being essentialist, Cixous’ ‘bisexuality’ functions to break down categories.

Muddling the distinctions and alignments between woman-female-feminine and man-male-masculine, Cixous states that bisexuality can be played out between any two people. [...] The questioning of the sex-gender-sexuality equation that Cixous’ work performs aligns her work implicitly with that of Butler who seeks more explicitly to trouble gender categories so as to question hierarchical understandings of sexuality. [...] Cixous does this in her] more poetic or fictional texts in which various sexual identifications are acted out (193)

This new category of sexuality, whether the denomination is Cixous’ “bisexuality” or Thaemlitz’ usage of “queer” is the third way in which Thaemlitz breaks down categories. A final point, how these tactics and the dismantling are used toward forging a new concept of Subject, will be treated in the following final section.

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<sup>220</sup> <http://www.comatonse.com/writings/iamnotalesbian.html> retrieved 26 Oct 2007.

## 5.5 THE RHIZOME SUBJECT

Throughout my discussion of poststructuralism in this dissertation, I have traced the development of a notion of Subject and compared it to the ‘com-posing’ author. I have particularly attempted to limn the development that Cixous proposed, or lines of development suggested by her writings. In the present section, I will carry her notion of a pluralistic, ‘bisexual’ Subject discussed in the preceding section toward another post-structuralist notion, the “rhizome” Subject. The rhizome Subject was proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in their work *Mille Plateaux* in 1980, thereby postdating Cixous’ works referenced here. Also of interest to our discussion is their notion of “becoming woman” postulated in the same work.

There are four specific reasons for extending my consideration of Cixous’ notion to Deleuze and Guattari. The first and over-riding reason is the neglect contemporary commentators demonstrate of the influence Cixous and other feminist theorists on the development of Deleuze’ and Guattari’s concepts; it deserves reparation. This neglect would be less remarkable, if the second reason did not exist: Deleuze and Guattari are the philosophical darlings of the hour. From my first experience with a scholarly congress on cultural studies in Leeds in 2005 to the conference “re:place” held in November 2007, few were the presentations that shunned mention of these two great thinkers. The third reason is the applicability Deleuze’ and Guattari’s concepts have for networks and net art – and hence for media theory; for sampling, and for electronica. As discussed above, this fact has been highlighted by Achim Szepanski, founder of *Mille Plateaux*. Through the efforts of Szepanski and others, the two philosophers are, at least for the moment, inextricably bound to the musical genres discussed here. The final reason for treating the thought of Deleuze and Guattari here is that today, 27 years after the publication of their monumental *Mille Plateaux*, a new generation of authors has studied their work and is attempting a reconciliation between their work and the work of feminist criticism – we have entered the age of ‘post-feminism’.

Deleuze and Guattari’s view present ample provocation for feminist critics like Butler, Irigaray, Jardine, and Lindhoff – particularly their appropriation of the feminine experience in the concept of ‘becoming woman’ without mention of the influence of feminist theory. Olkowski (1999) has taken many of these critiques into account (Chapter 2, “Can a Feminist Read Deleuze and Guattari?” 32-58) and goes a long way toward pointing out proximities between feminist thought and these great thinkers. The

lacuna of trying to bring Cixous' thought together with Deleuze and Guattari is taken up by Bryden (2004)<sup>221</sup>, Bray (2004), and more exhaustively by Zajac (2002) in the second half of her investigation beginning with "Introduction: How to Write on Deleuze and Cixous?" (69-72). The present attitude is that this question may open onto relevant and fruitful new paths: for feminist criticism, for philosophy, and for media theory – for gendertronics. I will discuss some of these paths in the conclusion of this work, but for now, let us examine the notions in question.

In the opening pages of *Mille Plateaux*, we are confronted with a new concept of the 'reader', and thus of the relationship between reader and book (up to now, Subject and Object, as seen here in Chapter 1.4): "A book has neither object nor subject..." The authors undertake three metaphors to describe concepts of a book. First, there is the "root book" (5-6), a vertical, binary "system of thought [that] has never reached an understanding of multiplicity..." (5). A second system is the "radicle-system", which has a circular, cyclic form (6.). Finally, it is stated that "the multiple *must be made*", and the notion of rhizome is introduced (7).

A rhizome as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles [...] any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order (7).

We find that in rhizome bodies, vertical, hierarchical relationships are replaced by horizontal ones. The constructs of Subject and Object are dissolved. This leads to the possibility of Subject-Subject relationships and to a new notion of subjectivity:

Le mot de Guattari, « nous sommes tous des groupuscules », marque bien la recherche d'une nouvelle subjectivité, subjectivité de groupe, qui ne se laisse pas enfermer dans un tout forcément prompt à reconstituer un moi, ou pire encore un surmoi, mais s'étend sur plusieurs groupes à la fois, divisibles, multipliables, communicants et toujours révocables. Le critère d'un bon groupe est qu'il ne se rêve pas unique, immortel et signifiant, comme un syndicat de défense ou de sécurité, comme un ministère d'anciens combattants, mais se branche sur un dehors qui le confronte à ses possibilités de non-sens, de mort ou d'éclatement, « en raison même de son ouverture aux autres groupes ». *L'individu à son tour est un tel groupe.*<sup>222</sup> (Deleuze 1974 ; my italics)

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<sup>221</sup> For its investigation of the "reflective consonance between Deleuze and his reviewee", Cixous, Bryden's recent article merits further attention. Bryden examines a forgotten but recently reprinted review of Cixous' novel *Neutre* (1972) by Deleuze for *Le Monde* in 1972 (cf. Lapoujade, D. 2007).

<sup>222</sup> "Guattari's aphorism 'We are all groupuscules' [corpuscles are minute globular particle; the neologism 'groupuscule' might be a *group* of minute particles] designates well the search for a new subjectivity, a

The concept of the rhizome Subject seems fairly straight forward, and I take it at face value. My goal here is neither to question its lineage or definition, nor to critique it. The metaphor of the rhizome carries the notion of Cixous' multiple bisexual Subject further; at the same time, it removes it from a context of sexuality. As a culmination in the development of Subject notions, it does away with hierarchy, replacing it with the network. I suggest that Thaemlitz' play with various personae, with Queer identity, and his collaborations with other artists represent forms of a rhizome Subject. Another example is the 'highpoint' of *Interstices*, in which he composes three different perspectives based on three different subjects of intersex and/or transgenderism: the parent of an intersex child; the young woman who is 'remade' to conform to conventional concepts of feminine prettiness, and the couple having sex, where she, wearing a dildo, assumes the 'traditional' male role of impaling him, thereby turning even homosexual stereotypes of man/man sex around. None of the single identities taken alone is Thaemlitz' 'true' identity; it is the clump of them, with their interrelations and future excrescences, that constitute the Thaemlitz-Subject, although any one may be at one time true.<sup>223</sup> This 'group-of-identities' notion is inherent in Cixous' concept of bisexuality; it can also be found in her notion of the "third body", which "calls attention to the in between, the liminal, that which passes through one and the other" (Bray 2004:63).

If the rhizome Subject is an a-sexualized notion of the Subject, sexuality, or gender – is reintroduced to it via the notion of 'becoming woman', a notion that is less straightforward. How can the endless binaries and dualism be overcome? "The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo [...]" (305). This intermezzo is 'becoming'. "It must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming woman. It is the key to all the other becomings" (306). The woman is "minoritarian" in relation to the man, who is "majoritarian" – that is

the form under which man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard upon which the majority is based: white, male, adult, "rational", etc., in short, the average European, the subject of enunciation (322). [...] Man is majoritarian par excellence, whereas becomings are minoritarian; all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian" (320). Majority implies a state of domination [...] 'man' constituted a

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group subjectivity, which doesn't allow itself to be enclosed in a whole ready to constitute an ego or, even worse, a superego; instead, it spreads to several groups at a time – divisible, multipliable, communicative, and always revocable. The criterion of a good group is that it doesn't have the illusion of being unique, immortal, and significant, like a union for defense or security, like a veterans' administration; rather, it branches outward and confronts the possibilities of nonsense, death, or explosion 'occasioned by its very openness to other groups'. For its part, *the individual is such a group*" (Deleuze 1974; my italics).

<sup>223</sup> Thaemlitz touches on these themes of identity in (2003g).

standard in the universe in relation to which men necessarily (analytically) form a majority (321). In this sense women [...] are minoritarian. It is perhaps the special situation of women in relation to the man-standard that accounts for the fact that becomings, becoming minoritarian, always pass through becoming-woman (321).

This concept of becoming-woman reminds us of Cixous' concept:

The woman arriving over and over again does not stand still; she's everywhere, she exchanges [...] She comes in, comes-in-between herself me and you, between the other me where one is always infinitely more than one and more than me, without the fear of ever reaching a limit; she thrills in our becoming. And we'll keep on becoming! (LM:893)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the minoritarian has an advantage. In interacting with the majority, the minoritarian "deterritorializes" it, affects it, moves it. Like Einstein's theory of general relativity – the "gold standard for beauty in physics" – in a single statement it explains the force of gravity: "mass tells space-time how to curve, space-time tells mass how to move"<sup>224</sup>. So, too, the minority, no matter how small, is capable of affecting the majority, of pushing it to a new territory. "Because only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming, [...] becoming-woman necessarily affects men as much as women (321)".

So far, so good; but alas, somehow "in a way", man maintains his dominance over this marvelous becoming-woman:

In a way, the subject in a becoming is always "man", but only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity. [...] A woman has to become-woman, but in a becoming-woman of all man (321). [...] woman as a molar entity<sup>225</sup> *has to become-woman* in order that the man also becomes- or can become-woman (304).

For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming-woman is at the service of man. Yet, but for the alterations of a few words, it is almost Cixous' message, as well:

When I say "woman", I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man: and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history (LM:875-6). It will be up to man and

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<sup>224</sup> *New Yorker*, 2 Oct 2007, [http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/10/02/061002crat\\_atlarge](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/10/02/061002crat_atlarge) retrieved 29 Dec 2007.

<sup>225</sup> "Deleuze and Guattari insist upon the co-existence of two dimensions of the subject, the 'molar' and 'molecular' ones, which correspond to two planes of the real, the plane of transcendence and the plane of immanence, respectively. Becomings activate the molecular dimension" (Zajac 2002: 93). "All becomings are molecular" (Mille Plateaux: 303).

woman to render obsolete the former relationship and all its consequences, to consider the launching of a brand-new subject, alive, with defamilialization (LM:890).

I put aside the problematic of feminist critique to regard instead commonalities. In common is, for example, the notion of finding the identity of the subject in the act of writing (or in other actions, like making music). Zajac pursues a resolution of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of writing – “writing is traversed by strange becomings”<sup>226</sup> – with Cixous' *écriture féminine* in her chapter “The Feminine of Becomings” (99-105). Cixous, like Deleuze and Guattari, sees the locus for the creation of the new, multiple Subject in the *in-between*.

A process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms (and man, in his turn) (LM:883).

For Cixous, the in-between exists in feminine writing at the service of woman. Regarding Thaemlitz, we can see in both cases how s/he is playing in the interstices, seeking and creating there. Likening the interstices of composition to the first instant of donning drag, she wrote:

Like applying the first cold drops of foundation to my face, there is no moment when I am less masculine or less feminine. I can control this sense of loss, determining the precise moment I enter into it. But the contrary does not hold true. I do not feel more masculine or more feminine when I do not apply makeup. Not in a predictable way. My sense of direction is demarcated by processes of accumulative abandonment. I collect these interstitial moments, recalling them like invisible snapshots of past actions that only take shape when framed by the events which surround them (Thaemlitz 2000).<sup>227</sup>

We recall the tracks “entre l'action et le deuil” in *Interstices: between action and mourning*<sup>228</sup>, loss, abandonment – moments that characterize transition. Thaemlitz is constantly becoming woman, only to re-become man. If it is a posture, then it is an

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<sup>226</sup> Quoted in Zajac: 99

<sup>227</sup> [http://www.comatonse.com/writings/interstices\\_install.html](http://www.comatonse.com/writings/interstices_install.html) retrieved 20 Dec 2007.

<sup>228</sup> For a tantalizing discussion of gender traits of mourning cf. Derderian (2001).

existential decision to accept the consequences of ‘groupuscule’ subjectivity, branching outward and confronting the “possibilities of nonsense, death, or explosion ‘occasioned by its very openness to other groups’” (Deleuze, loc. cit.).



**Figure 44 - Thaemlitz, Nov 2007 (my photo)**

Thaemlitz doesn't just 'happen' to realize many of Cixous' exhortations, simply because such things are 'in the air'. Much more radically, Thaemlitz consciously adopts poststructuralist positions and lives them. He realizes many notions suggested by Cixous for deconstructing established institutions, traditions, and hierarchies, employing compositional, economic, and social means to do so. In all of these ways, Thaemlitz transcends traditional boundaries, thereby transforming the creative means and the creative act in Cixous' sense.

## 6 WRITING THE ELECTRONIC BODY. DJ MISS KITTIN

You live, you believe, you give life to values that are apparently moral values, but in fact these moral values do not exist without precisely coming forth from a primary locus which is in any case *corporeal*.<sup>229</sup>



**Figure 45 - Miss Kittin, Sónar 2006<sup>230</sup>**

As has been indicated in the previous chapters, one of the central concepts of *écriture féminine* – the one that has perhaps the most deconstructive potential – is the body; the words ‘body’ and ‘bodies’ appear 49 times in LM. Contemporary culture is obsessed with the body, and discussions on notions of the body are intricate and difficult. A re-conceptualization has taken place that sees corporeality as a historically and polit-

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<sup>229</sup> Cixous in Conley (1984: 130); my italics.

<sup>230</sup> Photo by DJ MsDD <http://www.flickr.com/photos/43364726@N00/212116637/> retrieved 1 Feb 2008

ically inscribed entity. Corporeality represents the site of subjective experience that may contest oppressive power structures, and theorizing the body has become a major project in academia (Simon 2004:1). In order to concentrate our attention on this notion, I have saved it for the last. My research has demonstrated that, in contrast to my initial expectation, there is not too little that has been written about the body, rather very much – in literary and media theory, feminist criticism, philosophy, neurosciences. Still it remains true that (once again) “until recently, musicology has steered away from questions of music’s relation to the body” (Scott 2000:61). Therefore, my treatment here in one chapter seeks to gather together a certain number of these research results relevant to music, using Cixous’ thought as guiding line.<sup>231</sup> This collection, by virtue of its point in time, its musical orientation, and its grouping around Cixous’ theory, will have its own quality. I hope that it will be useful as point of departure for indicating new paths for further research on this complex topic, whether for myself or for others.

How does Cixous bring up and speak of the body? What does she mean by it? Why does she bring up the concept of the body, and what potential is inherent in it? How has this topic been received to date, particularly in the musical discourse, and what is the situation today? Finally, and most importantly for our discussion, where can a new notion of the body, in Cixous’ sense, be perceived in musical multimedia art employing new technologies, pointing the way to new interpretive approaches? I discuss these questions referring to DJ Miss Kittin. First, I describe her work in electronica and improvisation, then briefly sketch views on the body from third-wave feminism, from musical/musicological, and other standpoints. Then I will turn to Cixous’ words before considering some philosophical aspects, and I will conclude with new avenues for thinking the body.

Up to here, I have proceeded by trying to find out what new vistas Cixous’ concepts can open in regarding the music of specific composers. In this last chapter, I inverse the procedure. I will look at Miss Kittin’s body-oriented work and try to see what it can tell us about the concept central to Cixous’ *écriture féminine*. There are particular reasons for this reversal. First, DJ Miss Kittin does not so much compose music, as DJ, she plays the music of others. To date she has produced only one album and few texts

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<sup>231</sup> A general history is offered by Carson “Feminism and the Body” (Gamble 2001: 117-128). Other sources include Section IV “The Body is a Situation”: Simone de Beauvoir, which also treats Merleau-Ponty, in Chapter 1, “What Is a Woman? Sex, Gender, and the Body in Feminist Theory” in Moi (1999:59-83); Chapter 1, “Refiguring Bodies” in Elizabeth Grosz’ treasure trove *Volatile Bodies. Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994); Chapter 4 on Merleau-Ponty, “Lived Bodies. Phenomenology and the Flesh”; the sections “Which Body?” and “The Body as Visual Surface” in Braidotti (1994:44-51); Kirby’s *Telling Flesh. The Substance of the Corporeal* (1997); Ernst Schulte-Holtey’s “Körper/Figuren. Zur interdiskursiven Konstitution elementaren Wissens” in Heinz and Kuster (1998:63-82).

on her work. She is reticent with the press: She refused to grant me an interview, and her agent never responded to a request for promo materials. So, instead of first undertaking an analysis of her work, I will create (what Thaemlitz refers to as) “a good fiction” about her work – I will consciously project my notions onto her body (knowing well how subjective, even unfair this may be), in order to delve more deeply into notions of the body.

There are several CDs of her music available, and many clips of her appearances on the web. I have seen her in concert twice. I base my ‘interpretation’ of her work on these appearances and on her two-page contribution, “Untitled”, to Jansen’s *Gendertronics* (2005:17-18). In her appearances, Miss Kittin, in contrast to many (especially male) electronica DJ colleagues, puts her body in the foreground. She uses her body. And so for me, as for others in her audience, her body becomes the surface onto which I project my thoughts. This is part of her show, on which she also comments in her (song) texts. I hope that in examining my own projections, Cixous’ thoughts on the projections made on bodies, and in examining bodies and notions of bodies, to arrive at some *aperçus* on where the body stands in musicology today.

## 6.1 BIOGRAPHY AND MUSICAL CONTEXT

Caroline Hervé, AKA Miss Kittin, was born in 1973 in Grenoble, France, and grew up in a musical household.<sup>232</sup> She received piano instruction for two years and practiced ballet from the age of 5 to 22. In 1991, she began studying contemporary art, first at Marseille, then at the school of Beaux-Arts of Grenoble from 1993-94. She finished her studies with a cycle in graphic design in Amiens in 1995 before devoting herself exclusively to DJing. She first came into contact with electronic music at a New-Wave club in Grenoble, where she offered her services as a go-go dancer (“never topless”). There, she met The Hacker, with whom she would later collaborate and soon thereafter attended her first rave party (“a revelation”).

Miss Kittin’s producer and collaborator, The Hacker (real name: Michel Amato, born 1972), is a French electroclash and techno producer. His work has been influ-

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<sup>232</sup> Biographic information taken from Miss Kittin’s official website [www.misskittin.com](http://www.misskittin.com) and her MySpace page <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=154139958>, where her tracks can be heard (both retrieved 31 July 2007); from the French and English Wikipedia articles on her; and from CD booklets.

enced by electro artists like Kraftwerk, New Wave artists such as The Cure and Depeche Mode, as well as by the French rave scene of the early 90s. The Hacker started making music at the age of 17 in Grenoble, and in the mid 90s he began producing (80s)-style electro-pop with together his friend Miss Kittin. Their first track, "Gratin Dauphinois", earned them a signing with DJ Hell's new Gigolo label in 1997. They first became popular in Germany; with the beginning of electroclash in 2001 and the release of their first album, they became popular worldwide.<sup>233</sup> Tracks such as "Frank Sinatra" and "1982" propelled them into the spotlight<sup>234</sup>, and Miss Kittin currently enjoys star billing status. Kittin, based in Paris, is working on her second solo artist album, *BatBox*, due to appear in Spring 2008. Kittin's MySpace page contains a biography that adds background information and stylistic details to this sketch.

[1] She released her debut solo artist album *I Com* in 2004, that showed her spreading her wings with jacking Chicago house, distorted punk attitude, skanked-up dub and electronic pop as the singles "Professional Distortion"<sup>235</sup>, "Requiem For A Hit" and "Happy Valentine"<sup>236</sup> aptly displayed.

[2] The heavily-accented deadpan delivery over techno beats that established her notoriety on previous recordings has been unseated by a desire to sing, to scream, to rap and to croon, all of which she manages to do with ample helpings of sly wit and wordplay and a musical landscape that incorporates both brazen beats and intoxicating atmospherics.

[3] However, for all her releases and collaborations, Kittin's first and main love remains DJing. From starting out in 1994, [...] Kittin hasn't looked back. From playing harder edged techno, rave classics, Chicago, acid, and Detroit techno, Kittin has progressed into more leffield, electro and electronic realms. Able to play Prince with Black Dog [band] or Aphex Twin [DJ] with a new Kompakt 12", she has an uncanny and intuitive sense of selection that not only flows but also maintains that primary sense of the party. Anyone who has seen Kittin dancing behind the decks or grabbing the microphone mid-set will understand only too well that she is also a clubber at heart. As Kittin says, "I love playing records, it's

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<sup>233</sup> Many tracks by Kittin and Hacker are available on line (click through to individual tracks) at <http://www.misskittin.com/me/discography/content.html> retrieved 4 Jan 2008.

<sup>234</sup> As did further collaborations with Felix Da Housecat ("Silver Screen (Shower Scene)"); Golden Boy ("Rippin Kittin"); Sven Vath ("Je t'aime"); and T. Raumschmiere ("The Game Is Not Over").

<sup>235</sup> Audible online at [http://www.misskittin.com/me/discography/releases/records/04\\_02.htm](http://www.misskittin.com/me/discography/releases/records/04_02.htm) retrieved 4 Jan 2008.

<sup>236</sup> Audible online at [http://www.misskittin.com/me/discography/releases/records/05\\_01.htm](http://www.misskittin.com/me/discography/releases/records/05_01.htm) retrieved 4 Jan 2008.

probably the best thing I know to do in life. I do it because it's big fun and it makes me free.”

A few preliminary words on the background of the genres ‘rave’ and ‘electro-clash’ will provide a context for the discussion of Kittin’s activities in these music genres.<sup>237</sup> We left off our examination of electronica’s roots with Ishkur’s Chart ‘Jungle’ (158) and my synoptic chart (178). A rave (or rave party) is an all-night dance event, at which DJs play rave music and other types of electronic dance music, with the accompaniment of colored lights, projected images, and laser effects. From its inception, rave was a multi-sensory, multimedia event. Popular rave dance styles include break dancing, popping and locking, glowsticking, liquid dancing, and poi. Rave parties are often associated with the use of ‘club drugs’ such as ecstasy, methamphetamine, speed, and ketamine. The slang expression ‘rave’ was originally used by people of Caribbean descent in London during the 60s to describe a party. In the late 80s, the term began to be used to describe a party subculture that grew out of the ‘acid house movement’, which itself derived from ‘house music’, i.e., from Chicago.

House is a style of electronic dance music that was developed by dance club

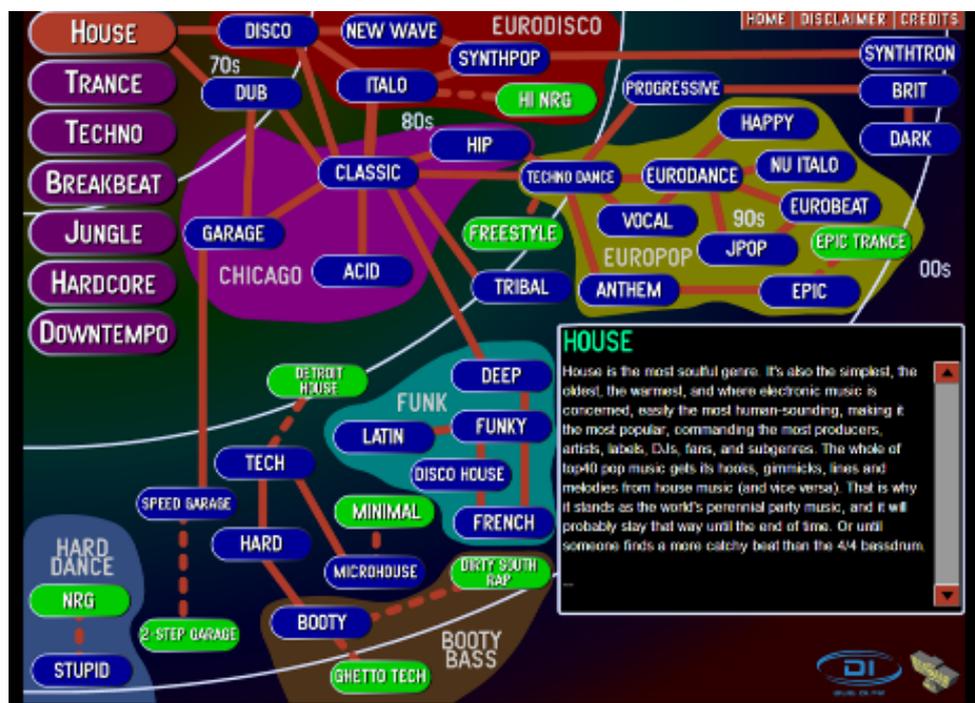


Figure 46 - Ishkur’s Chart ‘House’<sup>238</sup>

<sup>237</sup> Taken from Reynolds (1998 *Energy* and 1998 *Ecstasy*), and the Wikipedia articles ‘rave’ and ‘electro-clash’ in French, German, and English retrieved on 31 July 2007.

<sup>238</sup> <http://www.di.fm/edmguide/edmguide.html> retrieved 31 July 2007.

DJs in Chicago in the early to mid-80s. It was strongly influenced by elements of the late 70s soul- and funk-infused dance music style of disco. Drawing on disco's use of a prominent bass drum on every beat, it developed a new style by mixing in a heavy electronic synthesizer bass line, electronic drums, electronic effects, funk and pop samples, and reverb (or delay) enhanced vocals. It drew particularly on the legendary bass synthesizer Roland TB 303, described in Chapter 4 above. This instrument, soon discarded as being too rudimentary by studios wealthy enough to purchase more flexible instruments, was adopted by Black underground clubs in Chicago, where its timbre ultimately became the signature of 'Acid House'. Ishkur's genealogy of House can be seen on the preceding page.

Early rave-like dances were held in Houston and in Detroit; however, it was not until the mid to late 80s that Acid House and techno emerged and caught on in the clubs, warehouses and free-parties around London and later Manchester. These early mainstream raves were called the 'Acid House Summers' and attracted thousands of people (up to 25,000). The rave scene of the 80s, which began underground in North America and quickly spread to Great Britain, also gave rise to a series of raves in Southern France from 1993 to 2000. These were the raves that, for Miss Kittin, were a "revelation". Two genealogies of rave can be seen below.

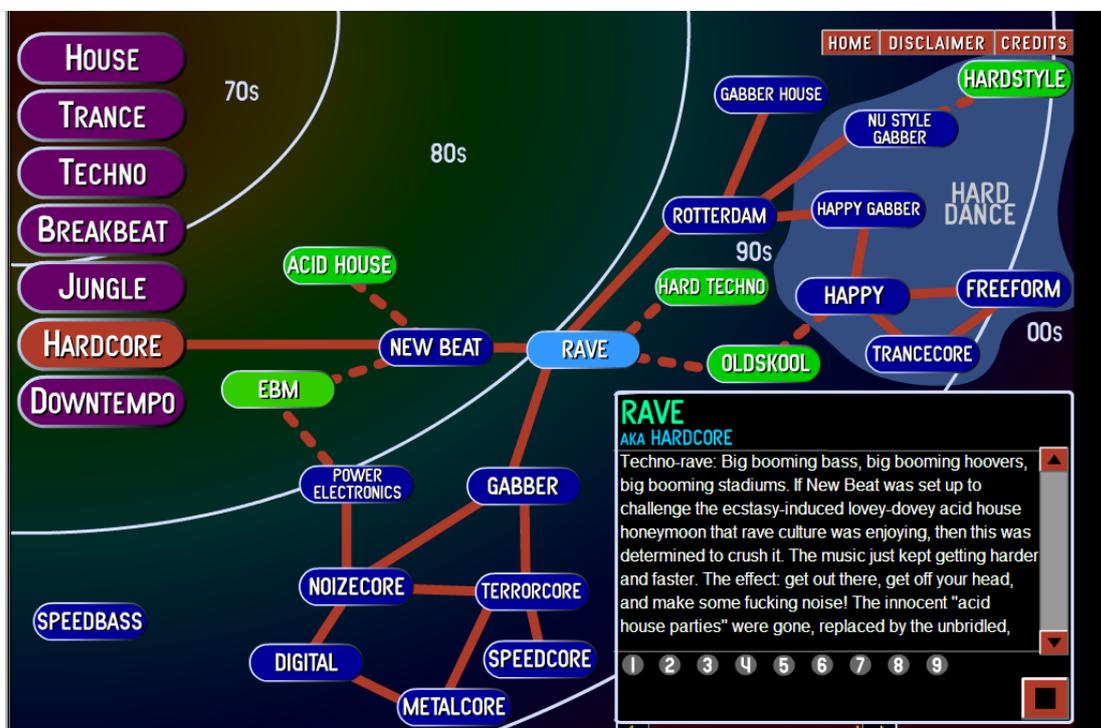


Figure 47 - Ishkur's Chart 'Rave'<sup>239</sup>

<sup>239</sup> <http://www.di.fm/edmguide/edmguide.html> retrieved 31 July 2007.

