ARCHIPELAGOS OF SOUND

music and its history within
the imperial world order

It is out of extreme human isolation and insularity
(each man is an island) that "together-ness" can emerge.

Michel Chion

Die Welt ist fort, ich muss dich tragen.

Paul Celan

Preface

23rd Music Biennale Zagreb is the host of the 2005 ISCM World Music Days and we have prepared the present volume both as a discursive approach to this context and as the continuation of the collaboration between Music Biennale Zagreb and Multimedia Institute, which has started, two years ago, with organization of the symposium *Musical Constellations in the Digital Age* and a string of adjoining concerts.

The present collaboration is entitled *Archipelagos of Sound - Music and its History within the Imperial World order*. It is envisaged as to pursue certain aspects that were addressed at 22nd MBZ and to offer new perspectives on the position of contemporary music production within the globalized market.

In this booklet we will focus on two general aspects that are to be singled out from a wide range of the possibilities suggested by subtitle *Music and its History Within the Imperial World Order*:

A. What could be a definition of the historicity of music/sound-material that reflects the basic determinants of the digital age? The question is centered on multiplicity of the present in the past, i.e. how a contemporary view rediscovers the musical history.

B. Post-globalized world, the one after first cycle of globalization, is just the one aspect of taking-place of the world, unable to completely consume up all the potentials of worldliness. Borrowing here Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of *mondialisation*, which designates a powerful reassessment of the notions of world and creation, we're interested what such a concept - *mondialisation* - could mean for the music. What does it mean to make (create) music after the globalization?

Dalibor Davidović & Ksenija Stevanović [editors]

Peter Szendy

1787 : Bentham, Mozart

I.

1787 : Jeremy Bentham writes his famous series of letters in which he proposes a *panoptical* design for an *Inspection-House.* His project is well known, it served a model for many buildings and we can agree we Foucault that his work was not only of temporary influence but that it inaugurates an era: this is where a new age of surveillance starts [1].

1787 : Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is performed in Prague. The year before, the première of *Le Nozze di Figaro* had a great success there. Mozart alludes to it in *Don Giovanni:* when Leporello hears Figaro's aria, *Non più andrai,* performed by a small ensemble during his master's meal, he says: "I know this one only too well" (II, 13).

1. Cf. Michel Foucault, Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison, Gallimard, 1975. The complete title of Bentham's project is: Panopticon ; or, The Inspection-House, containing the idea of a new principle of construction, applicable to any sort of establishment, in which persons of any description are to be kept under inspection ; and particular to penitentiary-houses, prisons […], hospitals, mad-houses, and schools : with a plan of management adapted to the principle : in a series of letters, written in the year 1787…

Don Giovanni, as I tried to show elsewhere, is a great opera about hearing [2]: we hear the characters as they themselves listen on the stage, representing us (the audience) and embodying various types of listening. In *Le Nozze* also, everybody listens. But, whereas *Don Giovanni* contrasts two listening attitudes (Don Giovanni is distracted, his attention is floating, while the Commander imposes the totalizing law of "structural" hearing), in *Le Nozze* we are confronted with an infinite series of variations on *overhearing.*

As we shall see, the very texture of the music, in *Le Nozze,* bears the marks of the audio surveillance that haunts the opera, in a sort of musical counterpoint to the birth of panopticism.

II.

Regardless of its exact function - prison, hospital, or even school -, the building described by Bentham should enable a complete and non-stop visual control over its inhabitants: it would be the "ideal perfection", Bentham says, if each person could be "under the eyes" of the inspector(s) "during every instant of time" [3]. Since this ideal condition can hardly be put into practice, Bentham proposes to make each occupant *believe,* or "conceive", that he *could be* continuously watched.