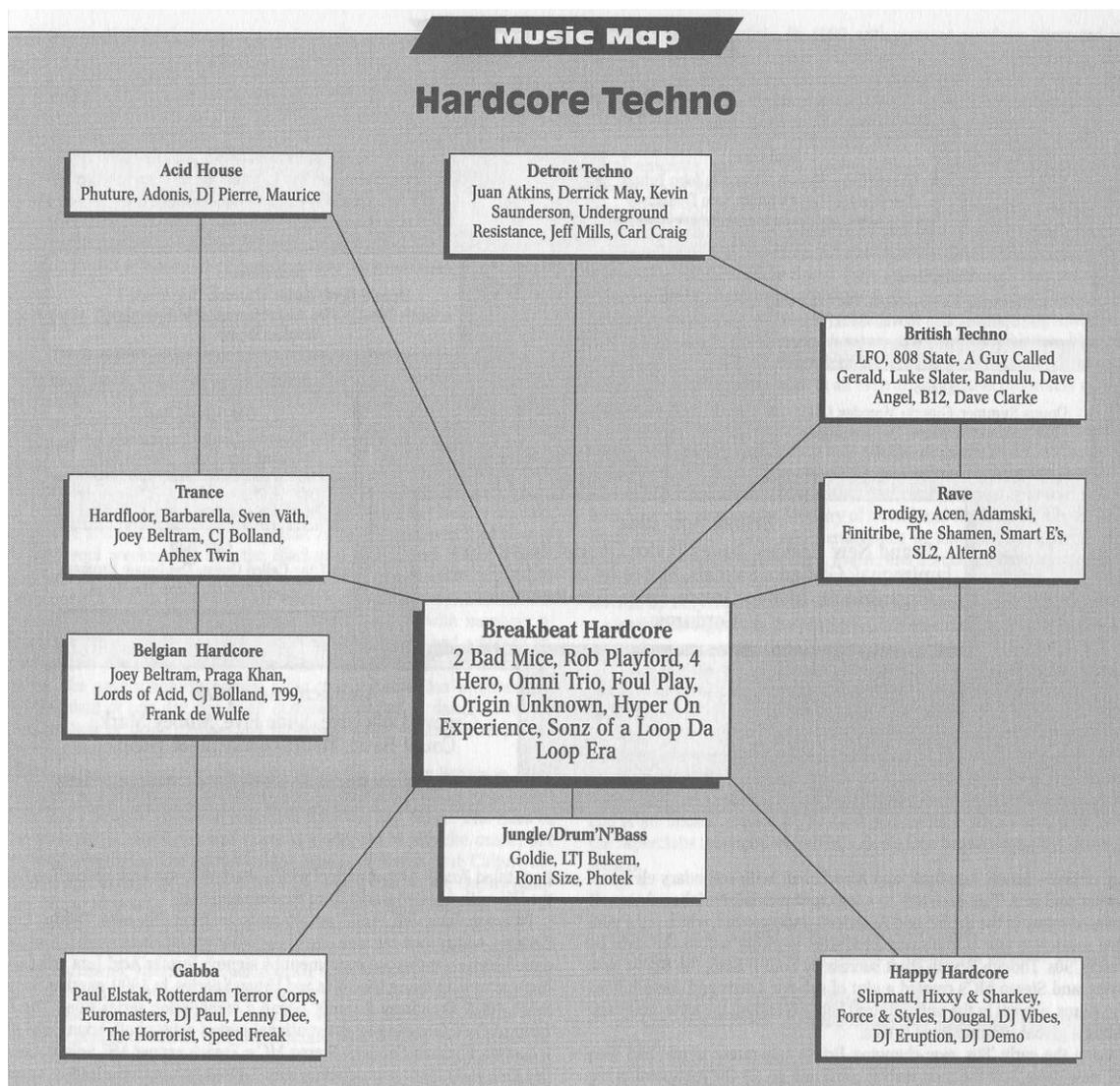


Figure 48 - 'Techno' with 'Rave' on the right (Bogdanov:647)

The genre The Hacker was active in, electroclash, came and went quickly. The neologism was coined by New York DJ Larry Tee in 2001: *electro* for the music genre, and *clash*, referring to the clash of genres and styles in it, although once again no binding definition exists (the name does remain in use, cf. [www.electroclash.com](http://www.electroclash.com)). Electroclash describes a style that fuses New Wave, punk, and electronic dance music with



Figure 49 - The Hacker, MySpace (2007)

post-industrial detachment in addition to vampy and/or camp sexuality. Synthesizers and drum machines are used to combine 80s disco sounds; visuals often allude to post-70s Westwood and Warhol fashion/art scenes, Kraftwerk, and early '80s New York Downtown. Lyrics are generally tongue-in-cheek and punk inspired and often more given to attitude and pose than poetics or themes. Miss Kittin and The Hacker helped develop a style of '*Sprechgesang*' that exaggerates monotone, atonal, and choppy delivery to the point of caricature. Other electroclash artists include Chicks on Speed, Peaches (below), Tracy and the Plastics, and A.R.E. Weapons.



**Figure 50 - Electroclash artist Peaches** (hotpress.com)

Before I begin with the analysis of Kittin's discourse, I would like to offer a personal account of my first two encounters with her.<sup>240</sup>

My first encounter with Miss Kittin was when I held the *Gendertronics* book in my hands for the first time. The back cover text consisted of three short lines:

You can philosophize forever, you will never  
find the words. When was the last time you  
sweat on a dance floor?  
Miss Kittin

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<sup>240</sup> This kind of personal testimony reflects the method of "subject-centered musical ethnography" modelled by ethnomusicological Tim Rice (2003) and excellently remodeled in the first person by Roe Min Kok (2004). I use it here to complement the sparse literature on the new musical genre fragment, electroclash, and its theoretical ramifications. I also use it to demonstrate this useful tool in the musicologist's palette inspired by Cixous: "She draws her story into history" (LM:881). Rice wrote, "My proposal concerning the possibilities for and the structure of subject-centered musical ethnographies takes seriously Slobin's notion that we are all individual musical cultures. Although Erlmann (1993:6) worries that such an approach will result only in 'a random collection of ethnoaesthetics', I think such ethnographies may have some useful theoretical payoffs. One of the goals of modeling these ethnographies would be to bring some narrative coherence to the complex and seemingly fragmented world that many social theorists, cultural critics, and ethnomusicologists are writing about. That coherence would be situated in subjects' biographies and in the interaction of people occupying slightly different subject positions but interacting in time and place" (156-157).

Sensing a nearness to Cixous' thought, I was eager to experience the artist 'Miss Kittin' live.

At the Barcelona Sònar Festival 'for advanced music and multimedia', I made sure to arrive at Kittin's concert early. The venue was a large rectangular tent with turntables, mixing board, and speakers set up at one end. I knew if I sat on the ground in front of the stage, that ultimately many people would stand up in front of me blocking my view of the stage. So instead, I found a low wall from which I hoped to have a good view of the stage and staked out a patch to stand on. It was very hot in Barcelona that June, it was the middle of the afternoon. I stood on my wall, sweated, and defended my few square inches of foot space as others began to crowd in. The closer the time came for Miss Kittin to begin her set, the louder the crowd became, and the more difficult it was for me to keep my place

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## In front of Miss Kittin



This was unreal. She's a rock start in Europe. Her outdoor set was one of the best I saw at Sonar. June 2005

**Figure 51 - Crowd waiting for Kittin's set, Sònar 2005<sup>241</sup>**

on the wall. Somehow, I was shoved into a position that only had a view of a two-meter-tall speaker:

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<sup>241</sup> This crowd scene, possibly with me in it, as well as other views of the concert can be seen at <http://www.flickr.com/search/?q=sonar+2005+kittin&m=text> retrieved 1 Jan 2008. See also <http://www.residentadvisor.net/photo-gallery.aspx?set=855> retrieved 1 Feb 2008.



**Figure 52 - My view of Miss Kittin's day set, Sónar 2005**

But I was strong! I held my ground, I sweated some more, I turned down a few of-  
fers of stimulants and listened to the roar around me. The roar seemed to be  
changing its nature, I couldn't quite tell if it was a sound-check, but suddenly the  
applause and cheers around me told me what was going on: Miss Kittin had ap-  
peared on stage. I heard distant waves of electronic noise and glitches over dis-  
torted speech, and I strained to see the performance. By leaning on my hot,  
drunken neighbor, I could just manage to get a glimpse of the mixing board. And  
an arm reached out – I saw tattoos! Just as I was registering that this must be the  
Kittin arm, I began to hear a pulsing B $\uparrow$  - A $\#$  $\uparrow$  from the synth, full of white noise,  
to which the major third D $\#$  $\uparrow$  was added. The third got stronger, and cheers came  
from the crowd. Then another crooning tone. I wrenched around, and I could see  
– Miss Kitten wasn't just DJing, she was gently singing tones into a microphone,  
creating loops and manipulating them, then mixing and reverbing them over the  
sounds she had initially laid down. Bit by bit, the sonic carpet expanded, became  
thicker; she added bass, she sang more pitches, while the glitches kept the  
rhythm. While most DJs improvise at least part of their performances, the elec-  
tronica genre has often been associated with pale, young 'nerdy' DJs hunched  
still and concentrated over their laptops. After decades of hearing and seeing  
such performances, this really was something new. I tried to hold out in the tre-  
mendous heat. In front of me, someone fainted. The crowd moved around and  
ejected the fainted body. After an hour on my feet, it was enough. Fortunately for  
me, her set would later be released as a CD.



Miss Kittin Live at Sónar

**Figure 53 - CD *Miss Kittin. Live at Sónar***

In analyzing these events retrospectively, I believe that the experiences I had with Miss Kittin were typical. It is easy to argue that Miss Kittin's expertise in mixing voice and sounds accounts for her success. But I am convinced it is more than that. I think it is an appreciation of her courage in going in new directions indicated with and legible on *her body* – while at the same time maintaining high artistic standards. This corporeal aspect has great importance to her constituency, club dancers, for club dancers are primarily in contact with their bodies – in the act of dancing, perceiving videos projected on the walls of the club, and bringing the sensual stimuli together. To examine my suppositions in detail, I return now to Miss Kittin's MySpace biography and quotes from her "Untitled" *Gendertronics* article.

In paragraph 1, Miss Kittin states her musical lineage: Chicago House, punk, dub, and electro pop. In paragraph 2, her electroclash-typical *Sprechgesang*, "her heavily-accented deadpan delivery" is mentioned, only to indicate that this has now "been unseated by a *desire* to sing" (cf. Cixous) and "to scream" (cf. Stäbler).

First I sense femininity in writing by: a privilege of *voice*: *writing and voice* are entwined and interwoven and writing's continuity/voice's rhythm take each other's breath away through interchanging, make the text gasp or form it out of suspenses and silences, make it lose its voice or rend it with cries (Cixous and Stäbler 1986:92).

In paragraph 3, her preferred activity is named, DJing, once again her lineage; but now she is moving into more experimental electronica areas. Then, her ability to mix tracks of widely disparate styles on two different turntables is praised (Prince and Aphex Twin): her "uncanny" and "intuitive" sense "flows" (cf. Cixous), serving the "primary sense of the party" – i.e., to *move* to the beat. The quote that ends the text "I love..." is pure Cixousian *jouissance* and liberation.

After the carefully thought through and finely crafted expressions of Terre Thaemlitz, this is a new approach. Indeed, where Thaemlitz' favorite way of performing would "ideally be just to sit down and push a button"<sup>242</sup>, Miss Kittin can't seem to get enough of "dancing behind the decks or grabbing the microphone mid-set". Let us see what she says about performing in "Untitled":

[...W]hen I sing, my whole body is playing. I become the show, naked and trapped in my own music [...] No matter who I am, entertainer, DJ, party animal. I can be all in one, rarely simultaneously but in many possible combinations. But

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<sup>242</sup> Statement made at live concert Q&A in Karlsruhe, 27 October 2007. Thaemlitz again: "As you know, I'm not interested in live performance." (Brunner n.d.).

how can I beat about the bush sitting here, in silence, in front of my computer? Is it worth intellectualizing this abstract sound world? [...] Fuck, this is only brain-masturbation. When are we gonna make more space for intuition? [...] Music first, as a gift, body second, and far behind, the intellectual “professional distortion” [her 2004 hit track] sadly destroying the magic. You can philosophize forever, you will never find the words. When was the last time you sweat on a dance floor?  
(17-18)

We see here the intimate connection between singing and “becoming”. We see a consciousness of multiple subjectivity. We see Kittin’s impatience with words and her need for bodily intuition: and she, too, like Derrida and Cixous has an awareness of the ‘gift’ with its fragility. What is it with the body and the woman?

## 6.2 A BODY OF ONE’S OWN

In the introduction to this thesis, I quoted the editor of *Gendertronics*, Meike Jansen, who stated that “third-wave feminism is missing in Germany” (15); and in the history of *écriture féminine* above, I quoted Kristeva’s description of the post-war establishment of feminism in three steps (77). What is this ‘third phase’ that is being referred to?

Owning one’s own body, gaining possession of it, was a goal of the women’s movement from its inception. In America, “one man, one vote” worked only recently for women (1920) and for Black men (constitutionally, a Black man was equal to 3/5 of a white man, Indians didn’t count at all; full voting rights obtained 1965)<sup>243</sup>. For the immensely long duration of human history, as far as we know, woman has been the possession of the man, with very few exceptions. In our hyper-technical day-to-day life, we forget how new a young woman’s right is to do with her body as she chooses; and we dislike thinking about the majority of the earth’s women who still do not have that right.

First-wave feminists, suffragists, fought for the right to make their bodies count. Second-wave feminists fought for laws to promote equality or, like Cixous and Kristeva,

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<sup>243</sup> That woman’s body is a surface for the multiple projections of the beholder is not a phenomenon that is restricted to women, as the discussion among African-American social critics with regard to gangsta rap illustrates. For the male African-American body, too, is a surface for multiple projections, often of violent stereotypes. In light of this, it would also make sense to consider how ‘writing the body’ could open up possibilities for interpreting the situations of male African-Americans or any other gender/ethnic groups.

fought for intellectual equality. The youngest generation, third-wavers, fights differently and in ways that their forebears may not readily grasp, as Citron (2004) illuminates:

Here is a sampling of pertinent writings from third-wave writers on third-wave feminism:

First by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake in the introduction to their excellent collection, *Third Wave Agenda. Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* [1997]: “We argue that contradiction – or what looks like contradiction... – marks the desires and strategies of third-wave feminists.”

Or this by Melissa Klein, a twenty-five-year-old punk contributor to *Third Wave Agenda*: “On my left upper arm I have a 6”-long tattoo of a voluptuous cowgirl. One of her hands rests jauntily on her jutting hip. The other is firing a gun. An earlier feminist might frown upon my cowgirl’s fringed hot pants and halter top as promoting sexual exploitation and might see her pistol as perpetuating male patterns of violence. Yet I see this image as distinctly feminist. Having a tattoo signifies a subculture that subverts traditional notions of feminine beauty. That this tattoo is a pinup girl with a gun represents the appropriation and redefinition of sexuality, power, and violence – ideas characteristic of third-wave punk feminism.”

[...] I interject a remark by the musicologist Claire Taylor-Jay in her review [in *Music and Letters* 83, no.3, 2002] of Derek Scott’s collection *Music, Culture, and Society*. In criticizing the volume for overly emphasizing the body, Taylor-Jay writes: “Feminism argues that a woman’s body should be irrelevant to her abilities and status, so to categorize writings on gender as being about ‘the body’ seems to fall back onto the previous reductionism.” And by that she means the essentialist association of woman and body. Taylor-Jay must be a second-waver.

Let’s return to third-waver Klein: “Feminism has moved away from a struggle for equality toward an engagement with difference, an assertion that girls can have the best of both worlds (that they, e.g., can be both violently angry and vampily glamorous). This feminism owes much to the struggles of the second wave, yet it differs in many ways, especially in the way it is defined by contradiction.” Klein notes how her generation has been influenced by AIDS and by gay and lesbian sexualities. They “began to shape a new feminism, a new kind of activism emphasizing our generation’s cynical and disenfranchised temperament. [...] Our politics reflects a postmodern focus on contradiction and duality, on the reclama-

tion of terms<sup>244</sup>. Sadomasochism, pornography, the words *cunt* and *queer* and *pussy* and *girl* – are all things to be re-examined or reclaimed. In terms of gender, our rebellion is to make it camp.<sup>245</sup>

She concludes, “I regard the willingness to experiment, to accept duality, and to have more questions than answers, as positive attributes – attributes that have given birth to a new brand of activism, a striving for social change unique to the young women of my community and my generation.”



**Figure 54 - Miss Kittin's arm tattoo** (Soft-curls.com)

Miss Kittin is quite obviously a third-waver. The tattoo of the voluptuous cowgirl Klein refers to in the quote above has come to represent youth's ability to perform something of its own and, in particular, woman's proclamation of possessing her own body.<sup>246</sup> How can we see these tattoos in relationship to Cixous? The website *Writing On the Body* give some hints:

Writing on the body is a theory that has become quite popular in the past few years with the increasing interest in marginalized cultures. [...] Basically, writing on the body looks at the ways in which we write identities onto others by drawing conclusions about the significance of body appearance. In other words, we write

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<sup>244</sup> Cf. Cixous: “[...]sn’t it evident that the penis gets around in my texts, that I give it a place and appeal? Of course I do. I want all. I want all of me with all of him. Why should I deprive myself of a part of us? I want all of us” (LM:891).

<sup>245</sup> I see here a fascinating opening to explore further the way in which third-wave irony turns the tables on poststructuralism's (postmodernism's) seriousness; cf. frontispiece and Chapter 2, “Paul Virilio. The Postmodern Body as a War Machine” in Kroker (1992:20-50); and the performances of body artist Stelarc.

<sup>246</sup> See also Chapter 6 “The Body as Inscriptive Surface” (in Grosz 1994:138-159).

others' identities onto their bodies by making decisions about hair color, body size, multiple piercings, skin color, and other visible markers. In order to understand this theory, you must recognize that *the body can be seen as a text*. In other words, the body can be looked at in much the same way as a book, a song, or any other type of material that can be read and written on. When we say that the body is a text, we mean that the body is a place where others attempt to understand who we are as people by interpreting what our clothes, body size, and birthmarks mean.<sup>247</sup>

The third-waver 'writes her own body' by using her body. As Kittin says, "[...W]hen I sing, my whole body is playing", "and it makes me free" – free for what? Presumably free to 'be[come] herself'. But not only that, the tattooed singer writes her body by consciously putting her text on her skin in order for her body to be read by others. Our notions of 'writing' and of 'text' are not so different since Cixous wrote in 1975:

I am spacious singing Flesh: onto which is grafted no one knows which I – which masculine or feminine, more or less human but above all living, because changing I. I see her "begin" (Cixous and Clément 1986:88).

Today, when the main vocabulary of youth's *lingua franca* stems from music, brands, and such body messages, how prescient Cixous analysis reveals itself to be.

Let us look briefly at another aspect of third-wavers that Melissa Klein names, the "reclamation of terms". The text of Miss Kittin's "Requiem for a Hit" (2004)<sup>248</sup> is, on the one hand, a play of words about post-production of a music track (compress, equalize, finalize), or about the self-prostitution of (being forced to) create 'hit' tracks, as Thaemlitz so condemned. It is also an invitation to self-abusing sexuality:

I beat that bitch with a hit  
I beat that bitch with a hit  
I beat I beat I beat I beat  
I beat that bitch with a hit

What you're gonna do for me  
Compress me or undress me  
Equalize me finalize me  
Pump me pimp and untie me  
Show me oh show me  
How you dig that shit  
And beat this bitch with a hit  
I beat that bitch with a hit...

We can compare the currently contested use of self-deprecating or self-abusive words

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<sup>247</sup> <http://www-as.phy.ohiou.edu/~rouzie/569A/body/wrindex.htm>, retrieved 9 Oct 2006; my italics.

<sup>248</sup> Audible at <http://mp3.juno.co.uk/MP3/SF157294-01-01-01.mp3> retrieved 4 Jan 2004.

concerning women (bitch) with the use of words like ‘nigger’ and ‘nigga’ by African Americans. Persons in different contexts will view the bondage of their words extremely differently; but at least for some like Melissa, their use “represents the appropriation and redefinition of sexuality, power, and violence”. However we may see this, those who do use words in this way are effectively re-naming and re-writing themselves: I am no longer the victim of discrimination, I am not a ‘nigger’. I am the ‘nigga’ from the ‘hood, and *I* write myself that way, not you. This recalls Cixous’ brutal use of sex[uality], the cost-what-it-may struggle to conquest her own female, feminine body.

Je veux *vulve* [sic]. Qu’elle [ma langue] prononce mes noms et j’ai ! Qu’elle me lise le livre de mes parties et moi-même je m’avance avec le livre de mon corps dans ma bouche, et dans ma bouche je contiens le volume qu’elle œuvre pour moi. [...] J’ai ma vulve ! Je veux *vagin*. [...] Je veux que ma langue m’ievagine [sic] (100).<sup>249</sup>

In bridging the chasm just described between the poles of “the body without the vote” and “beat that bitch with a hit”, Cixous’ writing plays a prominent role. Moreover, I suggest that Cixous proposes the concept of embodiment without naming it.

Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn’t painfully lost her wind). She doesn’t “speak,” she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it’s with her body that she vitally supports the “logic” of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she’s thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she’s saying, because she doesn’t deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when “theoretical” or political, is never simple or linear or “objectified”, generalized: she draws her story into history (LM:881).

Musically speaking, Leslie Dunn and Nancy Jones took important first steps toward conceptualizing terms with their *Embodied Voices. Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (1994; the volume also includes rich reference sources). Drawing on French poststructuralists (Kristeva, Poizat, Barthes), they define the philosophical context in which the concept of embodiment comes into play in the voice, as music philosopher Judith Lochhead describes in her review of the book:

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<sup>249</sup> “I want *vulva*. May [my tongue] speak my words and I have! Let my tongue read the book of my parts and I myself, I approach with the book of my body in my mouth, and in my mouth I hold the volume that it opens for me [...] I have my vulva! I want *vagina* [...] I want my tongue to ievaginate me” (Cixous 1976:110; quoted in Kogan:81). With regard to syntax and word creations, Cixous’ original French formulations produce an even more jarring effect than in English.

Drawing on Barthes' notion of "the grain of the voice" in particular, Dunn and Jones focus attention on the essential role played by the "purely sonorous" features of the "audible female voice" in "the construction of its non-verbal meanings" (2). We may note here that these purely sonorous features are those often identified as "musical" – register, sound quality, dynamics, accent, rhythm, and tempo. The concept of "embodiment" comes into play through the editors' explicit acknowledgement that sonorous features must be conceptually linked to the production of vocal sound through a person's body. [...] The various authors of *Embodied Voices* tap into the philosophical tradition of embodiment by showing how the culturally gendered bodies both of vocal performers and of hearers are reflected in the meanings of those vocal sounds.<sup>250</sup>

Thus, embodiment is the grain of the voice *plus* the body that performs and/or listens (we return to this). I suspect that this emphasis of meaning in vocal sounds hooks up with Joke Dame's work in Dutch (1994) and Hannah Bosma's, both mentioned above (90). In the context of electronic music and women, Anna Friz (2004) decries their physical absence<sup>251</sup>; while Burns and Lafrance (2000) discuss the body in popular music:

The body [...] is a powerful symbolic form, a surface on which the central rules, hierarchies, and even metaphysical commitments of a culture are inscribed and thus reinforced through the concrete language of the body (113).

These authors have approached the notion of body from a 'feminine' side, while others approach it from the performing side (improvisation) or from the association of the body with electronics. Of course the contributions of Leppert (1993), Scott (2000), and Frith (1996 and in Scott 2000) are standards in the discipline of musicology. Media theory has developed a large repertoire of texts concerning the body, which is fitting, since father-of-it-all Marshall McLuhan did not ignore the effect of media 'massaging' the body, indeed, it was an integral element of his theory<sup>252</sup>. And in 1991 Donna Haraway set the tone of the discourse on cybernetic bodies with her "Cyborg Manifesto". Others in the media theory discussion focus on the body as part of the act of percep-

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<sup>250</sup> Review available at <http://mto.societymusictheory.org/issues/mto.96.2.1/mto.96.2.1.lochhead.html> retrieved 13.01.2006.

<sup>251</sup> Heard But Unscene. Women In Electronic Music, 07.12.2004, available at <http://www.cut-up.com/news/detail.php?sid=334> retrieved 18 Oct 2007.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. <http://www.marshallmcluhan.com/poster.html> retrieved 7 Feb 2008. Exciting new research into McLuhan circles of thought, presented at the 2007 re:place conference (M. Darroch and J. Marchessault), continues to demonstrate the fruitfulness of McLuhan's theory for the development of media theory today. In 2006, the Marshall McLuhan Salon was opened at the Canadian Embassy in Berlin, cf. [http://www.international.gc.ca/canada-europa/germany/embassy\\_mcluhan-en.asp](http://www.international.gc.ca/canada-europa/germany/embassy_mcluhan-en.asp) retrieved 7 Feb 2008.

tion or on cognition. More recently in German media theory there has been a blossoming of themes and articles concerning the body (more or less). Cox has taken up Deleuze/Guattari's discourse of the body without organs in the excellent volume *SoundCultures* (2003). The volume includes many articles that 'dance around' the theme of the body, like "Do Androids Dance to Electronic Music? A Trip Through the Universe of Sonic Fiction". The volume is indicative of directions being taken in media theory research today regarding the body (including its humor) – at least as far as I can make out judging from papers read at recent Transmediale and re:place conferences. I would hope to see here further research that would incorporate musicology and *lecture féminine*.<sup>253</sup> Other recent sources include the publicly funded, ambitious MediaArtNet in English and German, for example the section "Body and Interface" in the lengthy article "Reality/Mediality. Hybrid Processes Between Art and Life" by Rudolf Frieling<sup>254</sup>; and the volume *Media – Power – Perception. Medial Apparatuses of Seeing and Hearing* (Fahlenbrach, ed., 2005) takes up indirectly the relationship of machines and the body.

In my discussion on German musicology above (20), I wrote that a new publication addressing the difficulties of *Musikwissenschaft* in Germany would be published shortly. The small booklet has now appeared, and while its contents do not encourage me, at least one insight does:

Natürlich reagieren alle diese Texte auf die Herausforderung jener strukturellen Krise, die das Fach so weitgehend erfasst und, will man pessimistisch sein, destabilisiert hat.<sup>255</sup>

However, I saw more 'business as usual' in the booklet than "destabilization", and it is easy enough to gain the same impression from the practicing community. S. Feißt's dissertation on improvisation in New Music (1997) as well as R. Karger's broadcasts and articles (2006) on improvising today left more questions open than answered as far as new insights from cultural studies and feminist critique concerning the body's role in improvisation. One excellent recent contribution in German on the relationship between music and the female body can be signaled, musicologist Julia Gerlach's contribution to "MUGI - Musik und Gender im Internet" [Music and Gender on the Internet] run by the Conservatory for Music and Theater in Hamburg, "Körper und Musik. Körperbilder

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<sup>253</sup> My proposition in a panel discussion at re:place concerning more collaboration between musicology and media theory met with promising interest. To be continued.

<sup>254</sup> [http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview\\_of\\_media\\_art/performance/22/](http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/overview_of_media_art/performance/22/) retrieved 1 Jun 2006.

<sup>255</sup> "Of course, all these texts are reacting to the challenge of the structural crisis that has so totally affected and, if one wants to be pessimistic, destabilized the discipline" (Lütteken 2007:18).

in der musikalischen Performance sowie intermedialer und partizipativer Musik“ [Body and Music. Images of the Body in Music Performance and in Intermedia and Participatory Music]:

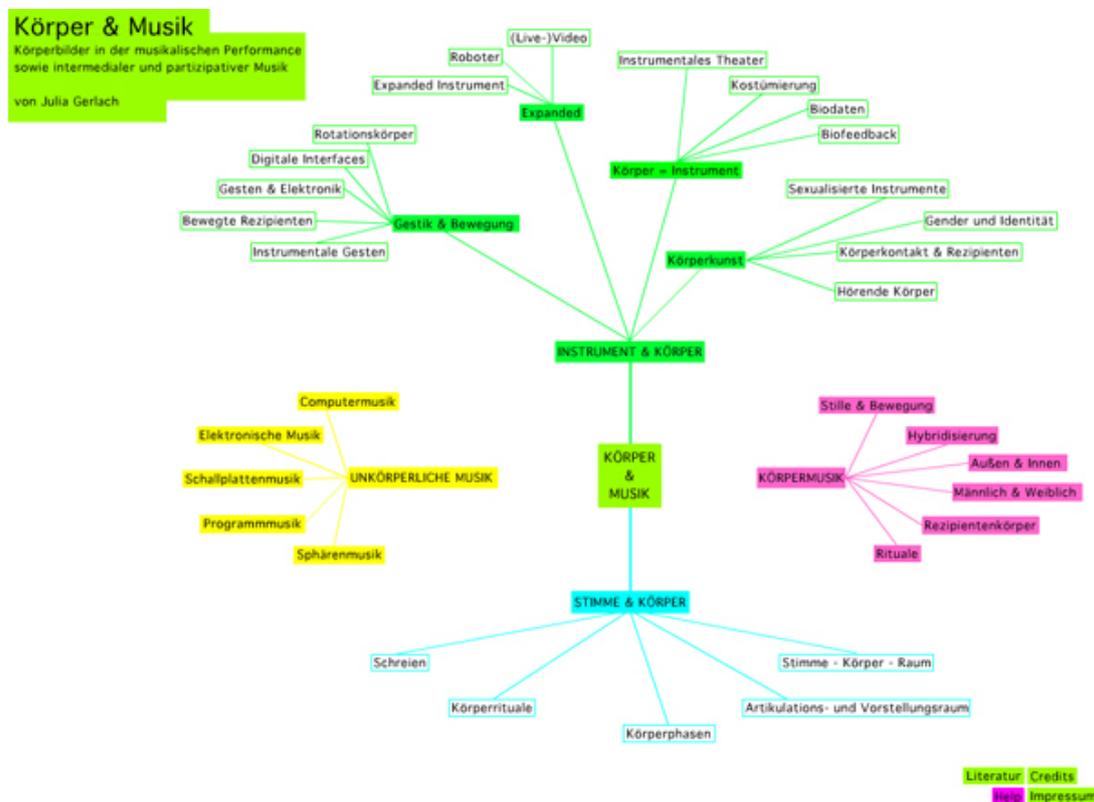


Figure 55 - Gerlach's website *Body and Music*<sup>256</sup>

After the discussion of a few aspects of how Miss Kittin's third-wave body can be read and the summary of some current research. Before we leave the area of music and musicology, let us reconsider aspects concerning the relationship between structuralists and poststructuralists made by Berman (1988), quoted in the prefatory chapter on poststructuralism above (54). Berman remarked that the strongest bond between them "is their agreement that the self (the subject, mind, ego, cogito) is not a Cartesian-like entity but is constituted". The Subject does not merely pre-exist, over a process in time it gradually takes on form. Berman also stated that "this constitution is by and in language", and we traced through Barthes, Foucault, and Derrida, how this constitution took place by means of a changed notion of *écriture*, which resulted in a new relationship between reader (Subject) and text (object). In the chapter on Stähler, we saw how the composer's *écriture* was also beginning to change this relationship in music. We

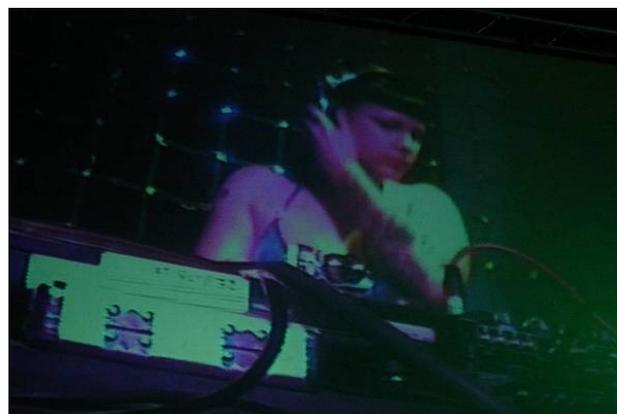
<sup>256</sup> MUGI Hamburg <http://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/koerpermusik/index2.html> retrieved 1 Feb 2008.

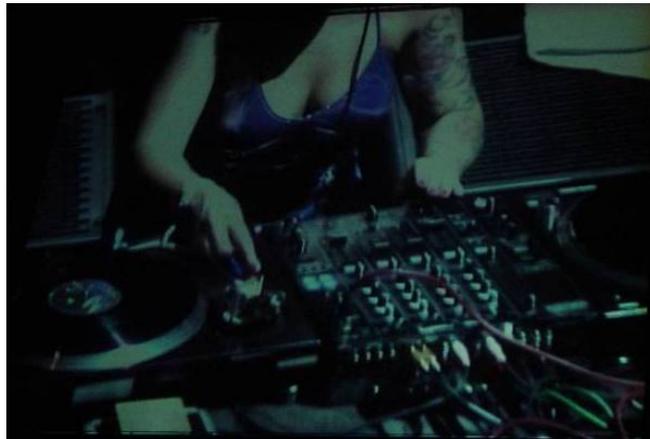
also saw how Stäbler began to stretch the notion of written text (or composed score) from 'ink + paper' to include the use of the body. As we have just seen with regard to 'writing' readable message with tattoos on the skin and with using her body to create her loops, we might thus see Miss Kittin as extending the notion of writing even further than did Stäbler, to include the body as a readable text. Berman had also pointed out that the poststructuralists had reinstalled time into the theory of language and self by identifying as primary not intellect, but desire, (Lacan); and that in this interpretation subjectivity – constructed by desire – became *generative*. This shift was seminal for the new meaning of *écriture*, which had now become a means for generating the self.

Let us compare this with Kittin's remark about DJing above, "I do it because it's big fun [desire, pleasure] and it makes me free". "*It makes me*" – doing DJing *makes me*, I am generated by it. With this background in mind, let us now take a look at the notion of the body in philosophy and the deconstructive potential of Cixous' theory.

I am spacious, singing flesh, on which is grafted no one knows which I, more or less human, but alive because of transformation (LM:889).

**Figure 56 - Miss Kittin's night set at Sónar 2006 (my photos)**





### 6.3 DECONSTRUCTING PHILOSOPHY'S BODY

There is not that scission, that division made by the common man between the logic of oral speech and the logic of the text, bound as he is by his antiquated relation – servile, calculating – to mastery. From which proceeds the niggardly lip service which engages only the tiniest part of the body, plus the mask (LM:881).

Two recently published works direct us to where current sociological/philosophical cruxes lie concerning the body and give us an idea of how new approaches might look. These new approaches hook up to notions we saw with notions of Stäbler and Cixous. Above I used the word 'embodiment' to describe Dunn and Jones' view of how the culturally gendered bodies of vocal performers (and hearers) combine with the semantic level of vocal sounds to produce meaning, and I suggested that Cixous described something like it already in 1975 (230). For MacDonald et al. (2002), "Embodiment refers to the biological and physical presence of our bodies, which are a necessary precondition for subjectivity, emotion, language, thought and social interaction". Our

bodies are the precondition for subjectivity. I must bodily exist, before I am, before I can think. Where does music fit into that? In the chapter “Music and the Body” in *Music in Everyday Life* (2000: 75-108), music sociologist Tina DeNora investigates the “reflexive relationship between music and embodiment and develops an interdisciplinary perspective for investigating many of the ways in which the body [...] may be understood to be ‘musically composed’” (xi). She does this by conducting a series of mini-ethnographic studies, of the nature I described in the footnote above on Rice’s “subject-centered musical ethnography”. DeNora is seeking to

[...] theorize the matter of how culture works at the level of embodied action and to develop theory that can be applied to practical bodily problems and procedures. In short, by moving away from discourses of the body and moving towards a focus on body-culture interaction, on temporal body practices, a grounded theory of the body’s cultural constitution has the capacity to move well beyond semiotic readings of bodily meanings. [...] It is a kind of work that is built up case by case, through empirical attention to the explicitly temporal matter of bodies in action (in real time) (76).

Here we see that DeNora is moving beyond both hypothetical discourses and beyond semantic interpretations of sound. She examines the minute interaction of bodies with music, of the sort I suggested in the consideration of Miss Kitten above. DeNora concludes her chapter with the somewhat cryptic, cyclical remark that music “affects the physical body by providing a ground for self-perception of the body” (107-108). Which comes first, the body or the music? Where Merleau-Ponty had focused on the phenomenological and corporeal foundations of perception<sup>257</sup> and Varela et al. (1991) extended this to cognition, DeNora is taking a different approach with corporeality and examining actions. We could now regard in DeNora’s fashion our examination of Gerhard Stäbler’s actions with his own body, questioning his role of agency in interacting with sound.

But what happens to other notions we spoke of with Stäbler – subjectivity or musical material – have they lost their importance? For a consideration of how these separate strands might be joined, I turn to Lisa Yun Lee’s *Dialectics of the Body. Corporeality in the Philosophy of T. W. Adorno* (2005). Although she seems to remain dialectic at heart, Lee obviously brings a deep acquaintance with poststructuralist and

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<sup>257</sup> The phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty articulates “a theory of cognition which recognizes the intersubjective and bodily basis of all human knowledge. See in particular these writings by Merleau-Ponty: *Phenomenology of Perception*, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays*, ed. James Edie, J. (ed, 1964) and *The Visible and the Invisible*” (Lochhead, loc. cit.).

feminist discourses, particularly concerning the body to her study. The section “The Body-Shop: The Academic Commodification/Fetishization of the Body” (124-131) in the chapter “Feminist Negative Dialectics” is a theoretic tour-de-force. I can only bow deeply before her finely nuanced understanding of the concepts involved. But we humble musicians can perhaps gather a few of the crumbs of her knowledge to help us see our situation more clearly. I quote from her introduction, which makes palpable an array of Adorno’s different notions of dialectics and body, while also furnishing background on his ‘approach’ to the body.

It is implausible for many to see Theodor Adorno as a philosopher of the body, because he is – in every sense – one of the great “minds” of twentieth century German thought. While the body conjures up sentiments such as desire, lust, passion and *jouissance*, Adorno, in contrast, has been described by critics as a *haute bourgeois* thinker with “remorseless tunnel vision” and “mandarin fastidiousness” while his works have been characterized as highbrow, hyper-intellectual, anguished and stodgy.

This work intends to read Adorno against the grain and to show that hope and desire are present in Adorno’s philosophy, no matter how bleak. [...] The body persistently appears in heterogeneous fragments throughout Adorno’s writing as the specifically corporeal (*Leib*), the more general body (*Körper*), and what he refers to as “metaphors of the body”. As I will discuss below, the absence of a sustained, systematic analysis of the body in Adorno’s thought is entirely consistent with his commitment to the formative nature of style, dialectical thought, and immanent critique. [...] Integral to my analysis is an explication of the intellectual and cultural history from which Adorno’s works emerge. It becomes evident when looking at Adorno’s many invocations of the body that he is writing as a response to both the Nazis fetishization of the body, and also to the commodification of the body by the forces of capitalism and the expanding influence of the American culture industry (1-2).

I will pause to make a few comments on Lee’s text to here. After her portrait of the usual ‘Adorno-we-love-to-hate’, Lee makes us aware that concepts of body are present in many forms in Adorno’s writings. Moreover, she points out that this kind of multiform concept is consistent with his style of critique. Importantly, she tells us that she is performing a cultural-studies based reading of Adorno. Two pages later, she mentions the trajectory of Adorno’s philosophy, and then ‘the sleuth Lee’ lists different forms the body takes in his writings. I quote copiously here, for I will base my conclusion on Lee’s description.

One of the consistent elements of Adorno's intellectual endeavors is his commitment to moving beyond the traditional two camps of philosophy: *idealism*, which projects the totality of reality into the world of spirit and mind, and *old* or *traditional materialism*, which reduces all intellectual abstractions to forms of sensuousness, i.e., to sensation and affectivity. It is within the dialectic of these two modes of thought that the body takes its elusive shape in Adorno's thought, where corporeality functions on various cascading levels. At times, Adorno associates the body with base physicality and materiality, or what he refers to as an "unadorned materialist motive (*ungeschminkt materialistische Motiv*)". This body is the straining, laboring body that calls to mind Odysseus' rowers in the seminal section on the Sirens in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. At these moments, the body is also the "damaged (*beschädigt*)" German Jewish body that lacks a voice in exile due to physical displacement and the expropriation of language. At other times, the body functions in Adorno's writing as the privileged metaphor for form and style. The embodying style and syntax of Adorno's writing, especially in a work such as "The Essay as Form", playfully actualizes the effort to outwit identity logic's destructive impulse to incorporate and homogenize everything it encounters. The body that Adorno invokes at these moments is the spontaneous body that reveals in its gestures the fleeting moments of freedom and potential for resistance. At one point, Adorno writes: "Only in the metaphor of the body can the concept of pure spirit be grasped at all, and it is at the same time cancelled". This statement deftly attacks the history of philosophy and its striving towards "pure spirit". Adorno did not begin his career as a philosopher, but as a musician and musicologist, and he maintained an ambivalent and uneasy relationship to the discipline of philosophy, which more than any other form of thought is guilty of the repression of the body in the quest for a more "pure", "neutral", or "objective foundation for knowledge" (4).

With the ending of this account, we return to our place as musicians and musicologists, scowling at philosophy for repressing the body we need for performance with in a quixotic quest for Truth. Joking aside, the circle I would like to close here regards the *mé-tissage* of musical material with embodiment (presaged by Cixous). If Adorno's "cascading" concept of body takes all the forms Lee describes, particularly including the "damaged (*beschädigt*)" German Jewish body that lacks a voice in exile due to physical displacement and the expropriation of language"; and if we take into considerations the ways in which today's music scholarship – sociological, ethnographic, feminist – studies the body for its rich sources of inscribed information as source of knowledge: then isn't the body the kind of material we saw in our discussion of Stäbler on *musical* material? Does not the body, just the same as harmonic material, have historical tendency? Is not history sedimented, indeed engraved and tattooed – in control-

lable and uncontrollable situations – onto the bodily material? In this light, it would indeed seem that the body is not just natural matter, but material that can be used as musical material. Here is the opportunity to use this body with all its qualities and ways of reflecting the world around it, and with its historical tendencies, joining past traditions with future practice as musical material.

#### 6.4 THE MUSICAL BODY

Je suis ce que je sens les yeux fermés. Sentir ne trompe pas.<sup>258</sup>

The topic of the body raises a number of broader questions we have mentioned or skirted, but not yet confronted; I turn now to these. First is a trope that frequently appears in the literature: How did the poststructuralists conceive of the ‘body as text’ – and by extension, how does Cixous? I hinted at this question in the chapter on Cixous and the French feminist theorists above, where I wrote:

One of the most important themes they introduced into the poststructuralist discourse was the area of biology and body; for, structuralism silences the speaking body in favor of bloodless structures, and few poststructuralist theories suggest ways to articulate the body (75).

Lee’s description helps shed light on this question.

Post-structuralism and postmodernism have questioned the givenness of the “so-called body”, preferring instead to refer to a [bloodless – *js*] textual body, with a stress on discursive construction. This line of thought owes much to Foucault’s seminal insights into the sustained attempts to construct a useful and economically exploitable “docile” body. Foucault’s analysis established the vocabulary that opened up the notion that the body is discursively constructed, an object of knowledge, and the principle target for relations of power. This line of thinking has fostered the viewing of the “body as text”, a culturally constructed artifact that needs to be interpreted rather than something that has an inherent or “natural” meaning. This has dissolved, to a certain degree, the imposed unity of women’s identity with the body and creating a space for imagining liberating practices. Judith Butler’s work in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*

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<sup>258</sup> “I am what I feel with my eyes closed. Feeling doesn’t fool you” (Cixous in Rossum-Guyon 1990:15).

comes to mind here as the most obvious example of this. Butler insists that the category of “woman” (as well as other such categories) should be a site of continuing contestation. When the concept of “woman” “is relieved of its foundational weight,” Butler argues, “it renders it a site of permanent political contest.” Butler claims that the objective of her inquiries is “to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize” (128).

Lee goes on at length to differentiate, then challenge Butler’s standpoint, and to suggest further paths of investigation; but I limit myself to the points she makes above, for I see here sufficient matter to help us think of answers to the question of body as text.

The interpretation is often heard that the “body as text” is a “culturally constructed artifact that needs to be interpreted”. I can agree with this standpoint to a certain extent; after all I have pled for reading tattoos on the body as text<sup>259</sup>; but this interpretation alone does not satisfy me. I find it too limiting, and Cixous is anything but limiting. It denies us the agency to shape our bodies ourselves – we are reduced to externally constructed artifacts. Precisely for this reason, DeNora’s sociological view opens up possibilities. It sees us interacting with our culture to construct our identities; DeNora is moving “towards a focus on body-culture interaction” and sees music “providing a ground for self-perception of the body”. I have repeatedly demonstrated how Cixous’ exhortation for woman to write our bodies can be taken in multifarious ways. In this light, it would appear illogically reductionist to think of writing the body *only* in the sense of constructing an artifact.

This is the next quandary: Does Cixous mean “write your body” literally or metaphorically? Elisabeth Grosz makes the point, “Irigaray and other ‘feminists of difference’ do not refer to the female body in biological terms, but only in so far as it is enveloped, produced and made meaningful by language” (quoted in Gamble 2001:222). Above I quoted Cixous coining of the term “invagination” (230*n*). According to Kogan, this neologism

[...] calls to mind Derrida’s notion of ‘invagination’, which refers to complex relations between inside and outside. These relations mark much of Cixous’ work.  
[...] Invagination is [...] a moment of *self-designation* of the text, when the narrative becomes performative (1985:83; my italics).

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<sup>259</sup> This poststructuralist viewpoint sees the body, indeed the individual, as a passive object, “target for relations of power”, a notion Butler contests with her notion of performativity. Further reflection on aspects seen in the musical concepts of Subject is called (cf. Cusick 1999).

If, as I write, I perform myself (in Butler's sense), then I am expressing agency. I have demonstrated how Miss Kitten does this: She repeatedly puts her body on show as something she shapes – and comments it – but *at the same time* she experiences herself *being alive* in her 'DJ performance'. Cixous suggests this kind of multiple performativity at the beginning of LM:

I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement (LM:875).

Woman puts herself into her text *and* into the world *and* into history, all at the same time. This is what she 'performs' (Butler) with writing.

She lets the other language speak – the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death. To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible. When id is ambiguously uttered – the wonder of being several – she doesn't defend herself against these unknown women whom she's surprised at becoming, but derives pleasure from this gift of alterability (LM:889).

Again it would seem very limiting to try to determine whether the writing meant here is 'literal' or 'metaphoric', when we have the poststructural, Cixousian possibility of choosing 'all of the above'; when the composer (or DJ) has the possibility of creating *and* being musical material at the same time by being a multiple Subject.

In the section on *écriture féminine* above, I showed in a long quote how Cixous emphasized that the designation 'feminine' was to be understood as being occasioned by its historical context, not chosen for intrinsic elements of 'femininity'; it is an element of history. We have regarded history sedimented in musical material; and we saw how Dahlhaus referred to histories and History – that would be Hegel's History. If this 'woman' inserts herself into Hegel's History, she ruptures its masculine – phallogocentric – narrative. She reduces hierarchies by a critique of categories (like Thaemlitz), as Lee just pointed out with regard to Butler; thereby, the master/slave hierarchy is broken. It seems to me as easy as A-B-C that such multiples be admissible in interpreting Cixous' notion of writing, as opposed to a limiting binary choice. Why, therefore, such debate and reluctance to accept such an answer about the body? Why do such movements coming from women tend to elicit such debate, denial, and fear?



## 7 CONCLUSIONS -- AU-DELA DE L'ECRITURE FEMININE

Cixous' theory of the body is the apotheosis of her concept of *écriture féminine*; and it is here that the full deconstructive potential of her theory is revealed. By using the body to rupture the narrative, Cixous works on deconstructing the construct of Western metaphysics. I repeat Lisa Lee's formulation on philosophy, "which more than any other form of thought is guilty of the repression of the body in the quest for a more 'pure', 'neutral', or 'objective foundation for knowledge'". So, my conclusion will come as no surprise that writing the body remains a scary topic; many scholars still have trouble recognizing what is being (un)done. When philosophers talk about the body, it is bloodless, un-sexed, a body without organs. Does *that* body sweat on the dance floor? It would seem to be simply the old fear of the body. Art historian Midori Yoshimoto describes the fate of the work *Vagina Painting* (1965) by Fluxus performance artist Shigeo Kubota (Yoshimoto 2005:178-183). In her work, Kubota painted red 'calligraphy' (hieroglyphics?) on papers placed on the floor below her, using a paintbrush from her vagina. The work was immediately rejected and forgotten by the Fluxus entourage. Yoshimoto cites bias, hate, and denigration among the reasons for rejecting this body art. Kubota gave up body art after the experience<sup>260</sup>.

In order to break through structural paradigms, Cixous (and other French feminist theorists) took recourse, like Kubota, to a concept foreign to the Western tradition – to the body. As far back as Plato's *Republic*, the body that performed poetry and music had dubious qualities.<sup>261</sup> Mimesis is not possible through words alone, only through a bodily representation, like "weeping and smiting [the] breast";<sup>262</sup> so, by banning mimesis

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. also Amelia Jones' *Body Art. Performing the Subject* (1998).

<sup>261</sup> The critical point was that although mimetic poetry might provide pleasure, it was distant from knowledge; Plato, *Republic X*, [600/601]. It seems to me that for the musician, the notion of writing – or of creating or recreating a text – *with the body* is even more provocative than for the writer. Because like Plato's poet, the musician has a text to perform, but it can only be performed using the musician's natural, physical body. In a musical presentation, a delicate balance is always struck between body and text (the score).

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, [605].

Plato also banned potentially seductive bodily presentations. Later phrases, like St. John's "In the beginning was the Word [*logos*]" or Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* were emblematic for a tradition that gave primacy to the word above the body. Therefore, what locus better represented the structure on which Western thought was based than the *word*? And what 'otherness' or alterity could better threaten to disrupt the masculine symbolic, logical order than the body? What delectable insolence to make bodily pleasure a source of knowledge! Like Kubota ten years before her, Cixous flung bloody red hieroglyphics from her vagina at Western metaphysics. Is it surprising that the reaction of rejection continues? It is a drastic image, like a Medusa – but one that sticks in the memory and makes us smile today, 40 years later.

Using Lee's new interpretation of Adorno's notions of the body in the preceding chapter, I have sought to make an arc to join embodiment with the first two terms we examined, the Subject and musical material. We have seen that the notion of embodiment itself is only now emerging; it is not a notion with a firmly written definition. We may see the body as Stähler uses it as part of his store of musical material, as Thaemlitz uses it as a theoretical, gendered part of how he 'performs' his socio-musical message, as Miss Kittin uses it in becoming herself, or as DeNora means it as providing a ground for self-perception. In each example, the iridescent term of embodiment shows another side, but in each instance one implication remains the same. There is no longer a set sequence of existence: the thought, then the Subject; or the body, then the Subject; or the Subject then the object. All are in motion. The relationships are dynamic. Body as musical material, embodying musical material: what was once object is now also Subject. The hierarchy between the two is broken. A body emerges through desire over time. The three terms, subject, musical material, and body, are now so to speak in one arena together, on a flat plane, interacting – perhaps as parts of rhizome perception, but in any event not in terms of hierarchical mastery and domination; rather, in a deconstructed, ever-changing view. A view that is not even antithetical to Adorno's intentions, at least as far as Lee sees it, a view I can only applaud. This new view on these three terms has been opened by *lecture féminine*.

In my preface, I wrote of my inability to analyze the music of 144 decaying pianos and other baffling musical phenomena after having spent 25 years as a conductor. When I began this dissertation, in April 2005, a new world opened up for me. For almost three years, I have had the pleasure of discovering the intellectual and musical world I describe in these pages. I hope I have succeeded in demonstrating how *lecture féminine* has brought the following three new aspects to the musicological analytic discourse.

First, with regard to the questions asked of art: Where traditional hermeneutic methods might interrogate works with regard to musical 'aesthetic criteria' such as form, materials, harmony, sound, etc., Cixous has put a multitude of new questions on the table. Other discourses have been engaged in these new disciplines, grappling with new questions being posed by the changes new media have brought about in our lives. The old methods offer no adequate possibilities for dealing with such questions. So, in adopting a new 'method', we have a tool for hearing the new discourses. Now perceiving these new discourses, when we look at a new work of art, we hear, we know what questions the work is addressing.

Second, with regard to the nature of the interrogation: Instead of the lone scientist working in seclusion with history and methods, *lecture féminine* emphasizes working in a network of persons, disciplines, and viewpoints. *Écriture féminine* is a possibility for authorship of multimedia works: it is multiple, it is evanescent. *Lecture féminine* is a possibility for reading such works: not formalistic; instead, you're reading between the lines – intermedial intertextuality.

Finally, with regard to the nature of the results of interrogation: not to own a result, not to ascertain Truth, not to appropriate the work. But, there is a time-delay factor in receiving these ideas. The research is recent, but it is done, the writings are there and waiting for the musical community to bring them into play. We saw Citron's estimate that it takes ten to fifteen years for a canon, for the music canon, to move. (How long did it take for the photograph to be recognized as art? The film? Film music?) And on the topic of the body, we are working on a topic with blockage that has been around since the beginning of Western philosophy.

Several of Cixous' ideas have infused my work. Her rejection of hierarchic, binary opposites that had the power to declare one music or current to be superior to another and her insistence on the hermeneutic importance of admitting 'not only, but also' encouraged me to arrive at a view of music history as it evolves. It is difficult to try to transform an essentially group-based approach like *lecture féminine* into a dissertation. Linked hypertexts are certainly a possibility, and I have attempted here to utilize them as much as possible. I am aware that there are 'loose ends' in this paper, that I have raised topics or questions without providing answers. Often, I have done this deliberately, to leave space for the questions, critiques, and inputs of my reader, in the spirit of *lecture féminine*.

What happens after feminine writing – *au delà de l'écriture féminine*? Looking toward the future, I see five topics for future research:

1. Continuing feminist investigation of the topics raised by Deleuze & Guattari,

(particularly notions of Subject) along the lines of Braidotti, Grosz, Schmiedel, Olkowski, and the emerging French *Fresh Théorie*.

2. Investigation of emerging neuroscience results in the last ten years as they converge with philosophical notions of Subject, body, music, perception (Berthoz, Damasio, Bauer, Paul Bloom; "Rather than portray events in the world beyond our skin, music seems to reenact experience *within* the body" (Jourdain 1997:293).

3. Bringing together of music(ology) with media theory and philosophy of technology ("Philosophy becomes the hardest task, because in some sense it is the most linguistically oriented of the humanities disciplines and simultaneously perhaps *the most insensitive to technology and materiality*"; Ihde<sup>263</sup>).

4. Enriching all the above by bringing conceptual results together with music examples in articles, conferences, study days.<sup>264</sup>

5. Searching for new methods of interacting with readers; e.g., "Growing up Female(s)" by Pegley and Caputo (in Brett: 297-313); "Passion/Mirrors" by Attinello (in dell'Antonio:155-172).

So many other sources to find, read, and evaluate... Neither I, nor other authors, have exhausted the store of ideas contained in Cixous' *écriture féminine*. Emerging technologies are constantly drawing forth new works of art and new aesthetics, and the work of receiving them into the existing canon of music benefits from new approaches. I have a vision of 'methods' that extend their borders, a Cartesian divide that closes, and the acceptance and development of more approaches as valid. I hope I have succeeded at building the *bridge* I invoked in the introduction as the goal of my efforts – a bridge for ideas to run across.

The laughter Cixous describes is philosophical laughter at its best. Paul de Man characterizes such laughter as a sort of irony, which is only authentically itself when we recognize our own naiveté in accepting a universe grounded on the self, on the proper, and on identity (Kogan:84).

Who laughs last, laughs best. And now, back to *cultivating my small field!*

Stuttgart, 6 January 2008

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<sup>263</sup> Wikipedia, [Interview \(audio\) with Ihde](#), March 2006, seen on 13 April 2007.

<sup>264</sup> A personal desideratum is the completion of the work on Maryanne Amacher begun for this dissertation, as mentioned in the Introduction, p. 40.

## **8 APPENDICES**



## APPENDIX A - Q & A with Hélène Cixous

On 6 March 2008 at the one-day workshop “Insistence – Resistance” in the Guibalsaal of the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, Germany I asked Hélène Cixous two questions. The questions and her answers are given here.

**Question 1 (JS):** At the risk of taking you back to historical topics you treated many decades ago [Mme Cixous had just expressed her distaste for this], I would like to take up one of your topics that is only now gaining relevance for my discipline, which is musicology. It is the philosophical – or music philosophical – notion of the body, and where music happens within it: What is the material and what is the body? Today, if we look at DJ culture and we see people scratching, we see that the materials DJs are working with (turntables and the songs that are either stored on the machines or produced live in concert, then captured, repeated, and changed within the machine – using the body to do that) we see places where aestheticians are now asking questions: What is that body that is doing that? In this respect, I had made an attempt to connect with your concept from the 70s of “writing the body”. Of course, you meant writing words and literature, and I’m talking about music. I can’t just take your notion about writing and immediately apply it to writing a score. So, I’m trying to find a way to make connections which are apt, which make sense. In that context, have you thought about the sense of a musician “writing the body” by creating music with the body? Or is that an application of that notion, which would be antithetical to you?

**Answer (HC):** No, it’s quite analogous in any case. [Difficult to understand] It is a big bond [?] to composing or using an instrument... If it’s a DJ, that would go to the technological aspect, which is very remote. But if you bring out music by your own means, then it is analogous for me. Right. But let me take another comparison which helps enormously. If you compare the way painters act ... painting, it asks for every nerve, muscle, all the senses... Try to imagine a painter, somebody like Alechinsky<sup>1</sup> when he paints... He paints with the canvas on the floor, so he paints in all kinds of positions of the body, which are extremely acrobatic, actually. He will use a brush which is a Japanese brush, something like a wand, you know (something that I couldn’t do), and I see how drawing that comes from above, wherever; afterward, we don’t see that. What we see is, on the contrary, open, even on the vertical wall. So, if you arrive at this result, the main energy has left from his hand [unintelligible] Painting is completely an art that uses the body, sculpting, plowing, cooking, all the realization of what one is,

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<sup>1</sup> Cixous’ recent work, *Si près* (2007), contains two illustrations by Pierre Alechinsky.

except that two of them ... I don't believe in that. I think that you cannot write a page without injecting in it the whole situation of the body: your temperature, your [?], your accent or not or hunger and thirst, your desperation: all actions ..., everything is materialized on the receptacle, or the painter ... I don't speak about the computer, because I don't use it to write, and I have that age-old horror that Jacques Derrida would try to convince me that with the computer it's the same, but no. This [points to a book] doesn't look like a body, because all books are reduced to the same rectangular two dimensions. Traditionally, they look like that, they have different sizes, etc., but it's not true when it comes from the thought, it's different. It *feels* of events, and these events, of course, are not disconnected from the events of the body. I'm too tired to write, if I feel, I feel tired... I won't be able simply – not intellectually, but physically, spiritually...– to actualize what is going through my body. 7:00

Let's take another example, it's the theater. What is an actor? An actor is a model.

**APPENDIX B** - Cixous (1975) "Le Rire de la Méduse"

*L'ARC*

REVUE TRIMESTRIELLE, CHEMIN DE REPENTANCE AIX-EN-PROVENCE

*Directeur* : STÉPHANE CORDIER - *Secrétaire* : ODETTE DULIEU

*Rédaction* : CATHERINE CLÉMENT, GILBERT LASCAULT  
RENÉ MICHA, HUBERT NYSSSEN, BERNARD PINGAUD

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*SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR  
ET LA LUTTE DES FEMMES*

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*Couverture* : Photo Jeanloup Sieff.

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HÉLÈNE CIXOUS

## LE RIRE DE LA MÉDUSE

Je parlerai de l'écriture féminine : *de ce qu'elle fera*. Il faut que la femme s'écrive : que la femme écrive de la femme et fasse venir les femmes à l'écriture, dont elles ont été éloignées aussi violemment qu'elles l'ont été de leurs corps ; pour les mêmes raisons, par la même loi, dans le même but mortel. Il faut que la femme se mette au texte — comme au monde, et à l'histoire, — de son propre mouvement.

Il ne faut plus que le passé fasse l'avenir. Je ne nie pas que les effets du passé sont encore là. Mais je me refuse à les consolider en les répétant ; à leur prêter une inamovibilité équivalente à un destin ; à confondre le biologique et le culturel. Il est urgent d'anticiper.

Ces réflexions, parce qu'elles s'avancent dans une région sur le point de se découvrir, portent nécessairement la marque de l'entretemps que nous vivons, celui où le nouveau se dégage de l'ancien, et plus exactement la nouvelle de l'ancien. C'est pourquoi, comme il n'y a pas de lieu d'où poser un discours, mais un sol millénaire et aride à fendre, ce que je dis a au moins deux faces et deux visées : détruire, casser ; prévoir l'imprévu, projeter.