Bentham's panoptical project, as it is explained in the second letter dedicated to penitentiaries, shows a circular building: the "inspector's lodge" occupies the central position, the prisoners' "cells" are placed along the periphery, separated one from another by the circle's *radii.* Therefore, in order to prevent prisoners from knowing whether they are being watched or not, the general plan is meticulously completed by a device that Foucault describes in these terms:

2. Cf. Peter Szendy, Écoute, une histoire de nos oreilles (Éditions de Minuit, 2001, with a foreword by Jean-Luc Nancy).
3. Panopticon, first letter, Idea of the Inspection Principle.

> "In order to make the presence or absence of the inspector unverifiable, so that the prisoners, in their cells, cannot even see a shadow, Bentham envisaged not only Venetian blinds on the windows of the central observation hall, but, on the inside, partitions that intersected the hall at right angles and, in order to pass from one quarter to the other, not doors but zigzag openings; for the slightest noise, a gleam of light, a brightness in a half-opened door would betray the presence of the guardian. The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen." (p. 235)

It is important that this architecture for monitoring, this machine for seeing everything goes alongside with the possibility – which Bentham envisaged without really developing it – of a *panacoustical* or *panaural* device. On two occasions, in the second and the twenty-first letter, Bentham mentions the "voice" and the "ear". In the first instance, he discusses the transmission of the voice as embodying authority:

> "To save the troublesome exertion of voice that might otherwise be necessary, and to prevent one prisoner from knowing that the inspector is occupied by another prisoner at a distance, a small tin tube might reach from each cell to the inspector's lodge… By means of this implement, the slightest whisper of the one might be heard by the other… With regard to instruction, […] in all cases where directions, given verbally and at a distance, are sufficient, these tubes will be

FOUND OF USE. THEY WILL SAVE, ON THE ONE HAND, THE
EXERTION OF VOICE IT WOULD REQUIRE, ON THE PART OF
THE INSTRUCTOR, TO COMMUNICATE INSTRUCTION TO THE
WORKMEN WITHOUT QUITTING HIS CENTRAL STATION IN
THE LODGE; AND, ON THE OTHER, THE CONFUSION WHICH
WOULD ENSUE IF DIFFERENT INSTRUCTORS OR PERSONS IN
THE LODGE WERE CALLING TO THE CELLS AT THE SAME
TIME. AND, IN THE CASE OF HOSPITALS, THE QUIET THAT
MAY BE INSURED BY THIS LITTLE CONTRIVANCE, TRIFLING
AS IT MAY SEEM AT FIRST SIGHT, AFFORDS AN ADDITIONAL
ADVANTAGE." (PANOPTICON, SECOND LETTER)

What Bentham proposes here, as a supplement to his *Panopticon,*
is a kind of voice-carrier that is all-encompassing and selective
at the same time: in other words, a *Panacousticon* which
facilitates communication between inspectors and inspected in
the context of an organized work.
In the second instance (the last letter dedicated to schools),
Bentham tries to distinguish the principle of the Panopticon
from "Dionysius' ear" [4]:

"I HOPE NO CRITIC […] WILL DO AN INSPECTION-HOUSE
SO MUCH INJUSTICE AS TO COMPARE IT TO DIONYSIUS'
EAR. THE OBJECT OF THAT CONTRIVANCE WAS, TO KNOW
WHAT PRISONERS SAID WITHOUT THEIR SUSPECTING ANY
SUCH THING. THE OBJECT OF THE INSPECTION PRINCIPLE

4. This so called Ear is a cave (an old quarry situated in the Archeological Park
of Syracuse). It is told that Denys or Dionysos, the ancient tyrant of Syracuse,
imprisoned his enemies there, and due to the acoustic properties of this cave,
could hear their conversations from a niche situated above. Caravaggio visited
this cave in 1586, accompanied by the archeologist Vincenzo Mirabella; he
compared its access to a human ear, and named it L'orecchio di Dionigi. Cf. Dörte
Zbikowski, « The Listening Ear : Phenomena of Acoustic Surveillance », in
CTRL [Space]. Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother, Thomas
Levin (ed.), ZKM-MIT Press, 2002, p. 37.