J'écris ceci en tant que femme vers les femmes. Quand je dis « la femme », je parle de la femme en sa lutte inévitable avec l'homme classique ; et d'une femme-sujet universelle, qui doit faire advenir les femmes à leur (s) sens et leur histoire. Mais il faut dire, avant tout, qu'il n'y a pas, aujourd'hui même, et malgré l'énormité du refoulement qui les a maintenues dans ce « noir » qu'on essaie de leur faire reconnaître comme leur attribut, une femme générale, une femme type. Ce qu'elles ont *en commun*, je le dirai. Mais ce qui me frappe c'est l'infinie richesse de leurs constitutions singulières : on ne peut parler d'une sexualité féminine, uniforme, homogène, à parcours codable, pas plus que d'un inconscient semblable. L'imaginaire des femmes est inépuisable, comme la musique, la peinture, l'écriture : leurs coulées de fantasmes sont inouïes. J'ai plus d'une fois été émerveillée par ce qu'une femme me décrivait d'un monde sien qu'elle hantait secrètement depuis sa petite enfance. Monde de recherche, d'élaboration d'un savoir, à partir d'une expérimentation systématique des fonctionnements du corps, d'une interrogation précise et passionnée de son érogénéité. Cette pratique, d'une richesse inventive extraordinaire, en particulier de la masturbation, se prolonge ou s'accompagne, d'une production de *formes*, d'une véritable activité esthétique, chaque temps de jouissance inscrivant une vision sonore, une *composition*, une chose belle. La beauté ne sera plus interdite. Alors je souhaitais qu'elle écrive et proclame cet empire

unique : pour que d'autres femmes, d'autres souveraines inavouées, s'écrient alors : moi aussi je déborde, mes désirs ont inventé de nouveaux désirs, mon corps connaît des chants inouïs, moi aussi je me suis tant de fois sentie pleine à exploser de torrents lumineux, de formes beaucoup plus belles que celles qui encadrées se vendent pour toute la galette qui pue. Et moi aussi je n'ai rien dit, je n'ai rien montré ; je n'ai pas ouvert la bouche, je n'ai pas re-peint ma moitié du monde. J'ai eu honte. J'ai eu peur et j'ai bouffé ma honte et ma peur. Je me disais : tu es folle ! Qu'est-ce que c'est que ces montées, ces inondations, ces bouffées ? Quelle est la femme bouillonnante et infinie qui n'a pas, immergée qu'elle était dans sa naïveté, maintenue dans l'obscurantisme et le mépris d'elle-même par la grande poigne parentale-conjugale-phallogocentrique, *eu honte de sa puissance* ? qui ne s'est pas, surprise et horrifiée par le remue-ménage fantastique de ses pulsions (car on lui a fait croire qu'une femme bien réglée, normale, est d'un calme... divin) accusée d'être monstrueuse ; qui, sentant s'agiter une drôle d'envie (de chanter, d'écrire, de proférer, bref de faire sortir du neuf) ne s'est pas crue malade ? Or sa maladie honteuse, c'est qu'elle résiste à la mort, qu'elle donne tant de fil à retordre.

Et pourquoi n'écris-tu pas ? Ecris ! L'écriture est pour toi, tu es pour toi, ton corps est à toi, prends-le. Je sais pourquoi tu n'as pas écrit. (Et pourquoi je n'ai pas écrit avant l'âge de 27 ans). Parce que l'écriture c'est à la fois le trop haut, le trop grand pour toi, c'est réservé aux grands, c'est-à-dire aux « grands hommes » ; c'est de « la bêtise ». D'ailleurs tu as un peu écrit, mais en cachette. Et ce n'était pas bon, mais parce que c'était en cachette, et que tu te punissais d'écrire, que tu n'allais pas jusqu'au bout ; ou qu'écrivant, irrésistiblement, comme nous nous masturbions en cachette, c'était non pas pour aller plus loin, mais pour atténuer un peu la tension, juste assez pour que le trop cesse de tourmenter. Et puis dès qu'on a joui, on se dépêche de se culpabiliser — pour se faire pardonner ; ou d'oublier, d'enterrer, jusqu'à la prochaine.

Ecris, que nul ne te retienne, que rien ne t'arrête : ni homme, ni imbécile machine capitaliste où les maisons d'éditions sont les rusés et obséquieux relais des impératifs d'une économie qui fonctionne contre nous et sur notre dos ; ni *toi-même*.

Les vrais textes de femmes, des textes avec des sexes de femmes, ça ne leur fait pas plaisir ; ça leur fait peur ; ça les écœure. Gueule des lecteurs, chefs de collection et patrons trônant.

J'écris femme : il faut que la femme écrive la femme. Et l'homme l'homme. On ne trouvera donc ici qu'oblique réflexion vers l'homme, auquel il revient de dire ce qu'il en est pour lui de sa masculinité et de sa féminité : ceci nous regardera quand ils auront ouvert leurs yeux pour se voir<sup>1</sup>.

1. Ils ont encore tout à dire, les hommes, sur leur sexualité, et tout à écrire. Car ce qu'ils en ont énoncé, pour la plupart, relève de l'opposition activité/passivité, du rapport de force où il se fantasme une virilité obligatoire, envahissante, colonisatrice, la femme donc étant fantasmée comme « continent noir » à pénétrer et « pacifier » (on sait ce que pacifier veut dire comme opération scotomisante de l'autre et méconnaissance de soi). A conquérir on a vite fait de s'éloigner de ses bords, de se perdre de vue et de corps. La façon qu'a l'homme de sortir de lui-même dans celle qu'il prend non pour l'autre, mais pour sienne, le prive, le sait-il, de son propre territoire corporel. A se confondre avec son pénis, et à se jeter à l'assaut, on comprend qu'il ait le ressentiment et la crainte d'être « pris » par la femme, d'être en elle perdu, absorbé, ou seul.

Elles reviennent de loin : de toujours : du « dehors », des landes où se maintiennent en vie les sorcières ; d'en dessous, en deça de la « culture » ; *de leurs enfances* qu'ils ont tant de mal à leur faire oublier, qu'ils condamnent à *l'in pace*. Emmurées les petites filles aux corps « mal élevés ». Conservées, intactes d'elles-mêmes, dans la glace. Frigidifiées. Mais qu'est-ce que ça remue là-dessous ! Quels efforts il leur faut faire, aux flics du sexe, toujours à recommencer, pour barrer leur menaçant retour. De part et d'autre, un tel déploiement de forces que la lutte s'est pour des siècles immobilisée dans l'équilibre tremblant d'un point mort.

★

Les voilà qui reviennent, les arrivantes de toujours : parce que l'inconscient est imprenable. Elles ont erré en rond dans l'étroite chambre à poupées où on les a bouclées ; où on leur a fait une éducation décervelante, meurtrière. On peut en effet incarcérer, ralentir, réussir trop longtemps le coup de l'Apartheid, mais pour un temps seulement. On peut leur apprendre, dès qu'elles commencent à parler, en même temps que leur nom, que leur région est noire : parce que tu es Afrique, tu es noire. Ton continent est noir. Le noir est dangereux. Dans le noir tu ne vois rien, tu as peur. Ne bouge pas car tu risques de tomber. Surtout ne va pas dans la forêt. Et l'horreur du noir, nous l'avons intériorisée.

Contre les femmes ils ont commis le plus grand crime : ils les ont amenées, insidieusement, violemment, à haïr les femmes, à être leurs propres ennemies, à mobiliser leur immense puissance contre elles-mêmes, à être les exécutantes de leur virile besogne.

Ils leur ont fait un anti-narcissisme ! un narcissisme qui ne s'aime qu'à se faire aimer pour ce qu'on n'a pas ! Ils ont fabriqué l'infâme logique de l'antiamour.

Nous, les précoces, nous les refoulées de la culture, les belles bouches barrées de bâillons, pollen, haleines coupées, nous les labyrinthes, les échelles, les espaces foulés ; les volées, — nous sommes « noires » *et nous sommes belles*.

Orageuses, ce qui est nôtre se détache de nous sans que nous redoutions de nous affaiblir : nos regards s'en vont, nos sourires filent, les rires de toutes nos bouches, nos sangs coulent et nous nous répandons sans nous épuiser, nos pensées, nos signes, nos écrits, nous ne les retenons pas et nous ne craignons pas de manquer.

Bonheur à nous, les omises, les écartées de la scène des héritages, nous nous inspirons et nous nous expirons sans essoufflement, nous sommes partout !

Nous, les arrivées de toujours, qui, désormais, si nous disons, pourrait nous interdire ?

Il est temps de libérer la Nouvelle de l'Ancienne en la connaissant, en l'aimant de s'en tirer, de dépasser l'Ancienne sans retard, en allant au-devant de ce que la Nouvelle sera, comme la flèche quitte la corde, d'un trait rassemblant et séparant les ondes musicalement, afin d'être *plus qu'elle-même*.

Je dis qu'il faut : puisqu'il n'y a pas eu encore, à quelques rares exceptions près, d'écriture qui inscrive de la féminité. Si rares, qu'on ne peut en sillonnant les littératures à travers temps, langues, et cultures,<sup>2</sup> revenir qu'effrayé de cette

2. Je ne parle ici que de la place « réservée » à la femme par le monde occidental.

presque vaine battue : on sait que le nombre de femmes écrivains, (tout en ayant augmenté très peu à partir du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle), a toujours été dérisoire. Savoir inutile et leurrant si de cette espèce d'écrivantes on ne déduit pas d'abord l'immense majorité dont la facture ne se distingue en rien de l'écriture masculine, et qui soit occulte la femme, soit reproduit les représentations classiques de la femme (sensible - intuitive - rêveuse, etc.)<sup>3</sup>.

J'ouvre ici une parenthèse : je dis bien écriture masculine. Je soutiens, sans équivoque, qu'il y a des écritures *marquées* ; que l'écriture a été jusqu'à présent, de façon beaucoup plus étendue, répressive, qu'on le soupçonne ou qu'on l'avoue, gérée par une économie libidinale et culturelle — donc politique, typiquement masculine — un lieu où s'est reproduit plus ou moins consciemment, et de façon redoutable car souvent occulté, ou paré des charmes mystifiants de la fiction, le refoulement de la femme ; un lieu qui a charrié grossièrement tous les signes de l'opposition sexuelle (et non de la différence) et où la femme n'a jamais eu sa parole, ceci étant d'autant plus grave et impardonnable que justement l'écriture *est la possibilité même du changement*, l'espace d'où peut s'élancer une pensée subversive, le mouvement avant-coureur d'une transformation des structures sociales et culturelles.

★

Presque toute l'histoire de l'écriture se confond avec l'histoire de la raison dont elle est à la fois l'effet, le soutien, et un des alibis privilégiés. Elle a été homogène à la tradition phallogocentrique. Elle est même le phallogocentrisme qui se regarde, qui jouit de lui-même et se félicite.

Sauf exceptions : car il y a eu, sans quoi je n'écrirais pas, (je-femme, rescapée) des ratées dans l'énorme machine qui tourne et répète sa « vérité » depuis des siècles. Il y a eu des poètes pour faire passer à tout prix quelque chose d'hétérogène à la tradition, — des hommes capables d'aimer l'amour ; d'aimer donc les autres et de les vouloir, de penser la femme qui résisterait à l'écrasement et se constituerait en sujet superbe, égal, « impossible » donc, intenable dans le cadre social réel : cette femme-là, le poète ne l'a pu désirer qu'à briser les codes qui la nient. Son apparition entraînant nécessairement sinon une révolution, — car le bastion était immuable — du moins de déchirantes explosions. Parfois c'est d'ailleurs dans la cassure que cause un tremblement de terre, à l'occasion de cette mutation radicale des choses par un bouleversement matériel quand toutes les structures sont un moment désorientées, et qu'une éphémère sauvagerie balaie l'ordre, que le poète fait passer, pour un bref entretemps, de la femme : ainsi fit Kleist, jusqu'à mourir de vouloir que vivent les sœurs-amantes filles-maternelles mères-sœurs qui n'ont jamais baissé la tête. Après quoi, dès les palais de magistrature redressés, il faut payer : immédiate et sanglante mise à mort de ces éléments incontrôlables.

3. Alors *quelles* sont les écritures dont on pourrait dire qu'elles sont « féminines » ? Je ne ferai ici que désigner des exemples : il faudrait en produire des lectures qui fassent surgir dans leur signification ce qui s'y répand de féminité. Ce que je ferai ailleurs. En France (a-t-on noté notre infinie pauvreté en ce champ ? Les pays anglo-saxons ont eu des ressources nettement plus importantes) pour feuilleter ce que le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle a laissé s'écrire, et c'est bien peu, je n'ai vu inscrire de la féminité que par Colette, Marguerite Duras ... et Jean Genet.

Les poètes seulement, pas les romanciers solidaires de la représentation. Les poètes parce que la poésie n'est que de prendre force dans l'inconscient et que l'inconscient, l'autre contrée sans limites est le lieu où survivent les refoulés : les femmes, ou comme dirait Hoffmann, les fées.

Il faut qu'elle s'écrive parce que c'est l'invention d'une écriture *neuve, insurgée* qui, dans le moment venu de sa libération, lui permettra d'effectuer les ruptures et les transformations indispensables dans son histoire, d'abord à deux niveaux inséparables :

a) individuellement : en s'écrivant, la femme fera retour à ce corps qu'on lui a plus que confisqué, dont on a fait l'inquiétant étranger dans la place, le malade ou le mort, et qui si souvent est le mauvais compagnon, cause et lieu des inhibitions. A censurer le corps on censure du même coup le souffle, la parole.

Ecris-toi : il faut que ton corps se fasse entendre. Alors jailliront les immenses ressources de l'inconscient. Notre naphte, il va répandre, sans dollars or ou noir, sur le monde, des valeurs non cotées qui changeront les règles du vieux jeu.

Ecrire, acte, qui non seulement « réalisera » le rapport dé-censuré de la femme à sa sexualité, à son être-femme, lui rendant accès à ses propres forces ; qui lui rendra ses biens, ses plaisirs, ses organes, ses immenses territoires corporels tenus sous scellés ; qui l'arrachera à la structure surmoisée dans laquelle on lui réservait toujours la même place de coupable (coupable de tout, à tous les coups : d'avoir des désirs, de ne pas en avoir ; d'être frigide, d'être trop « chaude » ; de ne pas être les deux à la fois ; d'être trop mère et pas assez ; d'avoir des enfants et de ne pas en avoir ; de nourrir et de ne pas nourrir...) par ce travail de recherche, d'analyse, d'illumination, cet affranchissement du texte merveilleux d'elle-même qu'il lui faut d'urgence apprendre à parler. Une femme sans corps, une muette, une aveugle, ne peut pas être une bonne combattante. Elle est réduite à être la servante du militant, son ombre. Il faut tuer la fausse femme qui empêche la vivante de respirer. Inscire le souffle de la femme entière.

b) acte aussi qui marquera la *Prise de la Parole* par la femme, donc son entrée fracassante dans l'*Histoire* qui s'est toujours constituée sur son *refoulement*. Ecrire pour se forger l'arme antilogos. Pour devenir enfin partie prenante et *initiante à son gré*, pour *son droit* à elle, dans tout système symbolique, dans tout procès politique.

Il est temps que la femme marque ses coups dans la langue écrite et orale.

Toute femme a connu le tourment de la venue à la parole orale, le cœur qui bat à se rompre, parfois la chute dans la perte de langage, le sol, la langue se déroband, tant parler est pour la femme — je dirai même : ouvrir la bouche — en public, une témérité, une transgression. Double détresse, car même si elle transgresse, sa parole choit presque toujours dans la sourde oreille masculine, qui n'entend dans la langue que ce qui parle au masculin.

C'est en écrivant, depuis et vers la femme, et en relevant le défi du discours gouverné par le phallus, que la femme affirmera la femme autrement qu'à la place à elle réservée dans et par le symbole c'est-à-dire le silence. Qu'elle sorte du silence piégé. Qu'elle ne se laisse pas refiler pour domaine la marge ou le harem.

Ecoute parler une femme dans une assemblée (si elle n'a pas douloureusement perdu le souffle) : elle ne « parle » pas, elle lance dans l'air son corps

tremblant, elle se *lâche*, elle vole, c'est tout entière qu'elle passe dans sa voix, c'est avec son corps qu'elle soutient vitalement la « logique » de son discours : sa chair dit vrai. Elle s'expose. En vérité, elle matérialise charnellement ce qu'elle pense, elle le signifie avec son corps. D'une certaine manière elle *inscrit* ce qu'elle dit, parce qu'elle ne refuse pas à la pulsion sa part indisciplinable et passionnée à la parole. Son discours, même « théorique » ou politique, n'est jamais simple ou linéaire, ou « objectivé » généralisé : elle entraîne dans l'histoire son histoire.

Il n'y a pas cette coupure, cette division qu'opère l'homme commun entre la logique du discours oral et la logique du texte, tendu qu'il est par son antique rapport asservissant, calculateur, à la maîtrise. D'où le discours mesquin du bout des lèvres et qui n'engage que la plus petite partie du corps plus le masque.

Dans la parole féminine comme dans l'écriture ne cesse jamais de résonner ce qui de nous avoir jadis traversé, touché imperceptiblement, profondément, garde le pouvoir de nous affecter, le *chant*, la première musique, celle de la première voix d'amour, que toute femme préserve vivante. Comment ce rapport privilégié à la voix ? Parce qu'aucune femme n'empile autant de défenses anti-pulsionnelles qu'un homme. Tu n'étayes pas, tu ne maçonnes pas comme lui, tu ne t'éloignes pas aussi « prudemment » du plaisir. Même si la mystification phallique a contaminé généralement les bons rapports, la femme n'est jamais loin de la « mère » (que j'entends hors-rôle, la « mère » comme non-nom, et comme source des biens). Toujours en elle subsiste au moins un peu du bon lait-de-mère. Elle écrit à l'encre blanche.

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*Femme pour femmes* : en la femme toujours se maintient la force productive de l'autre, en particulier de l'autre femme. *En* elle, matricielle, berceuse-donneuse, elle-même sa mère et son enfant, elle-même sa fille-sœur. Tu me dis : et celle qui d'une mauvaise mère est l'hystérique progéniture ? Tout sera changé, lorsque la femme donnera la femme à l'autre femme. En elle, latente, toujours prête, il y a source ; et lieu pour l'autre. La *mère* aussi est une métaphore : il faut, il suffit qu'à la femme soit donné par une autre le meilleur d'elle-même pour que la femme puisse s'aimer et rendre en amour le corps qui lui est « né ». Toi, si tu le veux, touche-moi, caresse-moi, donne-moi, toi la vivante sans-nom, même moi comme moi-même. Pas plus que le rapport à l'enfance (l'enfant qu'elle a été, qu'elle est, qu'elle fait, refait, défait, au lieu où, même, elle s'autre), le rapport à la « mère » *en tant* que délices et violences n'est coupé. Texte, mon corps : traversée de coulées chantantes ; entends-moi, ce n'est pas une « mère » collante, attachante ; c'est, te touchant, l'équivoix qui t'affecte, te pousse depuis ton sein à venir au langage, qui lance *ta* force ; c'est le rythme qui te rit ; l'intime destinataire qui rend possibles et désirables toutes les métaphores, corps (le ? les ?), pas plus descriptible que dieu, l'âme ou l'Autre ; la partie de toi qui entre en toi t'espace et te pousse à inscrire dans la langue ton style de femme. Dans la femme il y a toujours plus ou moins de la mère qui répare et alimente, et résiste à la séparation, une force qui ne se laisse pas couper, mais qui essouffle les codes. Nous re-penserons la femme depuis toutes les formes et tous les temps de son corps. « We are all lesbians », nous rappellent les Américaines : c'est-à-dire, n'abaisse pas la femme, ne lui fais pas ce qu'ils t'ont fait.

Parce que son « économie » pulsionnelle est prodigue, elle ne peut pas en *prenant* la parole, ne pas transformer directement et indirectement *tous* les systèmes d'échanges fondés sur l'épargne masculine. Sa libido produira des effets de remaniement politique et social beaucoup plus radical qu'on ne veut le penser.

Parce que de toujours, elle arrive, vivante, nous sommes au commencement d'une nouvelle histoire, ou plutôt d'un devenir à plusieurs histoires se traversant les unes les autres. En tant que sujet à l'histoire, la femme se passe toujours simultanément en plusieurs lieux. Elle dé-pense l'histoire unifiante, ordonnatrice, qui homogénéise et canalise les forces et ramène les contradictions dans la pratique d'un seul champ de bataille. En la femme se recourent l'histoire de toutes les femmes, son histoire personnelle, l'histoire nationale et internationale. En tant que combattante, c'est avec toutes les libérations que la femme fait corps. Elle doit voir loin. Pas de coup par coup. Elle prévoit que sa libération fera plus que modifier les rapports de force ou envoyer la balle dans l'autre camp ; elle entraînera une mutation des relations humaines, de la pensée, de toutes les pratiques ; il ne s'agit pas seulement de la lutte des classes, qu'elle entraîne en fait dans un mouvement plus vaste. Non que pour être femme-en-lutte (s) il faille sortir de la lutte des classes ou la dénier ; mais il faut l'ouvrir, la fendre, la pousser, l'emplier de la lutte fondamentale ; afin d'empêcher que la lutte des classes et toute autre lutte de libération d'une classe ou d'un peuple, n'opère comme instance refoulante, prétexte à différer l'inévitable, l'altération bouleversante des rapports de force et de production des individualités. Cette altération est déjà là : aux U.S.A. par exemple où des millions de taupes sont en train de faire sauter la famille et de désintégrer toute la socialité américaine<sup>4</sup>.

Elle arrive la nouvelle histoire, elle n'est pas un rêve, mais elle dépasse l'imagination masculine, et pour cause : elle va les priver de leur orthopédie conceptuelle, elle commence par ruiner leur machine à leurres.

Impossible de *définir* une pratique féminine de l'écriture, d'une impossibilité qui se maintiendra car on ne pourra jamais *théoriser* cette pratique, l'enfermer, la coder, ce qui ne signifie pas qu'elle n'existe pas. Mais elle excédera toujours le discours que régit le système phallogénique ; elle a et aura lieu ailleurs que dans les territoires subordonnés à la domination philosophique-théorique. Elle ne se laissera penser que par les sujets casseurs des automatismes, les coureurs de bords qu'aucune autorité ne subjuguera jamais.

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D'où la nécessité d'affirmer ses essors, d'en informer les passages, les voies proches et lointaines. En commençant par rappeler : 1) que l'opposition sexuelle qui s'est toujours faite au profit de l'homme, au point de réduire l'écriture aussi à ses lois, n'est qu'une *limite historico-culturelle*. Il y a, il y aura de plus en plus fort et vite maintenant une fiction qui produira des effets de féminité irréductibles.

4. Mais ceci, à l'intérieur d'une clôture économique-métaphysique dont la limite, parce qu'elle reste non analysée, non théorisée, arrêtera, barrera - (à moins d'un changement actuellement impossible à prévoir) - très vite la portée du mouvement.

2) que c'est par méconnaissance que la plupart des lecteurs, critiques, écrivains des deux sexes, hésitent à admettre ou nient carrément la possibilité ou la pertinence d'une distinction écriture féminine/écriture masculine. On dira couramment, évacuant ainsi la différence sexuelle : soit que toute écriture, dans la mesure où elle se fait jour, est féminine ; et inversement mais ça revient au même, que le geste de l'écriture est l'équivalent d'une masculine masturbation (et alors la femme qui écrit, elle se taille un pénis de papier) ; ou encore que l'écriture est bisexuelle, donc neutre, expulsant la différenciation. Admettre qu'écrire c'est justement travailler (dans) l'entre, interroger le procès du même *et* de l'autre sans lequel rien ne vit, défaire le travail de la mort, c'est d'abord vouloir le deux, et les deux, l'ensemble de l'un et l'autre non pas figés dans des séquences de lutte et d'expulsion ou autre mise à mort, mais dynamisés à l'infini par un incessant échange de l'un entre l'autre sujet différent, ne se connaissant et se recommençant qu'à partir du bord vivant de l'autre : parcours multiple et inépuisable à milliers de rencontres et transformations du même dans l'autre et dans l'entre, d'où la femme prend ses formes (et l'homme, de son côté ; mais c'est son autre histoire).

J'ai précisé : « bisexuelle donc neutre », par référence à la conception *classique* de la bisexualité, qui, ployée sous le signe de la peur de la castration, à l'aide du fantasme d'un être « total » (mais fait de deux moitiés) veut escamoter la différence éprouvée comme opération à perte, comme marque de sécabilité redoutable.

A cette bisexualité fusionnelle, effaçante, qui veut conjurer la castration, (l'écrivain qui affiche : ici, on écrit bisexuel, il y a gros à parier, allez voir, qu'il n'est ni l'un ni l'autre) j'oppose l'*autre bisexualité*, celle dont chaque sujet non enfermé dans le faux théâtre de la représentation phallogocentrique, institue son univers érotique. Bisexualité, c'est-à-dire repérage en soi, individuellement, de la présence, diversement manifeste et insistante selon chaque un ou une, des deux sexes, non-exclusion de la différence ni d'un sexe, et à partir de cette « permission » que l'on se donne, multiplication des effets d'inscription du désir, sur toutes les parties de mon corps et de l'autre corps.

Or cette bisexualité en transes qui n'annule pas les différences, mais les anime, les poursuit, les ajoute, il se trouve qu'à présent, pour des raisons historico-culturelles, c'est la femme qui s'y ouvre et en bénéficie : d'une certaine façon « la femme est bisexuelle ». L'homme, ce n'est un secret pour personne, — étant dressé à viser la glorieuse monosexualité phallique. A force d'affirmer le primat du phallus, et de le mettre en œuvre, l'idéologie phallogocentrique a fait plus d'une victime : femme j'ai pu être obnubilée par la grande ombre du sceptre, et on m'a dit : adore-le, celui que tu ne brandis pas. Mais du même coup on a fait à l'homme ce grotesque et, songes-y, peu enviable destin, d'être réduit à une seule idole aux couilles d'argile. Et, comme le notent Freud et ses suivants, d'avoir si peur d'être une femme ! Car, si la psychanalyse s'est constituée depuis la femme, et à refouler la féminité (refoulement qui, les hommes le manifestent, n'est pas si réussi que ça), de la sexualité masculine, elle rend un compte à présent peu réfutable ; comme toutes les sciences « humaines » elle reproduit le masculin dont elle est un des effets.

Ici, nous rencontrons l'inévitable homme-au-roc, dressé tout raide dans son vieux champ freudien, tel qu'à le reporter où la linguistique le conceptualise « à neuf », Lacan le conserve dans le sanctuaire du Phallus « à l'abri » *du manque de castration* ! Leur « symbolique », il existe, il a le pouvoir, nous, les désordonnantes, nous le savons trop bien. Mais rien ne nous oblige à déposer nos vies à ses banques du manque ; à penser la constitution du sujet en termes de drame à répétitions blessantes, à renflouer sans cesse la religion du père. Puisque nous ne le désirons pas. Nous ne tournons pas en rond autour du trou suprême. Nous n'avons aucune raison de *femme* de faire allégeance au négatif. Le féminin, (les poètes le soupçonnèrent) affirme : « ...and yes I said yes I will Yes ». Et oui, dit Molly en emportant *Ulysse* au-delà de tout livre vers la nouvelle écriture, j'ai dit oui, je veux Oui.

Le « *Continent noir* » n'est ni noir ni *inexplorable* : Il n'est encore inexploré que parce qu'on nous a fait croire qu'il était trop noir pour être explorable. Et parce qu'on veut nous faire croire que ce qui nous intéresse c'est le continent blanc, avec ses monuments au Manque. Et nous avons cru. On nous a figées entre deux mythes horrifiants : entre la Méduse et l'abîme. Il y aurait de quoi faire éclater de rire la moitié du monde, si ça ne continuait pas. Car la relève phallogocentrique est là, et militante, reproductrice des vieux schémas, ancrée dans le dogme de la castration. Ils n'ont rien changé : ils ont théorisé leur désir *pour* de la réalité ! Qu'ils tremblent, les prêtres, on va leur *montrer* nos sextes !

Tant pis pour eux s'ils s'effondrent à découvrir que les femmes ne sont pas des hommes, ou que la mère n'en a pas. Mais est-ce que cette peur ne les arrange pas ? Est-ce que le pire, ce ne serait pas, ce n'est pas, en vérité, que la femme n'est pas castrée, qu'il lui suffit de ne plus écouter les sirènes (car les sirènes, c'étaient des hommes) pour que l'histoire change de sens ? Il suffit qu'on regarde la méduse en face pour la voir : et elle n'est pas mortelle. Elle est belle et elle rit.

Ils disent qu'il y a deux irréprésentables : la mort et le sexe féminin. Car ils ont besoin que la féminité soit associée à la mort ; ils bandent par trouille ! pour eux-mêmes ! ils ont besoin d'avoir peur de nous. Regarde, les Persées tremblants avancer vers nous bardés d'apotropes, à reculons ! Jolis dos ! Plus une minute à perdre. Sortons.

Hâtons-nous : le continent n'est pas d'un noir impénétrable. J'y suis souvent allée. J'y ai un jour rencontré avec joie Jean Genet. C'était dans *Pompes funèbres* : il y était arrivé, mené par son Jean. Il y a des hommes (si peu) qui n'ont pas peur de la féminité<sup>5</sup>.

De la féminité les femmes ont presque tout à écrire : de leur sexualité, c'est-à-dire de l'infinie et mobile complexité, de leur érotisation, des ignitions fulgurantes de telle infime-immense région de leurs corps, non du destin, mais de l'aventure de telle pulsion, voyages, traversées, cheminements, brusques et lents éveils, découvertes d'une zone naguère timide tout à l'heure surgissante. Le corps de la femme aux mille et un foyers d'ardeur, quand elle le laissera — fracassant les jougs et censures — articuler le foisonnement des significations qui en tous

5. Cf. *Pompes funèbres*, pp. 185-186

sens le parcourt, c'est de bien plus d'une langue qu'il va faire retentir la vieille langue maternelle à un seul sillon.

Nous nous sommes détournées de nos corps, qu'on nous a honteusement appris à ignorer, à frapper de la bête pudeur ; on nous a fait le coup du marché de dupes : chacun aimera l'autre sexe. Je te donnerai ton corps et toi tu me donneras le mien. Mais quels sont les hommes qui donnent aux femmes le corps qu'elles lui remettent aveuglément ? Pourquoi si peu de textes ? Parce que si peu de femmes encore regagnent leur corps. Il faut que la femme écrive par son corps, qu'elle invente la langue imprenable qui crève les cloisonnements, classes et rhétoriques, ordonnances et codes, qu'elle submerge, transperce, franchisse le discours-à-réserve ultime, y compris celui qui se rit d'avoir à dire le mot « silence », celui qui visant l'impossible s'arrête pile devant le mot « impossible » et l'écrit comme « fin ».

Telle est la puissance féminine, qu'emportant la syntaxe, rompant ce fameux fil (juste un tout petit fil, disent-ils) qui sert aux hommes de substitut de cordon pour s'assurer, sans quoi ils ne jouissent pas, que la vieille mère est bien toujours derrière eux, à les regarder faire phallus, elles iront à l'impossible.

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« *Le Refoulé* » de leur culture et de leur société, quand il revient c'est d'un retour explosif, *absolument* ruinant, renversant, d'une force encore jamais libérée, à la mesure de la plus formidable des répressions : car au terme de l'époque du Phallus, les femmes auront été ou anéanties ou portées à la plus haute et violente incandescence. Au long assourdi de leur histoire, elles ont vécu en rêves, en corps mais tus, en silences, en révoltes aphones.

Et avec quelle force dans leur fragilité : « fragilité », vulnérabilité, à la mesure de leur incomparable intensité. Elles n'ont pas sublimé. Heureusement : elles ont sauvé leur peau, leur énergie. Elles n'ont pas travaillé à aménager l'impasse des vies sans avenir. Elles ont habité furieusement ces corps somptueux : admirables hystériques qui ont fait subir à Freud tant de voluptueux et inavouables moments, bombardant sa statue mosaïque de leurs charnels et passionnés mots-de-corps, le hantant de leurs inaudibles et foudroyantes dénonciations, plus que nues sous les sept voiles des pudeurs, éblouissantes. Celles qui en un seul mot du corps ont inscrit l'immense vertige d'une histoire détachée comme une flèche de toute l'histoire des hommes, de la société biblico-capitaliste, ce sont elles, les suppliciées d'hier, qui devançant les nouvelles femmes, celles après lesquelles plus aucune relation intersubjective ne pourra être la même. C'est toi, Dora, toi, indomptable, le corps poétique, la vraie « maîtresse » du Signifiant. Ton efficacité, on va la voir œuvrer avant demain, quand ta parole ne sera plus rentrée, la pointe retournée contre ton sein, mais s'écrit à l'encontre de l'autre.

*En corps* : plus que l'homme invité aux réussites sociales, à la sublimation, les femmes sont corps. Plus corps donc plus écriture. Longtemps c'est en corps qu'elle a répondu aux brimades, à l'entreprise familiale-conjugale de domestication, aux répétées tentatives de la castrer. Celle qui a tourné dix mille fois sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche avant de ne pas parler, ou elle en est morte, ou elle connaît sa langue et sa bouche mieux que tous. Maintenant, je-femme vais faire sauter

la Loi : éclatement désormais possible, et inéluctable ; et qu'il se fasse, tout de suite, *dans* la langue.

Ne nous laissons pas piéger par une analyse mal dégagée des anciens automatismes : il n'y a pas à craindre qu'en le langage se cache un adversaire invincible, parce que c'est la langue des hommes et leur grammaire. Il ne faut pas leur laisser un lieu qui n'est pas plus à eux seuls que nous ne sommes à eux.

Si la femme a toujours fonctionné « dans » le discours de l'homme, signifiant toujours renvoyé à l'adverse signifiant qui en annihile l'énergie spécifique, en rabat ou étouffe les sons si différents, il est temps qu'elle disloque ce « dans », qu'elle l'explode, le retourne et s'en saisisse, qu'elle le fasse sien, le comprenant, le prenant dans sa bouche à elle, que de ses dents à elle elle lui morde la langue, qu'elle s'invente une langue pour lui rentrer dedans. Et avec quelle aisance, tu verras, elle peut depuis ce « dans » où elle était tapie somnolente, sourdre aux lèvres qu'elle va déborder de ses écumes.

Il ne s'agit pas non plus de s'approprier leurs instruments, leurs concepts, leurs places, ni de se vouloir en leur position de maîtrise. Que nous sachions qu'il y a un risque d'identification, cela n'entraîne pas que nous succombions. Laissons aux inquiets, à l'angoisse masculine et à son rapport obsessionnel au fonctionnement à dominer, au savoir « comment ça marche » afin de « faire marcher ». Non s'emparer pour intérioriser, ou manipuler, mais traverser d'un trait, et « voler ».

*Voler*, c'est le geste de la femme, voler dans la langue, la faire voler. Du vol, nous avons toutes appris l'art aux maintes techniques, depuis des siècles que nous n'avons accès à l'avoir qu'en *volant* ; que nous avons vécu dans un vol, de voler, trouvant au désir des passages étroits, dérobés, traversants. Ce n'est pas un hasard si « voler » se joue entre deux vols, jouissant de l'un et l'autre et déroutant les agents du sens. Ce n'est pas un hasard : la femme tient de l'oiseau et du voleur comme le voleur tient de la femme et de l'oiseau : illes passent, illes filent, illes jouissent de brouiller l'ordre de l'espace, de le désorienter, de changer de place les meubles, les choses, les valeurs, de faire des casses, de vider les structures, de chambouler le propre.

Quelle est la femme qui n'a pas volé ? Qui n'a pas senti, rêvé, accompli le geste qui enraye la socialité ? Qui n'a pas brouillé, tourné en dérision, la barre de séparation, inscrit avec son corps le différentiel, perforé le système des couples et oppositions, foutu par terre d'une transgression le successif, l'enchaîné, le mur de la circonfusion ?

Un texte féminin ne peut pas ne pas être plus que subversif : s'il s'écrit, c'est en soulevant, volcanique, la vieille croûte immobilière, porteuse des investissements masculins, et pas autrement ; il n'y a pas de place pour elle si elle n'est pas un il ? Si elle est elle-elle, ce n'est qu'à tout casser, à mettre en pièces les bâtis des institutions, à faire sauter la loi en l'air, à tordre la « vérité » de rire.

Parce qu'elle ne peut pas, dès qu'elle se fraye sa voie dans le symbolique ne pas en faire le chaosmos du « personnel », de ses pronoms, de ses noms et de sa clique de référents. Et pour cause : il y aura eu cette longue histoire de gynocide ; comme le savent les colonisés d'hier, les travailleurs, les peuples, les espèces sur lesquels l'Histoire d'hommes a fait son or, ceux qui ont connu

l'ignominie de la persécution en tirent une future et obstinée envie de grandeur ; les enfermés connaissent mieux que leurs enfermeurs le goût de l'air libre. Grâce à leur histoire, les femmes savent (faire et vouloir) aujourd'hui ce que les hommes ne sauront penser que beaucoup plus tard : je dis qu'elle bouleverse le « personnel » : comme on lui a, par lois, mensonges, chantages, mariage, toujours extorqué son droit à elle-même en même temps que son nom, elle a dans le mouvement même de l'aliénation mortelle pu voir de plus près l'inanité du « propre », la mesquinerie réductrice de l'économie subjective masculine-conjugale, à laquelle elle résiste doublement : d'une part elle s'est constituée nécessairement en cette « personne » capable de perdre une partie d'elle-même sans être perdue. Mais secrètement, silencieusement, en son for intérieur, elle s'étend et se multiplie, car, d'autre part, elle en sait sur vivre et sur le rapport entre l'économie pulsionnelle et la gestion du moi, beaucoup plus long que tout homme. A la différence de l'homme qui tellement tient à son titre et ses titres, bourses de valeurs, tête, couronne et tout ce qui est de son chef, la femme se moque bien de la peur de la décapitation (ou castration), s'aventurant sans le masculin tremblement dans l'anonymat, auquel elle sait se fondre sans s'anéantir : parce qu'elle est *donneuse*.

J'aurai beaucoup à dire sur toute la trompeuse problématique du don. La femme n'est évidemment pas cette femme rêvée par Nietzsche qui ne donne que pour. Qui peut penser le don comme don-qui-prend sinon l'homme justement qui voudrait tout prendre ?

S'il y a un « propre de la femme, c'est paradoxalement sa capacité de se dé-propriser sans calcul : corps sans fin, sans « bout », sans « parties » principales, si elle est un tout, c'est un tout composé de parties qui sont des tous, non pas simples objets partiels, mais ensemble mouvant et changeant, illimité cosmos qu'Erôs parcourt sans repos, immense espace astral non organisé autour d'un soleil plus-astre que les autres.

Cela ne veut pas dire qu'elle est un magma indifférencié, mais qu'elle ne monarchise pas son corps ou son désir. Que la sexualité masculine gravite autour du pénis, engendrant ce corps (anatomie politique) centralisé, sous la dictature des parties. La femme, elle, n'opère pas sur elle-même cette régionalisation au profit du couple tête-sexe, qui ne s'inscrit qu'à l'intérieur de frontières. Sa libido est cosmique, comme son inconscient est mondial : son écriture ne peut aussi que se poursuivre, sans jamais inscrire ou discerner de contours, osant ces traversées vertigineuses d'autre, éphémères et passionnés séjours en lui, elles, eux, qu'elle habite le temps de les regarder au plus près de l'inconscient, dès leur lever, de les aimer au plus près de la pulsion, et ensuite plus loin, toute imprégnée de ces brèves identificatoires embrassades, elle va, et passe à l'infini. Elle seule ose et veut connaître du dedans, dont elle, l'exclue n'a pas cessé d'entendre résonner l'avant-langage. Elle laisse parler l'autre langue à mille langues, qui ne connaît ni le mur ni la mort. A la vie, elle ne refuse rien. Sa langue ne contient pas, elle porte, elle ne retient pas, elle rend possible. Ou ça s'énonce trouble, merveille d'être plusieurs, elle ne se défend pas contre ses inconnues qu'elle se surprend à se percevoir être, jouissant de son don d'altérabilité. Je suis Chair spacieuse

chantante, sur laquelle s'ente nul sait quel (le) je plus ou moins humain mais d'abord vivant puisqu'en transformation.

Ecris ! et Ton texte se cherchant se connaît plus que chair et sang, pâte se pétrissant, levant, insurrectionnelle, aux ingrédients sonores, parfumés, combinaison mouvementée de couleurs volantes, feuillages et fleuves se jetant à la mer que nous alimentons. Ah ! la voilà sa mer, me dira-t-il, l'autre qui me tend son bassin plein d'eau de la petite mère phallique dont il n'arrive pas à se séparer. Mais voilà, nos mers sont ce que nous les faisons, poissonneuses ou pas, opaques ou transparentes, rouges ou noires, hautes ou plates, étroites ou sans rives, et nous sommes nous-mêmes mer, sables, coraux, algues, plages, marées, nageuses, enfants, vagues.

Plus ou moins vaguement mer, terre, ciel, quelle matière nous rebuterait ? Nous savons toutes les parler.

Hétérogène, oui, à son bénéfique joyeux elle est érogène, elle est l'érogénéité de l'hétérogène ; ce n'est pas à elle-même qu'elle tient, la nageuse aérienne, la voleuse. Dispersable, prodigue, étourdissante, désireuse et capable d'autre, de l'autre femme qu'elle sera, de l'autre femme qu'elle n'est pas, de lui, de toi.

★

Femme n'aie peur ni d'ailleurs, ni de même, ni d'autre. Mes yeux ma langue mes oreilles mon nez ma peau ma bouche mon corps — pour — (l') autre, non que je le désire pour me boucher un trou, pour parer à quelque mien défaut, ou talonnée destinalement par la féminine « jalousie » ; non parce que je suis entraînée, dans la chaîne des substitutions qui ramène les substituts à l'ultime objet. C'en est fait des contes de petit poucet, du *Penisneid* que nous chuchotèrent les vieilles grands-mères ogresses servantes de leurs fils-paternels. Qu'ils croient, qu'ils aient besoin pour faire cas d'eux-mêmes, de croire que nous crevons d'envie, que nous sommes ce trou bordé d'envie de leur pénis, c'est leur immémoriale affaire. Indéniablement (nous le vérifions à nos dépens — mais aussi à notre amusement) c'est de nous faire savoir qu'ils bandent afin que nous les assurions (nous maîtresses maternelles de leur petit signifiant de poche) qu'ils en sont, qu'ils les ont encore, — que les hommes ne se structurent que de s'empenner. Dans l'enfant ce n'est pas le pénis que la femme désire, ce n'est pas ce fameux morceau autour duquel gravite tout l'homme. La gestation n'est pas reconduite, sauf dans les *limites* historiques de l'Ancien, à des fatalités, à ces mécaniques substitutions que met en place l'inconscient d'une éternelle « jalouse » ; ni au *Penisneid* ; ni au narcissisme, ni à une homosexualité liée à la mère-toujours-là ! Faire un enfant n'entraîne pas la femme, ni l'homme, à choir inéluctablement dans les schémas, à recharger le circuit de la reproduction. S'il y a risque, il n'y a pas de piège inévitable : que sur la femme ne vienne pas peser, sous couvert de prise de conscience, un supplément d'interdits. Tu veux un gosse ou tu ne veux pas, *c'est ton affaire*. Que nul ne te menace ; qu'à la peur d'être « prise » du temps jadis ne succède pas la peur en satisfaisant ton désir de devenir complice d'une socialité. Et l'homme, vas-tu aussi, escomptant de tous l'aveuglement et la passivité, craindre que l'enfant n'en fasse un père, et donc que la femme se fasse

d'un gosse bien plus d'un mauvais coup, engendrant à la fois l'enfant - la mère - le père - la famille ? Non. A toi de rompre les vieux circuits. Il y aura pour la femme et l'homme — à périmer l'ancien rapport, et toutes ses conséquences ; à penser le *lancement* d'un sujet neuf, en vie, avec dé-familialisation. Dé-mater-paternalisons plutôt que, pour parer à la récupération de la procréation, priver la femme d'une passionnante époque du corps. Défétichisons. Sortons de la dialectique qui veut que le bon père soit le père mort, ou l'enfant la mort des parents. L'enfant c'est l'autre, mais l'autre sans violence, sans passage par la perte, la lutte. On en a marre des renouements, de la fabrique de nœuds, toujours à retrancher, de la litanie de la castration qui se transmet et généalogise. Nous n'avancerons plus à reculons ; nous n'allons pas refouler quelque chose d'aussi simple que l'envie de vie. Pulsions orale, pulsions anale, pulsions vocales, toutes les pulsions sont nos bonnes forces, et parmi elles la pulsion de gestation, — tout comme l'envie d'écrire : une envie de se vivre dedans, une envie du ventre, de la langue, du sang. Nous n'allons pas, si cela nous chante, nous refuser les délices d'une grossesse ; toujours d'ailleurs dramatisée ou escamotée, ou maudite, dans les textes classiques. Car s'il y a un refoulé particulier, c'est bien là qu'on le trouve : tabou de la femme enceinte, qui en dit long sur la puissance dont elle paraît alors investie ; c'est qu'on soupçonne depuis toujours qu'enceinte, la femme non seulement double sa valeur marchande, mais surtout *se* valorise en tant que *femme* à ses propres yeux, et prend corps et sexe indéniablement.

Il y a mille façons de vivre une grossesse ; d'avoir ou pas avec cet autre encore invisible une relation d'une autre intensité. Et si tu n'as pas cette envie-là, cela ne signifie pas que tu en manques. Chaque corps distribue de façon singulière, sans modèle, sans norme, la totalité non finie et changeante de ses désirs. Décide pour toi de ta position dans l'espace des contradictions où plaisir et réalité s'étreignent. Mets l'autre en vie : la femme sait *vivre* le détachement ; accoucher n'est pas perdre, ni s'augmenter. C'est ajouter à la vie générale un autre. Je rêve ? Je méconnais ? Vous, les défenseurs de la « théorie », les béni oui-oui du Concept, entrôneurs du phallus (mais pas du pénis) allez crier encore une fois à l'« idéalisme », ou pire encore vous allez me cracher que je suis « mystique ».

Et la libido alors ? est-ce que je n'ai pas lu la Signification du Phallus ? Et la séparation, le bout de soi dont pour naître tu subis, racontent-ils, une ablation qu'à jamais ton désir commémore ?

D'ailleurs ne voit-on pas, dans mes textes, que le pénis circule, que je lui donne lieu et attrait. Certes. Je veux tout. Je me veux entière avec lui entier. Pourquoi me priverai-je d'une partie de *nous* ? Je veux donc tout de nous. Bien sûr qu'elle a envie, d'une « envie » aimante, et non jalouse. Non parce qu'elle est châtrée ; parce qu'elle est cette diminuée qui veut se combler, cette blessée qui veut se consoler et se venger. Je ne veux pas un pénis dont j'ornerais mon corps. Mais je désire l'autre pour l'autre, tout entier, toute entière ; parce que vivre c'est vouloir tout ce qui est, tout ce qui vit, et le vouloir en vie. La castration ? A d'autres. Qu'est-ce qu'un désir s'originant d'un manque ? Un bien petit désir. La femme qui se laisse encore menacer par la grande phalle, impressionnée par le cirque de l'instance phallique, mené tambour battant par un maître Loyal, c'est la femme d'hier. Elles existent encore faciles et nombreuses victimes de la plus

vieille des pharces, soit qu'elles soient distribuées dans la première et muette version, et que sur leurs corps se dresse à l'ancienne le monument théorique au phallus d'or qu'elles ne voient jamais, titanes allongées sous les montagnes qu'elles font par leurs frémisses, s'ériger. Soit qu'aujourd'hui sortant de leur période *infans*, elles se voient soudain assaillies par les bâtisseurs de l'empire analytique, et, dès qu'elles formulent le nouveau désir, nu, sans nom, et tout gai d'apparaître, les voilà prises au bain par les nouveaux vieillards, et hop ! oblique, fringué de modernité le démon de l'interprétation leur vend sous clinquants signifiants les mêmes menottes et autres enchaînantes breloques : deuxième version, l'« éclairée », de leur pudique abaissement. Quelle castration tu préfères ? Lequel tu aimes mieux, celui du père ou celui de la mère ? O les zolis zyeux, tiens, zolie petite fille, achète-moi mes lunettes et tu verras la Vérité-Moi-Je te dire tout ce que tu devras croire. Chausse-les à ton nez et jette le coup d'œil du fétichiste (que tu es, moi l'autre analyste, je te l'apprends) sur ton corps et le corps de l'autre. Tu vois ? Non ? Attends on va tout t'expliquer, et tu sauras enfin à quelle espèce de névrose, tu es apparentée. Bouge pas, on va te faire ton portrait, pour que tu te mettes bien vite à lui ressembler.

Oui, elles sont encore légion les naïves au premier et au deuxième degré. Les nouvelles arrivantes, si elles osent créer à l'écart du théorique sont interpellées par les flics du Signifiant, fichées, rappelées à l'ordre qu'elles sont supposées savoir ; assignées par force de ruse, à une place précise dans la chaîne qui se maillonne toujours au profit d'un « signifiant » privilégié. On nous remembre au fil qui s'il ne ramène pas au Nom-du-Père, pour faire plus neuf, vous ramène à sa place à la mère-phallique.

Amie, garde-toi du signifiant qui veut te reconduire à l'autorité d'un signifié ! Garde-toi des diagnostics qui voudraient réduire ta puissance génératrice. Les noms « communs » aussi sont des noms propres qui rabaissent ta singularité en la rangeant dans l'espèce. Romps les cercles ; ne reste pas dans la clôture psychanalytique : fais un tour, et traverse !

Et si nous sommes légion c'est que la guerre de libération n'a ouvert encore qu'une mince brèche. Mais les femmes s'y pressent, je les ai vues, celles qui ne seront ni domestiques ni bernées, celles qui n'auront pas peur du risque d'être femme.

D'aucun risque, d'aucun désir, d'aucun espace encore inexploré en elles, entre elles et d'autres ou ailleurs. Elle ne fétichise pas, elle ne dénie pas, elle ne hait pas, elle observe, elle approche, elle cherche à voir l'autre femme, l'enfant, l'amant, non pour consolider son narcissisme, ou vérifier la solidité ou la faiblesse du maître mais pour mieux faire l'amour, pour inventer

*L'Amour Autre :*

Aux commencements sont nos différences. Le nouvel amour ose l'autre, le veut, s'emballe en vols vertigineux entre connaissance et invention. Elle, l'arrivante de toujours, elle ne reste pas, elle va partout, elle échange, elle est le désir-qui-donne. (Non enfermée dans le paradoxe du don qui prend ; ni dans l'illusion de la fusion unienne. On n'en est plus là). Elle entre, elle entre-elle moi et toi entre l'autre moi où l'un est toujours infiniment plus d'un et plus que moi, sans craindre d'atteindre jamais une limite : jouisseuse de notre devenance. Nous n'en

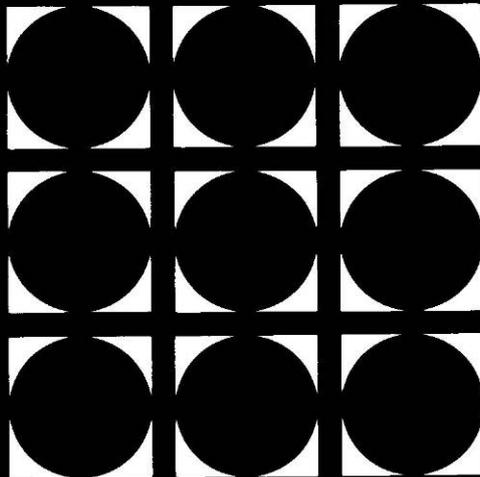
finirons pas ! Elle traverse les amours défensifs, les maternages et dévorations : au-delà du narcissisme avare, dans l'espace mouvant, ouvert, transitionnel elle *court ses* risques : au-delà de la remise-en-lit de la lutte à mort, de l'amour-guerre qui prétend figurer l'échange, elle se rit d'une dynamique d'Erôs que la haine alimenterait - haine : héritage, encore, un reste un asservissement dupant au phallus. Aimer, regarder-penser-chercher l'autre dans l'autre, dé-spéculariser, déspeculer. C'est difficile ? Ce n'est pas impossible : et c'est cela qui nourrit la vie, un amour qui ne s'entretient pas de ce désir inquiet qui pare au manque et veut confondre l'étrange, mais qui se réjouit de l'échange qui multiplie. Où l'histoire tourne encore comme histoire de la mort, elle n'entre pas. L'opposition, l'échange hiérarchisant, la lutte pour la maîtrise qui ne se termine que par au moins une mort (un maître - un esclave, ou deux non-mâtres = deux morts) tout ça relève d'un temps gouverné par les valeurs phallogocentriques : qu'il ait encore un présent n'empêche pas que la femme commence ailleurs l'histoire de la vie. Ailleurs, elle donne. Elle ne « sait » pas ce qu'elle donne elle ne le mesure pas ; mais elle ne donne ni le change ni ce qu'elle n'a pas. Elle donne plus ; sans assurance qu'il lui reviendra de ce qu'elle donne un bénéfice même imprévu. Elle donne à vivre, à penser, à transformer. Cette « économie » là, elle ne peut plus se dire en termes d'économie. Ou elle aime, tous les concepts de la vieille gestion sont dépassés. Elle n'y trouve pas, au terme d'un calcul plus ou moins conscient, son compte, mais ses différences. Je suis pour toi ce que tu veux que je sois au moment où tu me regardes telle que tu ne m'as encore jamais vue : à chaque instant. Quand j'écris, c'est tout ce que nous ne savons pas que nous pouvons être qui s'écrivent de moi, sans exclusion, sans prévision, et tout ce que nous serons nous appelle à l'inlassable, enivrante, inapaisable cherchée d'amour. Jamais nous ne nous manquerons.

HÉLÈNE CIXOUS

APPENDIX C - Cixous (1976e) "The Laugh of the Medusa"

# SIGNS

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## Editorial

Unifying the essays in the present issue of *Signs* is a concern with relationships, past, present, and potential, between society and sexuality. Joan Kelly-Gadol offers a theory of sex as a category of historical explanation and analysis. James A. Brundage examines the laws that the medieval Catholic church constructed to define and to control prostitution. David Tresemer reassesses the influential notion that women as a sex have been molded socially to avoid success. Nancy E. Williamson considers the implications of the American preference for sons over daughters in light of the possibility that parents may soon be able to select the sex of a child. In "Viewpoint," Sandra S. Tangri envisions an ideal population program built on feminist principles. The contrast between the vision she projects and that of the period Brundage describes helps to show the potential for change in the social orderings of sex and gender. Finally, H el ene Cixous, the French writer, scholar, and initiator of a doctorate in women's studies at the University of Paris, calls for women to write a new female text. Her essay, which denies the legitimacy of "phallic" intellectual schemes, exemplifies by its own texture the deregulation of past scholarship.

This issue, the fourth of volume 1, marks the end of our beginning. As of April 1976, we had over 7,000 subscribers, over 700 manuscript submissions. Our editors, readers, and contributors have made such growth possible. We feel, even more strongly than when we started, that we are but a part of a major intellectual movement. In virtually every discipline, new work about women, men, and their institutions has been produced that is both empirically accurate and conceptually original. This process is rectifying old errors, adding fresh materials, and suggesting new paradigms.

However, we have found, not a single definition of the new scholarship, but several overlapping ones. For some, studying women means paying scrupulous attention to them. For others, it involves taking up subjects, such as abortion, that the women's movement has brought into public prominence. For others, it demands doing research that will directly

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benefit and enhance women's lives. For still others, it is a means toward the end of a discovery of irreducible differences between female and male, feminine and masculine. As a result, people interested in the new scholarship may have some dissimilar purposes and expectations, though, to be sure, they dwindle before our collective energy and commitment.

The essays we have published during our first year have often considered a dialectic between institutions (which have given men more than their share of power and privilege) and the women who have tried to survive within them. In part that dialectic is a result of the basic fact that we were born female or born male. Though we reject a crude, oppressive biological determinism, we confront a process and a reality seemingly as constant in history as matter in the physical universe. At their most responsible, however, such analyses have recognized the complexities of experience and the differences, not simply between the sexes, but among races, classes, nations, cultures, social systems, and historical periods. We must do more to reveal and articulate the differences in the experience, the structurings, and the significance of sex and gender.

When we began, we knew that some portions of the academic and intellectual world looked at the new scholarship about women with suspicion, indifference, or contempt. It is particularly sad to see the effect of such attitudes on our more vulnerable practitioners: graduate students, the unemployed, the nontenured. Their contributions to the progress of the new scholarship must be acknowledged while we work against the unreasoned and unreasonable biases that have caused their difficulties. Unfortunately, they may be but one mark of the jeopardy of women in academic life. Marion Kilson's essay in this issue surveys the real position of women in higher education, one far bleaker and less promising than it should be. We must confront a bitter irony: if the number of articles, courses, and books about women is growing, the number of women in academic life itself may not be. Most of us want to act, to paraphrase and quote Adrienne Rich, "for the relief of the body/and the reconstruction of the mind." We will have to be persistent and inventive if we are to avoid an immediate future in which we will have reconstructed minds but disabled lives.

We must also strive to change the less painful, but pervasive, resistance we have encountered to the interdisciplinary, a methodological principle at work in women's studies from the beginning and in *Signs* from its inception. While we respect the need for specialization and support its productive results, we have also discovered the grim unwillingness, which taints all modern intellectual life, to regard another area of inquiry, method, or school of thought as seriously as one's own. To have that willingness, that generosity and elasticity, is the first step to making the private and the public connections that define the interdisci-

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plinary. This is not to make easy claims for this approach. Indeed, explorers of other fields are often self-deceptive and view insights that are new to them as novel to the field; they commit the fallacy of misplaced originality. Difficult as it may be, interdisciplinary work can be done, as Gertrud Lenzer's psychological, historical, and literary study of masochism or Hanna Papanek's survey of the social sciences for Southeast Asia has clearly shown. Beyond such gifted individual practitioners, there is a real need for interdisciplinary groups—teams of specialists who will collaborate to investigate serious questions that affect each of their fields. Among such questions for communal inquiry might be the nature of male hegemony; the use of female and male, masculine and feminine as metaphors; and the dynamics of modernization for men and women.

As we think of our ambitions, we also remember the phrase, "the blind fate of language." Perhaps scholarship and reflective essays, those particular forms of language, also have blind fates. They live in ways that we can neither wholly dictate nor confidently predict. Nevertheless, we sense the presence of a vital, constructive consciousness that has buoyed and heartened us. It supports our conviction that to care for the new scholarship is to nurture a scholarship of hope.

## The Laugh of the Medusa

Helene Cixous

Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen

[OCR'd by Shintani on 22.2.06]

I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing. from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement.

The future must no longer be determined by the past. I do not deny that the effects of the past are still with us. But I refuse to strengthen them by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. Anticipation is imperative.

Since these reflections are taking shape in an area just on the point of being discovered, they necessarily bear the mark of our time – a time during which the new breaks away from the old, and, more precisely, the (feminine) new from the old (*la nouvelle de l'ancien*). Thus, as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break, what I say has at least two sides and two aims: to break up, to destroy; and to foresee the unforeseeable, to project.

I write this as a woman, toward women. When I say "woman," I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man: and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses

This is a revised version of "Le Rire de la Méduse," which appeared in *L'Arc* (1975) pp. 59-54.  
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and to their meaning in history. But first it must be said that in spite of the enormity of the repression that has kept them in the “dark” – that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute – there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. What they have *in common* I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can’t talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes – any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible.

I have been amazed more than once by a description a woman gave me of a world all her own which she had been secretly haunting since early childhood. A world of searching, the elaboration of a knowledge, on the basis of a systematic experimentation with the bodily functions, a passionate and precise interrogation of her erotogeneity. This practice, extraordinarily rich and inventive, in particular as concerns masturbation, is prolonged or accompanied by a production of forms, a veritable aesthetic activity, each stage of rapture inscribing a resonant vision, a composition, something beautiful. Beauty will no longer be forbidden.

I wished that that woman would write and proclaim this unique empire so that other women, other unacknowledged sovereigns, might exclaim: I, too, overflow; my desires have invented new desires, my body knows unheard-of songs. Time and again I, too, have felt so full of luminous torrents that I could burst – burst with forms much more beautiful than those which are put up in frames and sold for a stinking fortune. And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn’t open my mouth, I didn’t repaint my half of the world. I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and my fear. I said to myself: You are mad! What’s the meaning of these waves, these floods, these outbursts? Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naiveté, kept in the dark about herself, led into self-disdain by the great arm of parental-conjugal phallocentrism, hasn’t been ashamed of her strength? Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well-adjusted normal woman has a [...] divine composure), hasn’t accused herself of being a monster? Who, feeling a funny desire stirring inside her (to sing, to write, to dare to speak, in short, to bring out something new), hasn’t thought she was sick? Well, her shameful sickness is that she resists death, that she makes trouble.