IS DIRECTLY THE REVERSE: IT IS TO MAKE THEM NOT ONLY SUSPECT, BUT BE ASSURED, THAT WHATEVER THEY DO IS KNOWN, EVEN THOUGH THAT SHOULD NOT BE THE CASE. DETECTION IS THE OBJECT OF THE FIRST: PREVENTION, THAT OF THE LATTER. IN THE FORMER CASE THE RULING PERSON IS A SPY; IN THE LATTER HE IS A MONITOR. THE OBJECT OF THE FIRST WAS TO PRY INTO THE SECRET RECESSES OF THE HEART; THE LATTER, CONFINING ITS ATTENTION TO OVERT ACTS, LEAVES THOUGHTS AND FANCIES TO THEIR PROPER ORDINARY, THE COURT ABOVE. ... »
(PANOPTICON, LETTER XXI, "SCHOOLS")

Thus, with its panacoustical supplement, the Panopticon is, at the same time, more and less than Dionysius' ear. More, since surveillance is potentially permanent; less, since it neglects the inmates' intimate secrets.

Foucault mentioned the possible panacoustic extension of Bentham's plan in a footnote:

> "BENTHAM IN HIS FIRST VERSION OF THE PANOPTICON HAS ALSO ENVISAGED ACOUSTIC SURVEILLANCE, BY MEANS OF TUBES THAT CONNECT THE CELLS WITH THE CENTRAL TOWER. HE ABANDONED THIS IDEA IN THE POSTSCRIPT TO THE PANOPTICON [1791], PROBABLY BECAUSE HE COULD NOT INTRODUCE THE DISSYMMETRY REQUIRED IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE INMATES FROM HEARING THE INSPECTOR IN THE SAME WAY AS HE HEARD THEM » (SURVEILLER ET PUNIR, P. 235, NOTE 2)

Foucault seems to forget that Bentham, with his tin tubes, had in mind the communication of orders rather than audio surveillance. It is true, though, that Bentham would certainly have had troubles with a *unidirectional* isolation of the tubes, *i. e.* with finding *acoustical* Venetian blinds, so to speak. But, as

we can see from the engravings in Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia universalis* (they represent palaces equipped with small auditory tunnels for surveillance), the capacity of sound to diffuse and pervade everything did not impede the construction of buildings dedicated to eavesdropping.

III.

Le Nozze, act I
In the recitative of the fourth scene, Susanna and Marcellina eavesdrop and spy on each other (Marcellina: "Let's pretend not to see her"; Susanna: "It's me she's talking about"). In the sixth scene, Cherubino hides behind an armchair when the Count arrives, and he overhears the latter's conversation with Susanna. In the seventh scene, it is the Count who hides behind the same armchair when Basilio enters, while Cherubino manages to slip unnoticed on the other side, under Susanna's dress: both are now listening to her dialogue with Basilio. The Count finally reveals his presence and discovers Cherubino:

> "Count (to Susanna) : Heavens! So he heard what I told you? Cherubino : I did what I could to hear not (per non sentir)."

In *Le Nozze,* everyone is spying, thus creating a network of listeners and acoustic relations, the complexity of which defies any analysis. This is the real madness of the *folle journée* staged by Beaumarchais in the play that inspired Mozart's librettist, Da Ponte. And the political implications of the opera are also embedded in this continuously varied exposition of (over)hearing as domination.
It has often been said that Da Ponte tempered Beaumarchais' pre-Revolutionary ideas when he adapted the play as a libretto for Mozart. And the *Memoirs* of the Italian librettist seem to

confirm this view. It is certainly true that Da Ponte's version omits some of the most subversive elements of the play, like the third scene of Act V, in which Napoleon, later, claimed to hear "the whole Revolution":

> "Because you are great Lord, you believe that you are a Genius! Nobility, fortune, rank, positions; all of this is making you so proud! What have you done to deserve such a grace? You only had to be born, and nothing else."

These lines have disappeared from the operatic version, but we can also find in it some new elements, additions to the original play, in particular a most subversive *dance lesson* by Figaro. This *Cavatina* (Act I, scene 2) is on the verge of insulting the Count, not only by way of the words that are sung, but also by the use of choreographic patterns and codes that destabilize the established hierarchy between master and servant.