And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven’t written. (And why I didn’t write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it’s reserved for the great – that is, for “great men”; and it’s “silly.” Besides, you’ve written a little, but in secret. And it

wasn't good, because it was in secret, and because you punished yourself for writing, because you didn't go all the way; or because you wrote, irresistibly, as when we would masturbate in secret, not to go further, but to attenuate the tension a bit, just enough to take the edge off. And then as soon as we come, we go and make ourselves feel guilty – so as to be forgiven; or to forget, to bury it until the next time.

Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man; not the imbecilic capitalist machinery, in which publishing houses are the crafty, obsequious relayers of imperatives handed down by an economy that works against us and off our backs; and not *yourself*. Smug-faced readers, managing editors, and big bosses don't like the true texts of women – female-sexed texts. That kind scares them.

I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man. So only an oblique consideration will be found here of man; it's up to him to say where his masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly.<sup>2</sup>

Now women return from afar, from always: from "without," from the heath where witches are kept alive; from below, from beyond "culture"; from their childhood which men have been trying desperately to make them forget, condemning it to "eternal rest." The little girls and their "ill-mannered" bodies immured, well-preserved, intact unto themselves, in the mirror. Frigidified. But are they ever seething underneath! What an effort it takes – there's no end to it – for the sex cops to bar their threatening return. Such a display of forces on both sides that the struggle has for centuries been immobilized in the trembling equilibrium of a deadlock.

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Here they are, returning, arriving over and again, because the unconscious is impregnable. They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incarcerate them, slow them down, get away with the old Apartheid routine, but for a time only. As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your

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<sup>2</sup> Men still have everything to say about their sexuality, and everything to write. For what they have said so far, for the most part, stems from the opposition activity/passivity, from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the consequential phantasm of woman as a "dark continent" to penetrate and to "pacify." (We know what "pacify" means in terms of scotomizing the other and misrecognizing the self.) Conquering her, they've made haste to depart from her borders, to get out of sight, out of body. The way man has of getting out of himself and into her whom he takes not for the other but for his own, deprives him, he knows, of his own bodily territory. One can understand how man, confusing himself with his penis and rushing in for the attack, might feel resentment and fear of being "taken" by the woman, of being lost in her, absorbed, or alone.

continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark.

Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves, to be the executants of their virile needs. They have made for women an antinarcissism! A narcissism which loves itself only to be loved for what women haven't got! They have constructed the infamous logic of antilove.

We the precocious, we the repressed of culture, our lovely mouths gagged with pollen, our wind knocked out of us, we the labyrinths, the ladders, the trampled spaces, the bebies – we are black and we are beautiful.

We're stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we're not afraid of lacking.

What happiness for us who are omitted, brushed aside at the scene of inheritances; we inspire ourselves and we expire without running out of breath, we are everywhere!

From now on, who, if we say so, can say no to us? We've come back from always.

It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her – by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with a movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than her self.

I say that we must, for, with a few rare exceptions, there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity; exceptions so rare, in fact, that, after plowing through literature across languages, cultures, and ages,<sup>3</sup> one can only be startled at this vain scouting mission. It is well known that the number of women writers (while having increased very slightly from the nineteenth century on) has always been ridiculously small. This is a useless and deceptive fact unless from their species of female writers we do not first deduct the immense majority whose workmanship is in no way different from male writing, and which either obscures women or reproduces the classic representations of women (as sensitive – intuitive – dreamy, etc.)<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I am speaking here only of the place "reserved" for women by the Western world

<sup>4</sup> Which works, then, might be called feminine? I'll just point out some examples: one would have to give them full readings to bring out what is pervasively feminine in their significance. Which I shall do elsewhere. In France (have you noted our infinite poverty in this field? – the Anglo-Saxon countries have shown resources of distinctly greater consequence), leafing through what's come out of the twentieth century – and it's not much – the only inscriptions of femininity that I have seen were by Colette, Marguerite Duras,... and Jean Genêt.

Let me insert here a parenthetical remark. I mean it when I speak of male writing. I maintain unequivocally that there is such a thing as *marked* writing; that, until now, far more extensively and repressively than is ever suspected or admitted, writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural – hence political, typically masculine – economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction; that this locus has grossly exaggerated all the signs of sexual opposition (and not sexual difference), where woman has never *her* turn to speak – this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures.

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Nearly the entire history of writing is confounded with the history of reason, of which it is at once the effect, the support, and one of the privileged alibis. It has been one with the phallogocentric tradition. It is indeed that same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogocentrism.

With some exceptions, for there have been failures – and if it weren't for them, I wouldn't be writing (I-woman, escapee) – in that enormous machine that has been operating and turning out its "truth" for centuries. There have been poets who would go to any lengths to slip something by at odds with tradition – men capable of loving love and hence capable of loving others and of wanting them, of imagining the woman who would hold out against oppression and constitute herself as a superb, equal, hence "impossible" subject, untenable in a real social framework. Such a woman the poet could desire only by breaking the codes that negate her. Her appearance would necessarily bring on, if not revolution – for the bastion was supposed to be immutable – at least harrowing explosions. At times it is in the fissure caused by an earthquake, through that radical mutation of things brought on by a material upheaval when every structure is for a moment thrown off balance and an ephemeral wildness sweeps order away, that the poet slips something by, for a brief span, of woman. Thus did Kleist expend himself in his yearning for the existence of sister-lovers, maternal daughters, mother-sisters, who never hung their heads in shame. Once the palace of magistrates is restored, it's time to pay: immediate bloody death to the uncontrollable elements.

But only the poets – not the novelists, allies of representationalism. Because poetry involves gaining strength through the unconscious and

because the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffmann would say, fairies.

She must write her self, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history, first at two levels that cannot be separated.

a) Individually. By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time.

Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. Our naphtha will spread, throughout the world, without dollars – black or gold – nonassessed values that will change the rules of the old game.

To write. An act which will not only “realize” the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal; it will tear her away from the superegoized structure in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being “too hot”; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing... ) – tear her away by means of this research, this job of analysis and illumination, this emancipation of the marvelous text of her self that she must urgently learn to speak. A woman without a body, dumb, blind, can’t possibly be a good fighter. She is reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow. We must kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing. Inscribe the breath of the whole woman.

b) An act that will also be marked by woman’s *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression*. To write and thus to forge for herself the antilogos weapon. To become *at will* the taker and initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process.

It is time for women to start scoring their feats in written and oral language.

Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away – that’s how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak – even just open her mouth – in public. A double distress, for even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the

deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine.

It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence. Women should break out of the snare of silence. They shouldn't be conned into accepting a domain which is the margin or the harem.

Listen to a woman speak at a public gathering (if she hasn't painfully lost her wind). She doesn't "speak," she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice, and it's with her body that she vitally supports the "logic" of her speech. Her flesh speaks true. She lays herself bare. In fact, she physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she inscribes what she's saying, because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking. Her speech, even when "theoretical" or political, is never simple or linear or "objectified," generalized: she draws her story into history.

There is not that scission, that division made by the common man between the logic of oral speech and the logic of the text, bound as he is by his antiquated relation – servile, calculating – to mastery. From which proceeds the niggardly lip service which engages only the tiniest part of the body, plus the mask.

In women's speech, as in their writing, that element which never stops resonating, which, once we've been permeated by it, profoundly and imperceptibly touched by it, retains the power of moving us – that element is the song: first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman. Why this privileged relationship with the voice? Because no woman stockpiles as many defenses for countering the drives as does a man. You don't build walls around yourself, you don't forego pleasure as "wisely" as he. Even if phallic mystification has generally contaminated good relationships, a woman is never far from "mother" (I mean outside her role functions: the "mother" as nonname and as source of goods). There is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink.

*Woman for women.*– There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other – in particular, the other woman. In her, matrix, cradler; herself giver as her mother and child; she is her own sister-daughter. You might object, "What about she who is the hysterical offspring of a bad mother?" Everything will be changed once woman gives woman to the other woman. There is hidden and always ready in woman the source; the locus for the other. The mother, trio, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was "born" to her. Touch me, caress me,

you the living no-name, give me my self as myself. The relation to the “mother,” in terms of intense pleasure and violence, is curtailed no more than the relation to childhood (the child that she was, that she is, that she makes, remakes, undoes, there at the point where, the same, she others herself ). Text: my body – shot through with streams of song; I don’t mean the overbearing, clutchy “mother” but, rather, what touches you, the equivocal that affects you, fills your breast with an urge to come to language and launches your force; the rhythm that laughs you; the intimate recipient who makes all metaphors possible and desirable; body (body? bodies?), no more describable than god, the soul, or the Other; that part of you that leaves a space between yourself and urges you to inscribe in language your woman’s style. In women there is always more or less of the mother who makes everything all right, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation; a force that will not be cut off but will knock the wind out of the codes. We will rethink womankind beginning with every form and every period of her body. The Americans remind us, “We are all Lesbians”; that is, don’t denigrate woman, don’t make of her what men have made of you.

Because the “economy” of her drives is prodigious, she cannot fail, in seizing the occasion to speak, to transform directly and indirectly *all* systems of exchange based on masculine thrift. Her libido will produce far more radical effects of political and social change than some might like to think.

Because she arrives, vibrant, over and again, we are at the beginning of a new history, or rather of a process of becoming in which several histories intersect with one another. As subject for history, woman always occurs simultaneously in several places. Woman un-thinks<sup>5</sup> the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield. In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history. As a militant, she is an integral part of all liberations. She must be farsighted, not limited to a blow-by-blow interaction. She foresees that her liberation will do more than modify power relations or toss the ball over to the other camp; she will bring about a mutation in human relations, in thought, in all praxis: hers is not simply a class struggle, which she carries forward into a much vaster movement. Not that in order to be a woman-in-struggle(s) you have to leave the class struggle or repudiate it; but you have to split it open, spread it out, push it forward, fill it with the fundamental struggle so as to prevent the class struggle, or any other struggle for the liberation of a class or people, from operating as a form of repression, pretext for postponing the inevitable, the staggering alteration in power relations and in the pro-

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<sup>5</sup> *De-pense*, “a neologism formed on the verb *penser*, hence “unthink,” but also “spends” (from *dépenser*) (translator’s note).

duction of individualities. This alteration is already upon us – in the United States, for example, where millions of night crawlers are in the process of undermining the family and disintegrating the whole of American sociality.

The new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imagination, and for good reason. It's going to deprive them of their conceptual orthopedics, beginning with the destruction of their enticement machine.

It is impossible to *define* a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system; it does and will take place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination. It will be conceived of only by subjects who are breakers of automatisms, by peripheral figures that no authority can ever subjugate.

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Hence the necessity to affirm the flourishes of this writing, to give form to its movement, its near and distant byways. Bear in mind to begin with (1) that sexual opposition, which has always worked for man's profit to the point of reducing writing, too, to his laws, is only a historico-cultural limit. There is, there will be more and more rapidly pervasive now, a fiction that produces irreducible effects of femininity. (2) That it is through ignorance that most readers, critics, and writers of both sexes hesitate to admit or deny outright the possibility or the pertinence of a distinction between feminine and masculine writing. It will usually be said, thus disposing of sexual difference: either that all writing, to the extent that it materializes, is feminine; or, inversely – but it comes to the same thing – that the act of writing is equivalent to masculine masturbation (and so the woman who writes cuts herself out a paper penis); or that writing is bisexual, hence neuter, which again does away with differentiation. To admit that writing is precisely working (in) the in-between, inspecting the process of the same and of the other without which nothing can live, undoing the work of death – to admit this is first to want the two, as well as both, the ensemble of the one and the other, not fixed in sequences of struggle and expulsion or some other form of death but infinitely dynamized by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another. A process of different subjects knowing one another and beginning one another anew only from the living boundaries of the other: a multiple and inexhaustible course with millions of encounters and transformations of the same into the other and into the in-between, from which woman takes her forms (and man, in his turn; but that's his other history).

In saying "bisexual, hence neuter," I am referring to the classic conception of bisexuality, which, squashed under the emblem of castra-

tion fear and along with the fantasy of a “total” being (though composed of two halves), would do away with the difference experienced as an operation incurring loss, as the mark of dreaded sectility.

To this self-effacing, merger-type bisexuality, which would conjure away castration (the writer who puts up his sign: “bisexual written here, come and see,” when the odds are good that it’s neither one nor the other), I oppose the *other bisexuality* on which every subject not enclosed in the false theater of phallogocentric representationalism has founded his/her erotic universe. Bisexuality: that is, each one’s location in self (*répérage en soi*) of the presence – variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female – of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex, and, from this “self-permission,” multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, over all parts of my body and the other body.

Now it happens that at present, for historico-cultural reasons, it is women who are opening up to and benefiting from this vatic bisexuality which doesn’t annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number. In a certain way, “woman is bisexual”; man – it’s a secret to no one – being poised to keep glorious phallic monosexuality in view. By virtue of affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallogocentric ideology has claimed more than one victim. As a woman, I’ve been clouded over by the great shadow of the scepter and been told: idolize it, that which you cannot brandish. But at the same time, man has been handed that grotesque and scarcely enviable destiny (just imagine) of being reduced to a single idol with clay balls. And consumed, as Freud and his followers note, by a fear of being a woman I For, if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successful a repression at that – men have made it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the “human” sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects.

Here we encounter the inevitable man-with-rock, standing erect in his old Freudian realm, in the way that, to take the figure back to the point where linguistics is conceptualizing it “anew,” Lacan preserves it in the sanctuary of the phallos ( $\phi$ ) “sheltered” from *castration’s lack!* Their “symbolic” exists, it holds power – we, the sowers of disorder, know it only too well. But we are in no way obliged to deposit our lives in their banks of lack, to consider the constitution of the subject in terms of a drama manglingly restaged, to reinstate again and again the religion of the father. Because we don’t want that. We don’t fawn around the su-preme hole. We have no womanly reason to pledge allegiance to the negative. The feminine (as the poets suspected) affirms: “...And yes,” says Molly, carrying *Ulysses* off beyond any book and toward the new writing; “I said yes, I will Yes.”

*The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable.* – It is still unex-

plored only because we've been made to believe that it was too dark to be explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it's still going on. For the phallogocentric sublation<sup>6</sup> is with us, and it's militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored in the dogma of castration. They haven't changed a thing: they've theorized their desire for reality! Let the priests tremble, we're going to show them our sexts!

Too bad for them if they fall apart upon discovering that women aren't men, or that the mother doesn't have one. But isn't this fear convenient for them? Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.

Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. That's because they need femininity to be associated with death; it's the jitters that gives them a hard-on! for themselves! They need to be afraid of us. Look at the trembling Perseuses moving backward toward us, clad in apotropes. What lovely backs! Not another minute to lose. Let's get out of here.

Let's hurry: the continent is not impenetrably dark. I've been there often. I was overjoyed one day to run into Jean Genêt. It was in *Pompes funèbres*.<sup>7</sup> He had come there led by his Jean. There are some men (all too few) who aren't afraid of femininity.

Almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinite and mobile complexity, about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain miniscule-immense area of their bodies; not about destiny, but about the adventure of such and such a drive, about trips, crossings, trudges, abrupt and gradual awakenings, discoveries of a zone at one time timorous and soon to be forthright. A woman's body, with its thousand and one thresholds of ardor – once, by smashing yokes and censors, she lets it articulate the profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction – will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language.

We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we've been made victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other sex. I'll give you your body and you'll give me mine. But who are the men who give women the body that women blindly yield to them? Why so few

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<sup>6</sup> Standard English term for the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, the French *la relève*.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Genêt, *Pompes funèbres* (Paris, 1948), p. 185.

texts? Because so few women have as yet won back their body. Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pro-nouncing the word “silence,” the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word “impossible” and writes it as “the end.”

Such is the strength of women that, sweeping away syntax, breaking that famous thread ( just a tiny little thread, they say) which acts for men as a surrogate umbilical cord, assuring them – otherwise they couldn’t come – that the old lady is always right behind them, watching them make phallus, women will go right up to the impossible.

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When the “repressed” of their culture and their society returns, it’s an explosive, *utterly* destructive, staggering return, with a force never yet unleashed and equal to the most forbidding of suppressions. For when the Phallic period comes to an end, women will have been either annihilated or borne up to the highest and most violent incandescence. Muffled throughout their history, they have lived in dreams, in bodies (though muted), in silences, in aphonic revolts.

And with such force in their fragility; a fragility, a vulnerability, equal to their incomparable intensity. Fortunately, they haven’t sublimated; they’ve saved their skin, their energy. They haven’t worked at liquidating the impasse of lives without futures. They have furiously inhabited these sumptuous bodies: admirable hysterics who made Freud succumb to many voluptuous moments impossible to confess, bombard-ing his Mosaic statue with their carnal and passionate body words, haunt-ing him with their inaudible and thundering denunciations, dazzling, more than naked underneath the seven veils of modesty. Those who, with a single word of the body, have inscribed the vertiginous immensity of a history which is sprung like an arrow from the whole history of men and from biblico-capitalist society, are the women, the supplicants of yesterday, who come as forebears of the new women, after whom no intersubjective relation will ever be the same. You, Dora, you the in-domitabile, the poetic body, you are the true “mistress” of the Signifier. Before long your efficacy will be seen at work when your speech is no longer suppressed, its point turned in against your breast, but written out over against the other.

*In body.*– More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, women are body. More body, hence more writing. For a long time it has been in body that women have responded to persecution, to the familial-conjugal enterprise of domestication, to the repeated attempts at castrating them. Those who have turned their tongues 10,000 times seven times before not speaking are either dead

from it or more familiar with their tongues and their mouths than anyone else. Now, I-woman am going to blow up the Law: an explosion henceforth possible and ineluctable; let it be done, right now, *in* language.

Let us not be trapped by an analysis still encumbered with the old automatisms. It's not to be feared that language conceals an invincible adversary, because it's the language of men and their grammar. We mustn't leave them a single place that's any more theirs alone than we are.

If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within," to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of; And you'll see with what ease she will spring forth from that "within" – the "within" where once she so drowsily crouched – to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam.

Nor is the point to appropriate their instruments, their concepts, their places, or to begrudge them their position of mastery. Just because there's a risk of identification doesn't mean that we'll succumb. Let's leave it to the worriers, to masculine anxiety and its obsession with how to dominate the way things work – knowing "how it works" in order to "make it work." For us the point is not to take possession in order to internalize or manipulate, but rather to dash through and to "fly."<sup>8</sup>

Flying is woman's gesture – flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying; we've lived in flight, stealing away, finding, when desired, narrow passageways, hidden crossovers. It's no accident that *voler* has a double meaning, that it plays on each of them and thus throws off the agents of sense. It's no accident: women take after birds and robbers just as robbers take after women and birds. They (*illes*)<sup>9</sup> go by, fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures, and turning propriety upside down.

What woman hasn't flown/stolen? Who hasn't felt, dreamt, performed the gesture that jams sociality? Who hasn't crumbled, held up to ridicule, the bar of separation? Who hasn't inscribed with her body the differential, punctured the system of couples and opposition? Who, by

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<sup>8</sup> Also, "to steal." Both meanings of the verb *voler* are played on, as the text itself explains in the following paragraph (translator's note).

<sup>9</sup> *Illes* is a fusion of the masculine pronoun *ils*, which refers back to birds and robbers, with the feminine pronoun *elles*, which refers to women (translator's note).

some act of transgression, hasn't overthrown successiveness, connection, the wall of circumfession?

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter.

For once she blazes *her* trail in the symbolic, she cannot fail to make of it the chaosmos of the "personal" – in her pronouns, her nouns, and her clique of referents. And for good reason. There will have been the long history of gynocide. This is known by the colonized peoples of yesterday, the workers, the nations, the species off whose backs the history of men has made its gold; those who have known the ignominy of persecution derive from it an obstinate future desire for grandeur; those who are locked up know better than their jailers the taste of free air. Thanks to their history, women today know (how to do and want) what men will be able to conceive of only much later. I say woman overturns the "personal," for if, by means of laws, lies, blackmail, and marriage, her right to herself has been extorted at the same time as her name, she has been able, through the very movement of mortal alienation, to see more closely the inanity of "propriety," the reductive stinginess of the masculine-conjugal subjective economy, which she doubly resists. On the one hand she has constituted herself necessarily as that "person" capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity. But secretly, silently, deep down inside, she grows and multiplies, for, on the other hand, she knows far more about living and about the relation between the economy of the drives and the management of the ego than any man. Unlike man, who holds so dearly to his title and his titles, his pouches of value, his cap, crown, and everything connected with his head, woman couldn't care less about the fear of decapitation (or castration), adventuring, without the masculine temerity, into anonymity, which she can merge with without annihilating herself: because she's a giver.

I shall have a great deal to say about the whole deceptive problematic of the gift. Woman is obviously not that woman Nietzsche dreamed of who gives only in order to.<sup>10</sup> Who could ever think of the gift as a gift-that-takes? Who else but man, precisely the one who would like to take everything?

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<sup>10</sup> Reread Derrida's text, "Le Style de la femme," in *Nietzsche aujourd'hui* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, Coll. 10/18), where the philosopher can be seen operating an *Aufhebung* of all philosophy in its systematic reducing of woman to the place of seduction: she appears as the one who is taken for; the bait in person, all veils unfurled, the one who doesn't give but who gives only in order to (take).

If there is a “propriety of woman,” it is paradoxically her capacity to deappropriate unselfishly: body without end, without appendage, without principal “parts.” If she is a whole, it’s a whole composed of parts that are wholes, not simple partial objects but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, a cosmos tirelessly traversed by Eros, an immense astral space not organized around any one sun that’s any more of a star than the others.

This doesn’t mean that she’s an undifferentiated magma, but that she doesn’t lord it over her body or her desire. Though masculine sexuality gravitates around the penis, engendering that centralized body (in political anatomy) under the dictatorship of its parts, woman does not bring about the same regionalization which serves the couple head/genitals and which is inscribed only within boundaries. Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide. Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours, daring to make these vertiginous crossings of the other(s) ephemeral and passionate sojourns in him, her, them, whom she inhabits long enough to look at from the point closest to their unconscious from the moment they awaken, to love them at the point closest to their drives; and then further, impregnated through and through with these brief, identificatory embraces, she goes and passes into infinity. She alone dares and wishes to know from within, where she, the outcast, has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the other language speak – the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death. To life she refuses nothing. Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible. When id is ambiguously uttered – the wonder of being several – she doesn’t defend herself against these unknown women whom she’s surprised at becoming, but derives pleasure from this gift of alterability. I am spacious, singing flesh, on which is grafted no one knows which I, more or less human, but alive because of transformation.

Write! and your self-seeking text will know itself better than flesh and blood, rising, insurrectionary dough kneading itself, with sonorous, perfumed ingredients, a lively combination of flying colors, leaves, and rivers plunging into the sea we feed. “Ah, there’s her sea,” he will say as he holds out to me a basin full of water from the little phallic mother from whom he’s inseparable. But look, our seas are what we make of them, full of fish or not, opaque or transparent, red or black, high or smooth, narrow or bankless; and we are ourselves sea, sand, coral, seaweed, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves.... More or less wavy sea, earth, sky – what matter would rebuff us? We know how to speak them all.

Heterogeneous, yes. For her joyous benefit she is erogenous; she is the erotogeneity of the heterogeneous: airborne swimmer, in flight, she

does not cling to herself; she is dispersible, prodigious, stunning, desirous and capable of others, of the other woman that she will be, of the other woman she isn't, of him, of you.

\* \* \*

Woman be unafraid of any other place, of any same, or any other. My eyes, my tongue, my ears, my nose, my skin, my mouth, my body-for-(the)-other – not that I long for it in order to fill up a hole, to provide against some defect of mine, or because, as fate would have it, I'm spurred on by feminine "jealousy"; not because I've been dragged into the whole chain of substitutions that brings that which is substituted back to its ultimate object. That sort of thing you would expect to come straight out of "Tom Thumb," out of the *Penisneid* whispered to us by old grandmother ogresses, servants to their father-sons. If they believe, in order to muster up some self-importance, if they really need to believe that we're dying of desire, that we are this hole fringed with desire for their penis – that's their immemorial business. Undeniably (we verify it at our own expense – but also to our amusement), it's their business to let us know they're getting a hard-on, so that we'll assure them (we the maternal mistresses of their little pocket signifier) that they still can, that it's still there – that men structure themselves only by being fitted with a feather. In the child it's not the penis that the woman desires, it's not that famous bit of skin around which every man gravitates. Pregnancy cannot be traced back, except within the historical limits of the ancients, to some form of fate, to those mechanical substitutions brought about by the unconscious of some eternal "jealous woman"; not to penis envies; and not to narcissism or to some sort of homosexuality linked to the ever-present mother! Begetting a child doesn't mean that the woman or the man must fall ineluctably into patterns or must recharge the circuit of reproduction. If there's a risk there's not an inevitable trap: may women be spared the pressure, under the guise of consciousness-raising, of a supplement of interdictions. Either you want a kid or you don't – *that's your business*. Let nobody threaten you; in satisfying your desire, let not the fear of becoming the accomplice to a sociality succeed the old-time fear of being "taken." And man, are you still going to bank on everyone's blindness and passivity, afraid lest the child make a father and, consequently, that in having a kid the woman land herself more than one bad deal by engendering all at once child – mother – father – family? No; it's up to you to break the old circuits. It will be up to man and woman to render obsolete the former relationship and all its consequences, to consider the launching of a brand-new subject, alive, with defamilialization. Let us demater-paternalize rather than deny woman, in an effort to avoid the co-optation of procreation, a thrilling era of the body. Let us defetishize. Let's get away from the dialectic which has it that the only good father is a dead one, or that the child is the death of his parents. The child is the other, but the other without violence, bypassing loss,

struggle. We're fed up with the reuniting of bonds forever to be severed, with the litany of castration that's handed down and genealogized. We won't advance backward anymore; we're not going to repress something so simple as the desire for life. Oral drive, anal drive, vocal drive – all these drives are our strengths, and among them is the gestation drive – just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood. We are not going to refuse, if it should happen to strike our fancy, the unsurpassed pleasures of pregnancy which have actually been always exaggerated or conjured away – or cursed – in the classic texts. For if there's one thing that's been repressed here's just the place to find it: in the taboo of the pregnant woman. This says a lot about the power she seems invested with at the time, because it has always been suspected, that, when pregnant, the woman not only doubles her market value, but – what's more important – takes on intrinsic value as a woman in her own eyes and, undeniably, acquires body and sex.

There are thousands of ways of living one's pregnancy; to have or not to have with that still invisible other a relationship of another intensity. And if you don't have that particular yearning, it doesn't mean that you're in any way lacking. Each body distributes in its own special way, without model or norm, the nonfinite and changing totality of its desires. Decide for yourself on your position in the arena of contradictions, where pleasure and reality embrace. Bring the other to life. Women know how to live detachment; giving birth is neither losing nor increasing. It's adding to life an other. Am I dreaming? Am I mis-recognizing? You, the defenders of "theory," the sacrosanct yes-men of Concept, enthroners of the phallus (but not of the penis):

Once more you'll say that all this smacks of "idealism," or what's worse, you'll splutter that I'm a "mystic."

And what about the libido? Haven't I read the "Signification of the Phallus"? And what about separation, what about that bit of self for which, to be born, you undergo an ablation – an ablation, so they say, to be forever commemorated by your desire?

Besides, isn't it evident that the penis gets around in my texts, that I give it a place and appeal? Of course I do. I want all. I want all of me with all of him. Why should I deprive myself of a part of us? I want all of us. Woman of course has a desire for a "loving desire" and not a jealous one. But not because she is gelded; not because she's deprived and needs to be filled out, like some wounded person who wants to console herself or seek vengeance: I don't want a penis to decorate my body with. But I do desire the other for the other, whole and entire, male or female; because living means wanting everything that is, everything that lives, and wanting it alive. Castration? Let others toy with it, What's a desire originating from a lack? A pretty meager desire.

The woman who still allows herself to be threatened by the big dick,

who's still impressed by the commotion of the phallic stance, who still leads a loyal master to the beat of the drum: that's the woman of yesterday. They still exist, easy and numerous victims of the oldest of farces: either they're cast in the original silent version in which, as titanesses lying under the mountains they make with their quivering, they never see erected that theoretic monument to the golden phallus looming, in the old manner, over their bodies. Or, coming today out of their *infans* period and into the second, "enlightened" version of their virtuous debasement, they see themselves suddenly assaulted by the builders of the analytic empire and, as soon as they've begun to formulate the new desire, naked, nameless, so happy at making an appearance, they're taken in their bath by the new old men, and then, whoops! Luring them with flashy signifiers, the demon of interpretation – oblique, decked out in modernity – sells them the same old handcuffs, baubles, and chains. Which castration do you prefer? Whose degrading do you like better, the father's or the mother's? Oh, what pwetty eyes, you pwetty little girl. Here, buy my glasses and you'll see the Truth-Me-Myself tell you everything you should know. Put them on your nose and take a fetishist's look (you are me, the other analyst – that's what I'm telling you) at your body and the body of the other. You see? No? Wait, you'll have everything explained to you, and you'll know at last which sort of neurosis you're related to. Hold still, we're going to do your portrait, so that you can begin looking like it right away.

Yes, the naives to the first and second degree are still legion. If the New Women, arriving now, dare to create outside the theoretical, they're called in by the cops of the signifier, fingerprinted, remonstrated, and brought into the line of order that they are supposed to know; assigned by force of trickery to a precise place in the chain that's always formed for the benefit of a privileged signifier. We are pieced back to the string which leads back, if not to the Name-of-the-Father, then, for a new twist, to the place of the phallic-mother.

Beware, my friend, of the signifier that would take you back to the authority of a signified! Beware of diagnoses that would reduce your generative powers. "Common" nouns are also proper nouns that disparage your singularity by classifying it into species. Break out of the circles; don't remain within the psychoanalytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through!

And if we are legion, it's because the war of liberation has only made as yet a tiny breakthrough. But women are thronging to it. I've seen them, those who will be neither dupe nor domestic, those who will not fear the risk of being a woman; will not fear any risk, any desire, any space still unexplored in themselves, among themselves and others or anywhere else. They do not fetishize, they do not deny, they do not hate. They observe, they approach, they try to see the other woman, the child,

the lover – not to strengthen their own narcissism or verify the solidity or weakness of the master, but to make love better, to invent

*Other love.*– In the beginning are our differences. The new love dares for the other, wants the other, makes dizzying, precipitous flights between knowledge and invention. The woman arriving over and over again does not stand still; she's everywhere, she exchanges, she is the desire-that-gives. (Not enclosed in the paradox of the gift that takes nor under the illusion of unitary fusion. We're past that.) She comes in, comes-in-between herself me and you, between the other me where one is always infinitely more than one and more than me, without the fear of ever reaching a limit; she thrills in our becoming. And we'll keep on becoming! She cuts through defensive loves, motherages, and devourations: beyond selfish narcissism, in the moving, open, transitional space, she runs her risks. Beyond the struggle-to-the-death that's been removed to the bed, beyond the love-battle that claims to represent exchange, she scorns at an Eros dynamic that would be fed by hatred. Hatred: a heritage, again, a remainder, a duping subservience to the phallus. To love, to watch-think-see the other in the other, to despecularize, to unhoard. Does this seem difficult? It's not impossible, and this is what nourishes life – a love that has no commerce with the apprehensive desire that provides against the lack and stultifies the strange; a love that rejoices in the exchange that multiplies. Wherever history still unfolds as the history of death, she does not tread. Opposition, hierarchizing exchange, the struggle for mastery which can end only in at least one death (one master – one slave, or two nonmasters  $\neq$  two dead) – all that comes from a period in time governed by phallogocentric values. The fact that this period extends into the present doesn't prevent woman from starting the history of life somewhere else. Elsewhere, she gives. She doesn't "know" what she's giving, she doesn't measure it; she gives, though, neither a counterfeit impression nor something she hasn't got. She gives more, with no assurance that she'll get back even some unexpected profit from what she puts out. She gives that there may be life, thought, transformation. This is an "economy" that can no longer be put in economic terms. Wherever she loves, all the old concepts of management are left behind. At the end of a more or less conscious computation, she finds not her sum but her differences. I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant. When I write, it's everything that we don't know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love. In one another we will never be lacking.

*University of Paris VIII – Vincennes*

## **APPENDIX D- Stäbler's Bunker Project Proposal**

### **Projekt für eine künstlerische Bestimmung eines der ehemaligen Erzbunker im Landschaftspark Duisburg-Nord**

eine interdisziplinäre Gestaltung des Raumes durch skulpturale Elemente, durch Farbe, Kunstlicht und durch Musik

Projekt der Skulptur : Pit Kroke  
Musik : Gerhard Stäbler

#### zum Projekt:

die begehbare skulpturale Anordnung innerhalb des leeren Erzbunkers bietet ein Angebot unterschiedlicher Wege, von unterschiedlicher Intensität und Ausstrahlung an; die musikalische Bespielung und nachts das Kunstlicht setzen Eindrücke hinzu, die unterstreichend oder auch gegen die Volumina, die Wege oder die optischen Erwartungen des Besuchers wirken können.

#### zum Raum:

die beiden Stahlwandtaschen komprimieren die Enge des Bunkers, brechen im Zentrum auf und stoßen durch die Wand zum unteren Bunkerweg. Wo die Stahlwände sich teilen, entstehen Bewegungsräume, die durch das helle T-Bodenelement die Entscheidungsmöglichkeiten für Wege aus der Beklommenheit bzw. Gefangenschaft anbieten.

In den Bunker gelangt man über eine Treppe vom bestehenden Laufsteg, auch vom unteren Bunkerweg durch Eintauchen unter die Stahlwand und ebenso von Durchgängen aus den anderen Bunkern.

Die schiefe Ebene (7,6 %), die den Bunkerboden neu definiert, dynamisiert das Raumgefühl und betont den Ausstieg am unteren Bunkerweg als Ausweg aus der Enge.

Von den Mauerkronen hat man eine gute Einsicht in das Projekt und auf eventuelle Live-Darbietungen.

#### zu den Materialien:

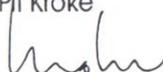
- das vorhandene Material ( Beton und Stahl ) bleibt in seinem Charakter bestehen;
- die Stahlwände sollen schwarz gestrichen werden, die stählerne Treppe dagegen zeigt die Oberflächenverzinkung;
- der Belag der Schräge soll aus gebundenem Anthrazitplitt sein;
- die Ausführung des T-Elements als „sentiero luminoso“ oder als spiegelnde Fläche muß diskutiert werden.

#### zur Musik:

- siehe dazu die Projektbeschreibung von Gerhard Stäbler und beiliegender CD.

#### zum Licht:

- außer der notwendigen Nachtbeleuchtung soll gebündeltes Laserlicht auf die Schnittflächen der vier aufrechten Wandstärken im Zentralbereich die Trennung der Stahlwandtaschen betonen.

PfK Kroke  


APPENDIX E- Rice, (2003) "Time, Place, and Metaphor..."

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## Time, Place, and Metaphor in Musical Experience and Ethnography

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What kind of a world do ethnomusicologists and the people we study live in? What questions are we asking of that world, of ourselves, and of music makers and music making? It seems to me that for many years ethnomusicologists have been moving toward ever new answers to these questions and that that movement demands yet a third question: What sorts of theoretical frameworks might help us answer the questions we are asking about music in the world as we understand it?

One venerable theoretical framework, dating from Alan Merriam's 1964 *The Anthropology of Music*, seems to construct, in line with the anthropology of the day, a relatively simple world of bounded, isolated, shared cultures and relatively static social structures. The primary questions that arise for ethnomusicology from this worldview concern the relationship of music to other domains of culture and its role (as mirror or agent) in the maintenance or change of social systems. This framework still usefully guides a significant portion of our research, even as we have moved beyond the oversimplified view of the world that it supports. Most ethnomusicologists understand that today's world, the world in which we and our subjects make, understand, and experience music, is either more complex than it used to be, or we are realizing that it was always complex and our ways of thinking about it were too schematic and blinkered.

If we now understand our world as not so simple, but rather as a complex of unbounded, interacting cultures and as consisting crucially of the rapid movement of people, ideas, images, and music over vast distances, then what sorts of questions arise? Ethnomusicology has developed as an omnivorous intellectual arena for asking nearly every conceivable question about music, so a short list of questions will hardly do. But here are a few that respond, in some measure, to our understanding that music making today occurs in a complex, mobile, dynamic world. In what ways does musical

experience change through time? Why do two people living in the same time and place experience the same music so differently? Why do people of the same ethnic group make such different kinds of music? What happens to musical experience as mediated musical sound shuttles through space? Under what conditions does music change from a pleasant aesthetic experience to a repulsive symbol of a loathsome politics? Why do totalitarian states repress, censor, and even liquidate artists who merely make music and sing songs? When does it become necessary to create a new musical style? Why do Korean-American youth living in Los Angeles love African-American music?

It seems to me that these sorts of questions invite us to move in two directions simultaneously: first, toward more atomized studies of individuals and small groups of individuals linked for perhaps just a moment in time and place by shared beliefs, social status, behaviors, tastes, and experiences of the world (and perhaps not at all by ethnicity); and second, toward understanding these individual beliefs and actions as taking place within a "modern world system" of some sort, a system that at the least challenges, and in some cases seems nearly to obliterate, cultures and societies as "traditionally understood." Although some will be moved to analyze the structure and function (and perhaps culture) of this modern world system, my list of questions points in the direction of individual or small-group musical experience. I seek answers to the general question, how do individuals experience music in modernity, in modern life, in the modern world system.

To help answer this question and the kinds of questions listed earlier, I propose in this paper a "three-dimensional space of musical experience" that should help us write what I call "subject-centered musical ethnography." I suggest that a move away from culture to the subject as the locus of musical practice and experience may provide a fruitful approach to some of the questions about music that our encounter with the modern world leads us to ask.

### The Background in Theory and Practice

The broad intellectual context in which many ethnomusicologists now work and which frames this proposal begins with anthropologists' own critique of the culture concept, encapsulated in Lila Abu-Lughod's evocative 1991 article title, "Writing against Culture," and worked out in detail by postcolonial and feminist scholars and critics of ethnographic writing. These critics argue for tension, strain, and contestation among different social and temporal "subject positions" within culture and against the ethnographic construction of an idealized, shared culture among, for example, undifferentiated Balinese or Nuer (see Borofsky et al. 2001 for a recent manifestation of this argument). This translates into a hypothesis that, while aspects

of musical experience may be shared by a sociocultural or ethnic group, important differences will be observed that can be understood through a fine-grained analysis of the shifting temporal, social, and cultural bases of that experience.

A second influential line of thought from anthropology has been the reenvisioning of the world and the call for a reorientation of its study by such scholars as Arjun Appadurai and James Clifford. Appadurai (1996) argues for a newly complex world, one that is "deterritorialized," increasingly made up of wandering migrant laborers, political exiles, war refugees, transnational businessmen, hopeful immigrants, and bourgeois tourists. If "locals" are dislodged by forces beyond their control, those who remain behind are increasingly subjected to products, organizations, and mass-mediated images circulating in an ever-more-globalized economic system. Even though many studies have documented intercultural contact, movement, and subjugations of the local in the more or less distant past (for example, J. L. Abu-Lughod 1989; Braudel 1981-84; Curtin 1984; Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1989), Appadurai prefers to argue that earlier forms of translocal processes and capitalist and colonial world systems differ fundamentally from the current situation. In particular, he claims that new technologies of travel and documentation have allowed us to enter a "new condition of neighborliness," where we need theories of "rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distance" driven by "fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity" (1996:29). Clifford (1997:5), on the other hand, stresses the continuity between past and present conditions of travel and rootlessness and is instead critical of older anthropological paradigms that ignore them, in particular the "classic quest—exoticist, anthropological, orientalist—for pure traditions and discrete cultural differences. Intercultural connection is, and has long been, the norm." If traditional methods were blind to these interconnections, he proposes a new focus on routes rather than roots, on travel rather than dwelling, and on a serious ethnographic encounter with the agents and territories that anthropologists (and ethnomusicologists) encounter on their way to their imaginary, isolated locales: international travel, the city, and the cosmopolitans who visit or reside there, people such as school teachers, missionaries, doctors, government officials, traders, and producers of commercial sound recordings.

While these theoretical repositionings in anthropology have been useful to ethnomusicologists, our understandings have also been reconstituted by our own practice, or more precisely by the practice of those we work with and study, who have caused us to think about the "world of music" in new ways. In particular, the commercial genre known as "world music" has challenged those who study it (for example, Erlmann 1993; Guilbault 1997; Monson 1999). Veit Erlmann has opened up the problem most succinctly for

my purposes by positing a dichotomy between accounting for a world system of global/local dialectics and accounting for the experience of that system, which he acknowledges are not the same. His theoretical proposals seemed aimed primarily at understanding and critiquing the system, while my interest in subject-centered musical ethnography represents a proposal for approaching the other side of the dichotomy, experience. In doing so I hope to avoid "the romanticization and mythologization of individual experience and agency" (1993:7), which in this proposal is neither a stand-in for the local and therefore tradition as against modernity nor a hopelessly optimistic place for anti-hegemonic thought and action and a "diversity [that] subverts homogeneity" (5). In the end I imagine we would both agree that this dichotomy needs to be resolved through a synthesis of some kind, and indeed he has moved toward achieving that synthesis in his more recent work (Erlmann 1999).

"World music" is not the only musical sign of modernity, however, nor are the challenges it poses to ethnomusicological theory unique to it. Modernity has also infiltrated, confronted, changed, and invigorated local forms of music making not yet fully engaged with the global marketplace. Not least among the problems for musical ethnography has been the challenge of following those we study as they travel around the world. Twenty years ago while living and working in Toronto, I received a request to borrow some recording equipment from an American graduate student studying Azorean song dueling. When I asked why he was not going to the Azores, he replied that the best singers in the tradition lived in Canada. Thomas Turino (1993) traveled between the Andean highlands and Lima, Peru, just as those he studied did. Theodore Levin's (1996) quest to understand Central Asian music led him to Queens, New York. Jane Sugarman (1997) used her own observations and Albanian-made videotapes to create a seamless narrative of the role of wedding music in the creation of Albanian culture in a diaspora that took her to Western Macedonia, Toronto, and Detroit. Helen Rees (2000) accompanied local Naxi musicians from China's southwestern border province of Yunnan back to her native England to translate for their first international tour. She summarizes neatly the temporal, spatial, and conceptual arc of one musical practice, writing that *Dounging* music from Lijiang

... has been exalted ritual music, refined secular entertainment, funeral music, tool of patriotic and political propaganda, object of musicalological interest, emblem of place and ethnicity, and an economic asset in the socialist market economy and the tourist trade. Over the last fifty years it has also traveled a trajectory of geographically widening recognition and significance... before 1949 a music of purely local significance, it gradually gained sporadic recognition at provincial and national levels, and since 1988 has achieved national and international acclaim through tourist performances, commercial recordings, and concert tours to Canton, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and six European countries. (2000:193)

Such changes in the uses of music through time and its transportation through space are increasingly reflected in the textures of the musical ethnographies ethnomusicologists are writing.

Equally noteworthy is the jumble of musical and cultural styles we encounter in one place. Bruno Nettl (1983) has long been an advocate of studying all the music of a society, but the conjunction of cultural experiences and musical forms enabling and influencing Kheli Fiedjoe, a fifteen-year-old piano prodigy in Lomé, Togo, challenges us in new ways. The son of two doctors and the student of a teacher educated in philosophy at the Sorbonne, his world consists of "Tupac Shakur meeting Pushkin to a tune by Saint-Saëns, orchestrated by Salif Keita."

This is the scene: Kheli is in the living room trying to practice. His mom is up on the roof pounding manioc for the fufu [a staple dish] while she recites Buddhist mantras. His dad is sitting in the paillette [a traditional straw-thatched gazebo] with grandpa, reading *The New England Journal of Medicine*. His sister is off in France, letting her native Mina [the local language] grow rusty while she pursues a master's degree in business English and Portuguese. His school principal is singing spirituals in a classical soprano, straight out of the Harlem Renaissance. His Lycee Français buddies are getting ready to go out dancing to soukous and Eurotechno at Privilege, the Lebanese-run disco. The poor boys in his neighborhood are playing barefoot soccer, calling out the names of Nigerian stars who play for top-ranked Dutch clubs. Their sisters are in the market, selling water for four cents a bag from trays on their heads, humming Ivorian makossa, Ghanaian gospel, local traditional Mina tunes, French hip-hop, American R & B. (Steinglass 2001:20)

This mix of cultural and musical styles, in versions now endlessly available around the globe, is made possible by colonialism in the first instance and the ubiquity of electronic media in the second. The simultaneity of every place in one place is another marker, in addition to travel in timespace, of modernity all over the world. Although ethnomusicologists are increasingly narrating such stories, the implications of such narratives for theory and method are just beginning to be elucidated. In what follows, I would like to make some suggestions as a contribution to that discussion.

One of the most ambitious attempts in ethnomusicology to make some general sense of the complexities of music making in the kind of world I have just encapsulated anecdotally is Mark Slobin's *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (1993), a rare and laudable attempt to move beyond the particularism of so many of our musical ethnographies to "frameworks, guidelines, [and] categories" that might aid "a future comparative method" and yet are "open-ended enough to allow for substantial revision and extension" (1993:6). Slobin seems most intent on accounting for the shifting variety of small-group interactions at the local level, while acknowledging that this microlevel, the subcultural as he calls it, is increasingly penetrated by

influences at the intercultural and supercultural macrolevels. Below the sub-cultural level he is interested in the individual musician or music lover whose musical experience is formed at the intersection of these three types of "cultures" (11). He hopes that readers "will modify, elaborate, or even discard my proposals in a spirit of dialogue" (13).

In that spirit, the proposal I present below responds to four basic issues that arise for me in Slobin's suggestions. First, though Slobin seems as fascinated by "lived musical experience" as he is by local "musical scenes," the narrative weight falls on the scenes and "the dynamics of subcultural life" (38) rather than on individual experience. His characterization, following Appadurai, of "a planet in flux" (15) seems to capture a fragmentation of experience that might make a focus on individuals fruitful, and I take as my starting point Slobin's suggestive epigram, "we are all individual music cultures" (ix). Second, his division of the world into subcultures, intercultures, and supercultures and his lists of units under these broad categories is helpful: at the subcultural level the family, the neighborhood, the organizing committee, the ethnic group (36) and gender and class; at the intercultural level the music industry, diaspora, and affinity groups; and at the supercultural level regions, transregions, nation-states and, after Appadurai, ethnoscapas, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. In my view, these units (and others that might be suggested) are not simply cultures and cultural but social and geographical (or sociogeographical) locales in which individuals experience music, along with other things. Third, many of the conundrums that Slobin uncovers within and between "cultures" can be clarified and even resolved by more careful attention to temporality. Tellingly, only in the "closing thoughts" of the last chapter does he introduce time systematically, in a three-part classification of the length of "intergroup contact: long-standing, medium-range, and quite recent" (112), and time's absence is a felt gap throughout the book that I would like to fill in here. Fourth, Slobin lists the enormous variety of uses and experiences associated with music. As he puts it, "Music is at once an everyday activity, an industrial commodity, a flag of resistance, a personal world, and a deeply symbolic, emotional grounding for people in every class and cranny the superculture offers" (77). This is an important theme and in what follows I try to push this line of thinking a bit further.

### **Subject-Centered Musical Ethnography**

My proposal concerning the possibilities for and the structure of subject-centered musical ethnographies takes seriously Slobin's notion that we are all individual musical cultures. Although Erlmann (1993:6) worries that such an approach will result only in "a random collection of ethnoaesthetics," I think such ethnographies may have some useful theoretical payoffs. One of

the goals of modeling these ethnographies would be to bring some narrative coherence to the complex and seemingly fragmented world that many social theorists, cultural critics, and ethnomusicologists are writing about. That coherence would be situated in subjects' biographies and in the interaction of people occupying slightly different subject positions but interacting in time and place. Structuring musical ethnographies similarly using a model such as I propose below would introduce a modest level of systematicity and reduce the randomness of such an approach. What I emphatically am not suggesting is that subject-centered ethnographies are preferable to those that employ other analytic foci. Rather, it seems to me that it might be one of many ways to bring some order to our research in the crazy quilt of a world described by Appadurai and Clifford and experienced by many of us.

Since my proposal begins with the notion of subject, some discussion of that concept is necessary. Contemporary social theory uses a number of somewhat equivalent terms: person, individual, self, subject, agent, and actor. Different theoretical perspectives inevitably favor one or another of them, and they have different referents and relevance in different cultures (see, for example, Ochs and Capps 1996). It is beyond the scope of this paper to tease out the senses in which these terms are used in different discursive traditions, and in what follows I am going to use them somewhat interchangeably. In general, however, I claim that the subject, self, or individual around whom musical ethnography might be centered is a thoroughly social and self-reflexive being. It is this idea that makes subject-centered (or self-centered!) musical ethnography productive.

In this view, experience is not an inner phenomenon accessible only via introspection to the one having the experience. Rather, experience begins with interaction with a world and with others. For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, experience begins socially and prelinguistically with a body-subject that is "sentient and sensible, it sees and is seen, hears and is heard, touches and is touched" (Crossley 1994). The self is made through an encounter with symbols in the world into which it is "thrown" (Gadamer 1975), the process reaching its culmination with the learning of language, always already given socially, and the development of self-awareness, self-reflexivity, and awareness of others. As Mikhail Bakhtin put it, "we get our selves from others" (in Clark and Holquist 1984). It is this thoroughly social self, subject, or person that is amenable to the kinds of social analyses favored by ethnomusicologists. Biography or subject-centered ethnography then becomes not a documentation of individuality and creative genius (though it could be that) but an account of the social "authoring" (to use Bakhtin's trope) of the self.

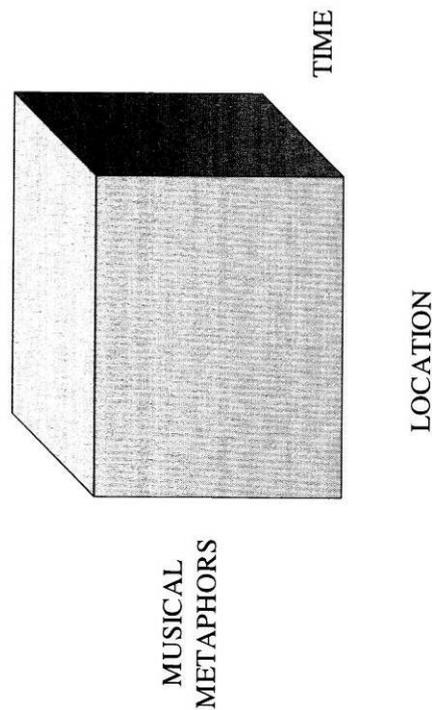
If the self is inherently social, Anthony Giddens (1991:1) extends the argument relevantly for my project by claiming that self-reflexivity and narratives of the self are conditions of "high" or "late" modernity in which traditional "habits and customs" are "undercut." In his view tradition gave to

people their habitus, status, and roles, in the process limiting their ability to structure a self outside these given frameworks. Modernity on the other hand knocks down these traditional underpinnings and requires all of us to construct reflexively our biographies from a wide array of choices not available in traditional societies. Life-style choice becomes not a trivial accoutrement of the bourgeoisie but crucial for everyone living in modernity (5). "What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity—and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour" (70). The self-reflexive project of self-identity in modernity, understood as a social process, provides the rationale and foundation for subject-centered musical ethnography. Not coincidentally, the acknowledgement of our self-reflexivity as scholars has shifted the focus of some recent musical ethnographies to individuals (or sets of individuals), their self-understandings, and the interpretation of their musical practices by interested others (for example, Bakan 1999; Friedson 1996; Rice 1994; Stock 1996; Titon 1988; see also Stock 2001 for an overview of issues concerning the ethnomusicological study of individuals).<sup>1</sup>

### Three Dimensions of Musical Experience

My proposal for subject-centered musical ethnography posits for each subject, person, or individual a three-dimensional space of musical experience. The three dimensions of this imaginary, ideal space are time, location, and metaphor (Figure 1).

Figure 1. A three-dimensional space of musical experience and ethnography.



This space is ideal in two senses. First, three or more orthogonal dimensions define and construct "space" in formal, mathematical terms, a concept of space given to us by Newton and Leibniz. Second (and a corollary of the first point), it is an ideational space for thinking about musical experience, not the place in which musical experience happens. Musical experience occurs "really" in a material world of sonic vibrations, interacting bodies, and socially organized physical places and locales, a concept of space given to us by Aristotle as natural and by Kant as constructed (Curry 1996). So in this paper I use "space" in its abstract mathematical sense to define an arena of analysis, not in its common usage as "distance extending in all directions." "Location" is the name of an axis in this abstract "space" of musical experience, and "place" and "locale" refer to real ("natural") and constructed nodes along the location axis.

That time and place are foundational for human existence, and by extension musical experience, was established in the European philosophical tradition during the first half of the twentieth century through the independent work on human existence in Bakhtin's dialogism (Bakhtin et al. [1919] 1990), Martin Heidegger's ontology (Heidegger [1927] 1962), and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1989). To account for specifically musical experience we need a third dimension. This dimension, I suggest, consists of metaphors that make claims about the nature of music and that bring music closer to other domains of human experience. These metaphors ideologically ground the behavioral, interpretive, and discursive strategies that put those claims into practice. Using such a three-dimensional model as a heuristic position or lens through which to view musical experience from different subject positions and to follow the life histories of individuals encountering the social in an ever-lengthening and often changing dimension from the local to the global (and back again), we should be able to ask and answer the kinds of questions listed above.

Here is a brief overview of each of these dimensions.

#### Location

Social theory in the last fifteen years or so has been characterized in part by a renewed interest in ideas of space, place, and location, perhaps because the comfortable spatial constructs of traditional disciplines no longer seem adequate. The anthropologists' society or village and the sociologists' class or nation-state have been exceeded by the movements of those they study. Geographers are reshaping their discipline by no longer taking space as natural, immutable, and fixed but understanding it as a social construction, a projection of the social in space, and as dynamic as time itself (May and Thrift 2001).

Since ethnomusicologists typically have gone to a place to study (though multisited ethnographies such as those cited earlier are increasingly com-

mon), our practice or conceptualization of practice may blind us to the realization that we and our subjects increasingly dwell not in a single place but in many places along a locational dimension of some sort. Musical experience may be the product of and contribute to the making of many "places" in space (Feld and Basso 1996; Stokes 1994). My proposal responds to the growing understanding that our and our subjects' experiences are no longer contained within local, isolated cultures or even within nation-states but are and have been shaped by regional, areal, colonial, and global economics, politics, social relations, and images. The global and the local have become a cliché of recent locational analysis in ethnomusicology, but the locational dimension contains many other positions that powerfully impact musical experience (for recent examples, see Berrian 2000 and Forman 2002).

At least three ways of viewing space, in the sense of distance or expanse, have been proposed recently. Appadurai (1996:46), for example, thinks the shape of space in the modern world is "fundamentally fractal," not Euclidean, and therefore needs to be explained by something close to chaos theory. Second, geographers speak of space itself as fundamentally multidimensional: as real and perceived, as phenomenal and behavioral, as ideal and material, as container or network or grid (Curry 1996:3). Third, Edward Soja (1989:149) speaks of the "the nodality of social life, the socio-temporal clustering or agglomeration of activities around identifiable geographical centers or nodes." Here he has in mind a set of nested "locales" that "provide settings of interaction . . . These settings may be a room in a house, a street corner, the shop floor of a factory, a prison, an asylum, a hospital, a definable neighbourhood/town/city/region, the territorially demarcated areas occupied by nation-states, indeed the occupied earth as a whole. Locales are nested at many different scales and this multilayered hierarchy of locales is recognizable both as social construct and a vital part of being-in-the-world" (148-49). "Locale" and "place," the latter as explicated by Edward S. Casey (1996), have similar meanings and import in the location dimension posited here.

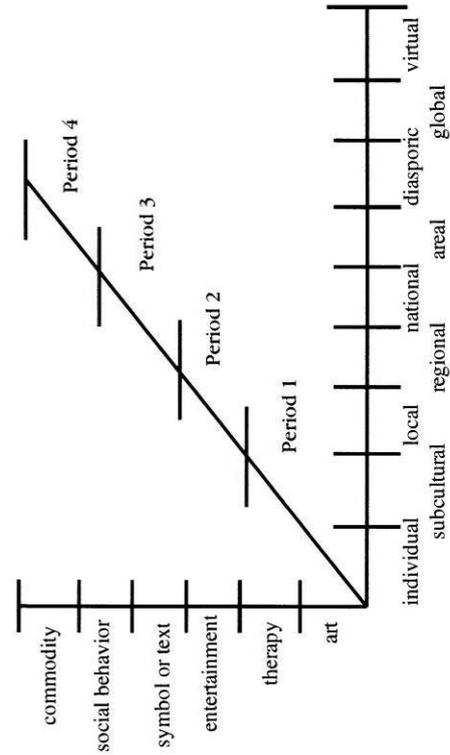
The location dimension I am proposing responds best to this last image of nested settings, places, locales, and nodes of social and musical behavior, but it keeps in mind the dialectic of real and imagined suggested by the second approach. From the point of view of the subject, these locales can be material and face-to-face or they may constitute "imagined communities" in extralocal settings from the regional to the national to the diasporic to the global. Other potentially productive locales, imagined by scholars, might be used in the model as well: border areas as cultural spaces; Appadurai's "scapes"; the center and the periphery; and so forth. The crucial aspect of this dimension is that we and our subjects live and experience music socially in multiple locales, and our musical ethnographies must take this into account. Equally important, this sociogeographical dimension is not a

procrustean bed of naturally given places. It is rather a way to think about and plot out the multiple social settings in which people produce, experience, and understand music. This "sense of place" varies from person to person, time to time, and narrative to narrative. Understanding this dimension as in flux, nested, dynamic, multiple, and constructed is one way to deal with real-world complexity without giving in to Appadurai's fractals and chaos theory.

In using this framework, the nodes on this dimension will inevitably vary with each application. For example, for my analytic purposes, I have found it useful to posit a set of nested nodes that seem to influence musical experience, on one hand, and to themselves be constructed in part by musical practice on the other: the individual, subcultural, local, regional, national, areal, diasporic, global, and virtual (Figure 2). Though these spaces can refer to on-the-ground realities, they may be equally important for musical experience as constructed mental locales in which musicians and their audiences imagine themselves experiencing music.

Most of these locales or places are self-explanatory, but I will comment on each of them briefly here. The individual comes into play when selves or subjects understand themselves as isolated or unique, perhaps in opposition to culture and society or in an especially creative moment; a variant of this notion at this level of analysis might be the body considered as a node of musical experience. The subcultural refers to parts of societies, defined socially by gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, occupation, interests, and so on.

Figure 2. Some nodes in a space of musical experience.



Geographically this position includes the "locales" or "places" where these subcultural behaviors are performed: the home, the workplace, the neighborhood, the schoolyard, the market, the club, and the dancehall. The local is a geographical metaphor for the social and cultural units traditionally studied by ethnomusicologists, particularly in places that enable face-to-face interaction: for example, a people, a culture, a society, a village, or a town. The regional refers to extralocal constellations of villages or groups that are constructed by scholars or reported on by locals, for example, the South, Northumberland, the Prairies. The national refers to the nation-state, its policies and practices, and the discourses that allow its citizens to imagine it. The areal refers to parts of the world that are thought to have a shared historical experience such as Latin America, the former French colonies of Africa, and formerly communist Eastern Europe. The diasporic refers to the sense of connectedness among populations with a common origin but dispersed widely across the globe, the Jewish people providing the archetypal case (Shelemy 1998). The global refers to connections facilitated by commerce, travel, and electronic media among otherwise different people around the world. For example, "Real Punks" produce very similar sounding music whether from the U.S., England, Japan, South America, Bulgaria or India; publishing their views in a fanzine called *Punk Planet*, they "do not conceive of themselves as having an imagined homeland," but rather as "an inherently global community that supercedes local and national boundaries" (Rodel 2002). The virtual refers to the possibilities for a kind of disembodied existence and experience in places created by the electronic internet, where, for example, musical communities coalesce in their devotion to "folk music" and the exchange of "mods," that is, binary music files created and played back on computer software (Bryant 1995; Lysloff in press). These are merely suggestions, though perhaps this dimension has the advantage of bringing together and establishing possible relationships among a number of different locational foci in current ethnomusicological research.

### Time

There are minimally two ways to think about time. One is chronological and historical; the other is experiential and phenomenological.

History as conventionally written presupposes the ability of the writer to step outside time, observe it passing by, and create an orderly narrative of events. Periodization, which can vary from the microscopic to the macroscopic, is one of the conventional strategies of such an approach to time (Figure 2). Descriptions of musical sounds in succession (a chord progression or a formal analysis) represent a kind of periodization within a performance. Klaus Wachsmann (1982) periodized his listening experience into a first hearing of a piece and subsequent hearings. More typically we periodize

musical styles, grouping a continuous succession of pieces or performances into categories spanning decades and centuries. Sometimes these histories of style are linked to changes in the social maintenance and cultural underpinnings of music. I take this approach when, for example, I divide the history of Bulgarian traditional music into three periods of economic and social maintenance: (1) the precommunist period of family farming to 1944; (2) the communist period from 1944 to 1989; (3) the postcommunist, democratic, market-economy period from 1989 to the present (Rice 1996). Musical experience changes as these economic and political periods change.

Phenomenologically, musical experience in the present is partly conditioned by inveterate previous experience. Someone living in the present will have a very different experience of Bulgarian music if they knew it in the precommunist period than if they first encountered it in the communist or postcommunist periods. Bringing experience into periodized histories suggests that time doesn't simply pass in a straight, measured line, but in fact is a fundamental aspect of our being and experience in the world (Heidegger [1927] 1962). Music may blandly proceed from beginning to end, from hearing to hearing, from piece to piece, and style to style in the chronological perspective. But in the flux of time, rather than outside it, each new hearing, as Wachsmann pointed out of his hearing and rehearing of a Beethoven piece over many years, contains a new experience. His simple example illustrates the crucial role time plays in musical experience. When we think about longer spans of time, periodized by important social and cultural changes that affect nearly everyone in a particular society or even many of us around the world, then the importance of time for musical experience takes on even greater significance.

The space of musical experience needs to take both views of time into account. The chronological, historical view is most easily represented graphically, as I do in Figure 2. But the way the experience of music changes as the subject moves through time and the way music gives us its own experience of time (measuring it, foreshortening it, stretching it out) need to be a part of the narratives created when using this space of musical experience.

### Metaphor

The third dimension consists of beliefs about the fundamental nature of music expressed in metaphors in the form "A is B," that is, "music is x." These beliefs then become the basis for discourses about music, musical behaviors (including all aspects of creativity, reception, performance, and institutionalization), and strategies for deploying these beliefs and behaviors in self-interested ways.

The metaphors I have in mind are not literary tropes, rhetorical devices, or examples of fancy, decorative language. Rather, my view of metaphor is

informed by a turn in twentieth-century analytic and continental philosophy away from a rhetorical view of metaphor toward the claim that it is a key element in human thought and therefore has important epistemological and ontological implications (Johnson 1981). I.A. Richards, a student of rhetoric, initiated this turn in 1936 when he claimed that "metaphor is the omnipresent principle of language. . . . Thought is metaphoric, and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive from them" (Richards [1936] 1981:50-51). Max Black ([1954-55] 1981), an analytic philosopher, extended Richards's ideas by arguing that metaphors are statements, not words, that extend the meanings of both the "primary subject" (A) and the "subsidiary subject" (B). These subjects are neither labels nor things but "systems of things" with "commonplace" attributes. Since metaphors suppress some details about their subjects while emphasizing others, they "organize our view" of the subjects, create new understandings of both subjects of the metaphor, and contribute importantly to epistemological issues in analytic philosophy. Paul Ricoeur, a philosopher in the continental tradition, elucidated the psychological processes at work when metaphor creates new understandings. He explains that "meaningful metaphoric utterances" occur when "things or ideas that were remote appear now as close . . . what Aristotle called . . . the transfer of meaning is nothing else than this move or shift in the logical distance, from the far to the near" (Ricoeur [1978] 1981:233). This shift provides the basis for the innovative nature of metaphor and its ability to help us imagine new relationships and construct new symbolic worlds. George Lakoff, a linguist, and Mark Johnson, a philosopher, were less interested in metaphors as the locus of conceptual innovation than in the way they guide the thoughts and actions of individuals operating in society and serve understanding and experience. When we take them as true, then they powerfully inform our view of the world and our actions in it (Lakoff and Johnson 1980a:156-84). "No account of meaning and truth can be adequate unless it recognizes the way in which conventional metaphors structure our conceptual system" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980b:486). As Johnson (1981:43) puts it, returning to Richards's initial insight, "metaphoric process is an omnipresent principle of cognition . . . All experience has an 'as' structure."

For the purposes of this proposal, I am interested in implied or explicit "metaphoric utterances" in the form A is B (music is X) that bring seemingly distant domains closer together and that organize, and in some cases shift, our view and experience of both subjects of the metaphor. If all thought is metaphoric, then this definition of metaphor requires us to revisit the distinction between literal and metaphoric meaning, because in this philosophical tradition both are capable of making true statements. In this view, what appear to be "literal expressions" are something more like "old," "conven-

tional," "dead," taken-for-granted metaphors that powerfully inform our view of the world, but where the sense (or memory) of a shift in cognition or experience has been lost. Often their metaphoric sense has to be recovered through analysis and deconstruction: think, for example, of "music literature" or "feminine endings." What appear to be "metaphoric expressions" per se have a quality of newness and require a shift in cognition and experience: think, for example, of "songs as waterfalls" or "music is the work of the devil." In this view of metaphor, much depends on context and subject position. That is, one subject's fresh and challenging metaphor may appear as literally true to another. Both evaluations capture the two sides of the coin of metaphor: its capacity to frame our understanding when taken as true, near, and obvious and its capacity to alter and reconfigure our understanding when taken as surprising, far, and insightful.

Such metaphors, whether obvious or surprising, are probably as endless as the cultures we study, and each tells us something important about the nature of music in that society (compare Merriam 1964:63-84 on "concepts of music"). Some surely challenge ethnomusicologists' "commonplace" ideas about the nature of music. For example, among the Navajo, music is medicine, a form of therapy; it is performed to heal the sick. It doesn't represent something; it does something (Witherspoon 1977). This metaphor makes a Navajo truth claim, organizes their musical and ritual behavior, and is obvious and close to their experience. For some ethnomusicologists, this metaphor requires an act of imagination and analysis to bring the previously distant "systems" of music and clinical healing closer together and to understand its truth, a cognitive shift comparable to what Navajos must have gone through when David McAllester (1954) asked them questions about music as an aesthetic object. These sorts of differences in perspective on the truth of various musical metaphors not only provide a challenge to and locus for ethnomusicological research, but when present in specific instances of social and cultural interaction generate conflict over the nature of music and musical experience.

Not only do the people we study make metaphors to account for their experience of music. Musicologists also base their studies of music on metaphors that make fundamental claims about music's nature and significance. Among the common ones in current use, and therefore applied cross-culturally in our studies, are music as art, as cognition, as entertainment, as therapy, as social behavior, as commodity, as referential symbol, and as text for interpretation (Figure 2). Though in many cases these metaphors are left unspoken, I believe that our analyses in every case are predicated on the truth of one or some of these metaphors.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, in advancing our arguments, we often imply that those we study behave as if these metaphors were true for them as well. I will discuss just four of the common metaphors listed above to illustrate what I have in mind on this dimension.

The music-as-art metaphor suggests that the nature of music is first and foremost about the processes of performing and composing music, the musical products resulting from those processes, and the reception of those processes and products in perception, cognition, and interpretation. Here I purposefully conflate many separate domains of musicological study, including psychoacoustics, music theory, style history, and aesthetics as well as the conventional distinction between art and craft. This metaphor leads us to consider the techniques, forms, and structures of music and how those structures may be evaluated in terms of craft, balance, virtuosity, and beauty (see Bakan 1999; Berliner 1994; Brinner 1995; and Tenzer 2000 for recent examples that emphasize these themes, among others). Music seems so powerful as an art, its techniques of production so formidable, and the pleasures of its reception so enrapturing that such considerations can easily eclipse other views of the nature of music and even lead to denials that this is a metaphor at all. Ethnomusicologists have been at pains to move beyond the shadow of the music-as-art metaphor to the theoretical light of other metaphors, but we need to recognize that it or something like it informs the experience of music not simply for those raised in the traditions of European aesthetics but in nearly every musical tradition we study.

A second metaphor, developed by ethnomusicologists in part as a response to the music-as-art metaphor, claims that music is social behavior, a claim that seemed far from the understanding of musicologically trained ethnomusicologists in the 1960s. Ethnomusicologists demonstrated that because music is made and understood by people in society, every performance of music is also a performance of existing or emergent social structures and social relations (see Neuman 1980; Seeger 1987; and Waterman 1990 for examples of this approach). Musical performances may enact past or present social structures, they may model alternatives to existing structures, or they may help to imagine future structures.

A third metaphor powerfully attractive to ethnomusicologists as an alternative to the music-as-art metaphor claims that music is a symbolic system or text capable of reference not only to already existing music but also to a world beyond music. The terms symbol and text are deployed in different discursive traditions, the former in semiotics and the latter in literary criticism and hermeneutics. Here I conflate these two metaphors because they both make the claim that music can have referential meanings to things, ideas, worlds, and experiences outside music itself (see Becker and Becker 1981 and Feld 1988 for examples of this approach).

A fourth metaphor, music as commodity, has challenged ethnomusicologists in recent years, if only because we, like many of our subjects, find the previous metaphors more palatable and less, well, cheap. In many sociogeographical locales, musicians can, literally and really, exchange their

performances and their recorded products for money or other marketable commodities. This reality takes on a metaphorical quality when new possibilities for such exchanges challenge older, taken-for-granted ideas about music as art, as social practice, or as therapy and thus create a kind of cognitive dissonance in musicians. If we and our subjects prefer other metaphors, we and they have encountered this one as we all engage the commercial world of the music industry and as we increasingly make that world the focus of our research.

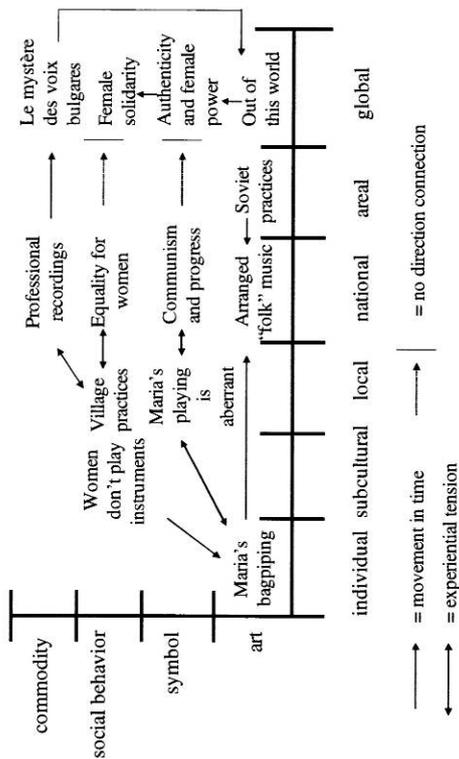
Though some debate centers around the relative merits of each of these claims and other ones as well, I suggest that ethnomusicologists take seriously every musical metaphor, whether of their own making or of their research subjects, for what they are: fundamental claims to truth, guides to practical action and discourse, ways of reconfiguring our understanding of the world, and sources for comprehending music's profound importance to human life. Though true from some subject's point of view, each may require others to reshuffle their conceptions of the nature of music. One can imagine a single subject employing many metaphors in different nodes of place and time to make sense of musical experience and many subjects contesting the nature of music at the intersection of their individual spaces of musical experience.

Musical metaphors also guide discursive and practical action in individual lives, in society, and through time. They guide individuals' use of music rather than specify its social functions (Merriam 1964:209-27). Sometimes I suppose the metaphors happily commingle; at other times they may become alternative, competing strategies. When we are faced with multiple metaphors about the fundamental nature of music, a number of important questions arise (Rice 2001). How do our subjects deploy these metaphors? How are they discursively constructed? Or are they left implicit? Are they kept in balance or are some brought into the foreground while others are pushed into the background? Or does one eclipse the others, making them disappear? When subjects' metaphors conflict or are contested, how are they used strategically to the subjects' benefit? How and why do societies and social institutions control musical metaphors and thus set the agenda for the significance and signification of music?

### Three Stories

To illustrate this abstract model, here are three necessarily schematic and simplified stories from my work on Bulgarian traditional music. For my Bulgarian examples I need seven locations, four metaphors, and a three-part periodization (Figures 3 and 4).<sup>5</sup> Others using this model would construct its specific nodes to suit their own narrative and analytical goals.

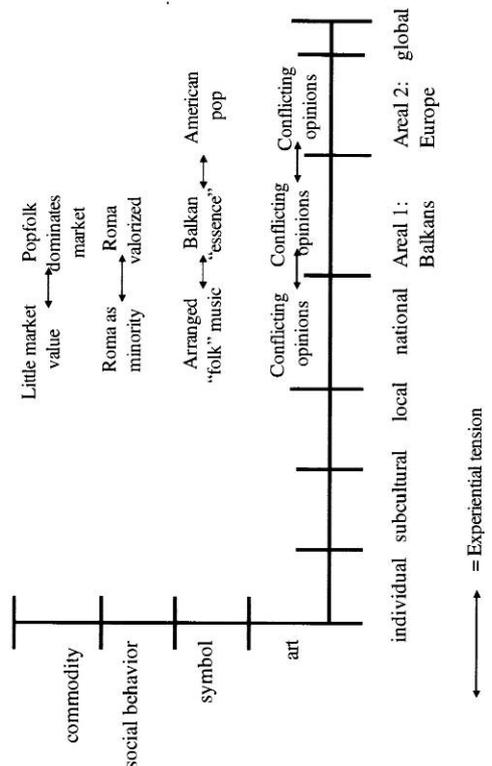
Figure 3. Individual, local, national, and global experience.



**A Female Bagpiper**

The performance of Bulgarian music—indeed the performance of all music—is the performance of some aspects of social structure and social relationships. Bulgarian music was and still is used, among other things, to bring kinship structures to experiential life and to enact traditional gender

Figure 4. Bulgarian musical experience in the year 2000.



roles. For the first story the crucial aspect of gendered musical behavior is that men traditionally played musical instruments and women did not.

When Maria Stoyanova decided to play her father's bagpipe, this shocked her family and everyone in her village (Rice 1994:268-71). Though she was born in the 1950s and raised during the communist period, her parents still used precommunist ideas about gender to justify taking the instrument away from her, one illustration of how time is a nested dimension of experience, that is, phenomenological as well as chronological. In the process, they treated her playing as a text ripe for interpretation and misinterpretation. Not only was the bagpipe indexical of male behaviors, its very construction, with three phallic tubes sticking out of it, was iconically male as well. So her playing of it could be read as representing some sort of public sexual display inappropriate for women. For Maria, her playing has nothing to do with sexuality, as interpreted at the local level using values in place before World War II. It has rather to do with art, supported by the communists' commodification of "folk music." This was the sound she loved and she, as an individual, was determined to play this instrument for its artistic value even if it meant flying in the face of older subcultural and local values. This conflict over the significance of music took place in a space whose temporal dimension allowed the co-occurrence of precommunist and communist attitudes toward female music making.

The conflict, or experiential tension, between Maria's individual ideas about bagpipe music as art and local ideas about bagpipe music as acceptable only for men was resolved with the passage of time from prewar traditionalism to postwar communist modernity. Between 1944 and 1989 the national government appropriated local music traditions and made them into symbols of national identity and the hoped-for progress of humankind under socialism, an art of "arranged folk music" influenced by Soviet predecessors, and a commodity based on new forms of music professionalism (Buchanan 1991, 1995; Levy 1985; Rice 1994:169-233; Silverman 1982, 1983).

In the 1960s, when Maria auditioned on the bagpipe to study at the newly formed national high school for folk music, the jury of sophisticated urbanites was as shocked as the people in her village had been. One of those present told me they read the bagpipe's blowpipe as a phallus in her mouth, understood bagpipe playing as a male tradition, and wondered whether they should admit her to a school founded to support and preserve a tradition she seemed to be flouting. In the end, a Marxist ideology of equality for women won out, and she was admitted. She eventually became the principal bagpipe teacher at the national conservatory devoted to folk music and a sought-after soloist with many wedding bands. At the national level during the communist period, her playing functioned metaphorically as both a symbol of women's equality of opportunity in a socialist state and a social enactment of women taking a leading role in the previously male domain of instrument-

tal music. New values at the national level trumped older values at the local level, empowering Maria in ways denied to her by tradition (see Rice, in press, for a fuller account of Maria's musical practice).

In Figure 3, the story begins with the "traditional" social behavior of women at the subcultural level and moves to Maria's appropriation of a male traditional behavior for her individual satisfaction, a move read at the local level as aberrant, which creates what I call "experiential tension." Maria's art, along with local practices and values, then take on completely new significance when they move, in the communist period, to the national level, a move which generates experiential tension between these new practices and older local ideas about the nature of music.

### Powerful Voices

A second story begins during the communist period when this new "national music" was firmly in place and had for the most part eclipsed local, precommunist values and practices. Significantly for this story, these national transformations of local music traditions were commodified during this period. For the first time, musicians, singers, and dancers could make a living wage (feed a household, as they said) from their performances on stage, for the radio, and in commercial recordings. These recordings then slipped through a "space hatch" from a Bulgarian space of musical experience into foreign conceptual spaces structured in the same three-dimensional way but with different nodes of time, location, and metaphor. In other words, the subjects of this story are not Bulgarians but their others, a subject position that might be called "foreign fans of Bulgarian music." In these foreign spaces, now conventionally but perhaps incorrectly called the "global," Bulgarian nationalized folklore commodified on recordings was interpreted first of all as art. For many listeners, including myself when I first heard it, Bulgarian women's choirs made wonderful sounding music with no cultural referents except to the largely empty label "Bulgarian" (Figure 3).

Although this movement of Bulgarian recorded commodities began in the 1960s and even earlier, it reached its apotheosis in the United States during the late 1980s with a set of recordings released on Nonesuch with the title *Le mystère des voix bulgares*. Since in the West we often follow aesthetic experiences with questions about symbolic significance (What does it mean? What did the composer intend?), these recordings were also read symbolically in ways that were unconnected to the meanings associated with its production (see Buchanan 1996, 1997, 1998 for critical treatments of these recordings and their reinterpretation outside Bulgaria). In countless newspaper articles and in notes accompanying the recordings and the concerts, this state-sponsored arranged choral singing was read as exotic, even unearthly, music. The political context of its production did not travel with the

recordings and its relative newness as arranged music was intentionally obscured by producers and presenters in western Europe and the United States to encourage its misreading as ancient, authentic, traditional, and "cosmic." Another interpretation without justification in local practice read the undeniably powerful female voices as the performance and symbolic representation of powerful females, although, as Donna Buchanan (1996:195) points out, the professionalization of local musical practice at the national level gave the singers in these choirs a new social status and a quasi-independence denied them in local, patriarchal society. The early recordings and the responses to them circulated in a Slobinesque "microscene" of Balkan music enthusiasts who danced to, sang, and played this music (see Lausevic 1998 for a discussion of this scene). For decades since the release of the first commercial recordings of Bulgarian music in the 1960s, Bulgarian women's singing has continued to inspire imitators in the U.S., Japan, and northern Europe. Bulgarian choral music presents young women in these places with a useful symbol of gendered behavior, one that sounds powerful and strong. By singing it in choirs they create a social situation in which to express and perform strength, female solidarity, and independence from men.

In one of the more amusing of the interpretations, or misinterpretations, of this arranged, state-sponsored choral singing, the syndicated television serial, "Xena, Warrior Princess," used, in early episodes at least, this style as a leitmotiv to accompany Xena into battle against her exotic and otherworldly foes. In 1995 I received a call from Joe LoDuca, the composer of the music for the series, asking for my help in finding singers for the recording sessions in Los Angeles. When I asked him why Bulgarian music, he told me that the producers had heard the *mystère* recordings and thought that this powerful female sound would be ideal for their powerful heroine. In other words, they mapped a powerful female sound onto the sound of a powerful female (see also Buchanan 1998).

One way to interpret this story in terms of the space of musical experience is to argue that the recordings moved outside a Bulgarian national locale (significantly not a local place) into a global locale. In both places the recordings are commodities with artistic, symbolic, and social significance. In the Bulgarian space they model new forms of social behavior in which women have relatively more equality of opportunity than they had at the local level, and they have a symbolic meaning associated with the propaganda goals of the party controlling the nation-state. Figure 3 illustrates the fact that only the recorded commodity passed into the global node of musical experience. The Bulgarian symbolic meanings and social significance were filtered out, it was appropriated as art, and all manner of new meanings and behaviors were attached to it. Although ethnomusicologists have tended to be critical of this process, lamenting the loss or distortion of the original meaning and

critiquing the rather odd orientalist and new-age takes on "world music," we also must acknowledge and study the social utility, cultural production, and individual musical experience that occurs at the "global" level, or more precisely in the new local and subcultural locations, made possible by travel and shuttling media, as for example Mirjana Lausevic (1998) does in her study of the Balkan music scene in the United States.

### Postcommunist Popfolk

The third story brings us into the postcommunist period and is based on a brief period of fieldwork in the summer of 2000 (Rice 2002). Music in Bulgaria in the postcommunist period has become at least partly about localization (Buchanan 1998, 1999; Peters n.p.). Many Bulgarians I talked to that summer tended to interpret the music in Bulgaria and their musical preferences as answering the question, where are Bulgaria and Bulgarians located in today's world? The subjects of this story are, again, not individuals but groups of people who occupy three different subcultural positions and who therefore answer these questions differently. In Figure 4 the three subject positions might be labeled nationalists, Balkanists, and Europeanists. They are represented in locational terms as the national, areal 1: Balkans, and areal 2: Europe; the tensions between them in all four metaphoric domains are indicated by double-headed arrows.

During the communist period Bulgarian village music, in arranged forms, became—and still is—a symbol of Bulgarian national identity (Buchanan 1991). It put into practice an ideological bracketing of ethnic minorities within the country and an emphasis on difference from the neighbors on its borders. In 2000, Bulgarian nationalized folk music (*narodna muzika*) had virtually vanished from the airwaves and recorded media in the new, capitalist, commodity market for music. What was popular, what sold, was a new form of music called by various names, but most commonly in the year 2000 *popfolk* and *chalga*, a word whose connotations and implications might be captured in the expression "Bulgarianized 'Gypsy' music." It consists of Bulgarian-language cover versions and newly authored texts set to Rom (Gypsy), Turkish, Serbian, Greek, and Romanian folk and popular melodies. It is a kind of pan-Balkan, Rom-influenced popular music, commonly interpreted, both by its proponents and opponents, as a symbol of Bulgaria's areal location in the Balkans.<sup>4</sup> Proponents celebrate that fact, arguing that Bulgarians should not deny that part of their history and "nature."

Opposition to this style comes from two sides. Bulgarian nationalists are deeply offended that this style has eclipsed music that has identifiable, ethnically Bulgarian features and, even worse, that it glorifies a scorned ethnic minority, the *Tsigani* (to use a somewhat derogatory Bulgarian term), who originated the style and provide many of the most popular singers and in-

strumentalists in this new genre. In addition to being hated by narrow-minded nationalists, popfolk is also criticized by intellectuals, bureaucrats, and well-educated youth invested in moving Bulgaria away from its Ottoman and Soviet past, both of which isolated Bulgaria from cultural and economic centers in Western Europe. They hope to insert themselves and Bulgaria into the so-called "European family," lobby for membership in the European Union and NATO, consume Western European and American images and products, and favor classical music and Europeanized and Americanized forms of popular music.

While the symbolism of the music is clear to all, arguments for and against it tend to be couched in aesthetic and commodity terms, and the performers themselves, recorded in music videos, sometimes model intimate relationships between Roma and Bulgarians, idealized forms of social relationships rare in everyday life. Opponents call it "cheap" music, made solely for its commercial potential without redeeming artistic value. On the other hand, ethnic Bulgarians who participate in its making defend its artistry, pointing to some respected poets who have contributed song lyrics and to the university music educations of some of the musicians. Bulgaria today, in transition from socialism to capitalism, from totalitarianism to democracy, and from a regional "comecon" to access to global markets, is a fascinating place where different subject positions are colliding over the meaning and value of music.

### The Space of Musical Experience and Ethnography

The three-dimensional space of musical experience I have proposed here represents an attempt to model the encounter of ethnomusicologists and their subjects with modernity. Thus it is the space of both musical experience and ethnography. In other words, both we and our subjects operate in similar spaces of the same structure. In this limited sense, the space I have proposed here is also postmodern insofar as it tries to capture recent late modern, postmodern, and postcolonial critiques of our modernist understandings of the relationship between scholars and their subjects.<sup>5</sup> Modernity understands itself in contrast to tradition. Under modernity ethnomusicologists view themselves as cosmopolitan, moving about and operating freely in a global space largely inaccessible (at least in concept and method) to the inhabitants of those traditional, local cultures we often study (for a recent counterexample, see Turino 2000). In modernity, we could travel to their locales but they could not necessarily travel to ours. Their experiences were local, while ours were global. The space of musical experience and ethnography I am proposing here is shared, in structure at least, by us all; it is the conceptual space in which musical ethnography and music experience

co-occur for both scholars, musicians, and audiences and in that limited sense is postmodern. It is the space in which scholars, musicians, and audiences know the passage of time, savor music's differing essences, meanings, and metaphoric connections to other domains of culture, and feel the gradations of power as we move (if at times only conceptually) from locale to locale. It is a space in which those otherized by modernist ideologies now write their own ethnographies or participate dialogically in their writing. It is the space where the authority of omniscient authors and ethnographers is challenged by the realization that they are positioned within the same kinds of spaces as their subjects, not in a fundamentally different sort of space.

I further contend that an abstract space like this is fundamental to our studies of technology and media, on the one hand, and power and contestation, on the other. Travel technology, for instance, enables us and our subjects to move through this space, and electronic media function as "space shuttles" that bring near to experience the temporally and spatially distant; give us "schizophonic" ways of experiencing music; and help us construct and revise our "senses of place" and space (see, for example, Manuel 1993 and Taylor 1997). Contestation occurs because individuals are situated differently in the space of musical experience. Power is negotiated and acted out along its dimensions in terms, for example, of who controls the (metaphoric) discourse; who has been there the longest; and who occupies the superior position (locale).

Finally, I suggest that this model of the space of musical experience and ethnography might provide us with an analytical tool to aid our understandings of individual encounters with modernity as well as provide a framework for comparison between and among our idiographic studies.

In the present time, in the global space of commodified forms, where new meanings eclipse older ones, the experience of music may feel modern to some and postmodern to others. Musical ethnographies that trace the movements of subjects in location, metaphorical understanding, and time and the differing experiences such movements entail take on a fundamentally dynamic character responsive to the new or newly understood complexities of today's modern world.

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### Notes

1. Michel Foucault can be understood as mounting an attack on phenomenological projects such as the one proposed here. Foucault was clearly more interested in how practice defined practitioners than in the practitioners themselves. However, the subject remains for him a bracketed yet necessary being. If discourses are "sites of struggle" and each side gives different meanings to the same discourse, then this claim presupposes intersubjectivity and subjects who use the same discursive means variously to control, to oppose control, and to fight for their rights (Crossley 1994:120). Foucauldian studies of the genealogy of discourses and discursive categories may not need the subject and intersubjectivity, but if we want to understand how these discourses are deployed and resisted in the present, as I do, then we need a notion of the self similar to the one outlined here. "Situating subjectivity and intersubjectivity provide a necessary, unexplicated background for Foucault's foreground or figural concerns. And like the background of any image, they too can become figural without changing the picture" (Crossley 1994:159-60).
2. Daniel Neuman (1980:27-28) makes a similar point about the role of metaphor in research: "The nature of the relationship between music and culture (or music and society or social system) has been expressed in a number of ways, but is based always, I believe, on one of three primary metaphors of relationships, which need to be made explicit. The first is music "as a component of sociocultural system"; the second is music "as model, microcosm, or reflection of a social system"; and the third is music "as commentary," as a "reflection on or about cultural systems."
3. My ability to represent three dimensions failed me in Figures 3 and 4, so I have used the "arrow of time" to indicate that dimension. These arrows refer simply to the passage of time and do not precisely reference the three periods that underlie these Bulgarian stories.
4. That Bulgarians are using new genres of popular music to construct ideas about the Balkans has already been pointed out by Bulgarian and American scholars. In the mid-1990s a popular genre, referred to as "*Pirin folk*" after the region of southwest Bulgaria also known as Macedonia, was "about musically constructing Macedonia" (Buchanan 1999:172; also Peters n.p.). The musical construction of the Balkans was also the topic of a panel of papers by Donna Buchanan (1998), Jane Sugarman, and Martin Stokes at the 1998 SEM annual meeting. Buchanan (1999:176) cites a Bulgarian musicologist, Rozmari Stalelova, who claims that Pirin folk represents "the Balkans in Bulgaria." This story brings these earlier reports up to the year 2000 and places them in the context of my proposed space of musical experience.
5. Though postmodernism as a position beyond the modern/traditional dichotomy seems useful, I am not advocating postmodernism as a philosophical position. In fact, I am opposed

to the pessimism of postmodernism, that is, its apparent ability to deconstruct the modernist project, but not to offer positive alternatives. To propose a space of musical experience as a heuristic device for future study, as I do here, flies in the face of the spirit of much postmodernist discourse. Similarly, while the idea of different subject positions inscribed in this model shares with postmodernism a rejection of the modernist idea of absolute truth, it is not antifoundational in the same sense. It holds out the possibility of comparison, judgment, and interpretation, of the authoring of the self through music as a series of moral choices in social relationships with others; and it is founded on philosophical claims about the social nature of human being in the world.

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n.d. = no date

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