Let's listen to Figaro, left alone in his nuptial chamber. It seems that he dreams about vengeance, knowing his master's interest in Susanna. The *Cavatina* begins with his famous aria, *Se vuol ballare:*

> "If you wish to dance, Mister Count, / I will play the guitar. / If you wish to come to my school, / I will teach you the capriola." (Se vuol ballare, signor contino, / il chitarrino le suonerò. / Se vuol venire nella mia scola, / la capriola le insegnerò.)

We hear the rhythm of the minuet that accompanies Figaro's words: *pizzicatos* in the strings imitate the sound of the guitar, while the horn doublings underline the noble and ceremonial character of this dance (Johann Georg Sulzer writes that it is

"more suited than any other dance for assemblages of persons who distinguish themselves by a fine manner of living" [5]). But the *Allegretto* of the Minuet soon turns into a *Presto* contredanse (bar 64), reaching its climax when Figaro swears that he will "overturn" the Count's "intrigues" *(tutte le macchine rovescierò)*.

Mozart plays in a very consequent way with the choreographic codes inherited from the Baroque period and the contredanse, that was imported from England towards the end of the 17th century [6]. The contredanse occupied a special position in the choreographic landscape before French Revolution. In opposition to the minuet, the contredanse doesn't have a fixed rhythmical pattern; it subverts the previous dancing practices because it is a sort of *danceless dance*, indifferent to the characteristic codes of the *Ancien Régime* [7]. The contredanse is not the characteristic expression of noble individuals: it is essentially danced by groups of people in the middle of a crowd [8].

The *Encyclopédie méthodique* published by Nicolas Etienne Framéry in 1791 captures the revolutionary social dimension that the contredanse would eventually acquire. In the article dedicated to this dance, Framery says that the word seems to come from the English *country-dance* and that the number of the participants is "indeterminate". And he adds: "The slow minuet […] could only be born in the cities, where people dance

5 Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste, article « Minuet » ; quoted by Wye Jamison Allanbrook in a remarkable study, which I am referring to in my argumentation: Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart. Le Nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni, University of Chicago Press, 1983, p. 33.
6 "Most of the dances whose characteristic patterns form part of Mozart's vocabulary of rhythmic gestures were already old-fashioned in his own time. New tastes preailed among the bourgeoisie who frequented the new and modish dance halls; except for the minuet, the French court dances were rarely performed in public. Most of the dancing manuals written in the later half of the century contained instructions only for the minuet and contredanse." (Wye Jamison Allanbrook, ibid., p. 31-32).

for the sake of *amour-propre.* In the village people dance […] to breathe out a feeling of joy which grows constantly in proportion to the number of dancers, and has no need of spectators." [9]

These are the implications of Figaro's *Cavatina:* a sort of daydream in which he deprives his master from the dignified nobility of the minuet and pushes him amidst the revolutionary masses of the contredanse.

IV.

However, the subversive dimension of Mozart's writing does not end with the generic use of choreographic codes. The opera's political overtones are also to be found in some tiny textural details, where mastership *(maîtrise)* is expressed in measurements *(métrage)* and metrics *(métrique).*

The first bars of the score (1-24) measure the tonal space: the strings in the orchestra go from d (tonic) to a (dominant), and

7 Speaking about the contredanse, Allanbrook is referring to the "revolution of the danceless dance" (p. 60): "The contredanse in its several versions was the leading dance of the late eighteenth century, and it entered the repertoire while a new democratization of social life was taking place in Europe. Dance was no longer the hierarchic display it had been in the French courts. Dance halls were springing up in all European capitals, centers of social life where members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy might meet one another and perhaps even dance a figure together. Dance, once considered a […] a character-building discipline, was turning into a purely amateur amusement […], turning away from rigorous training in the expression of the passions..." And p. 69: "The middle class as we think of it today, the bourgeoisie, does not have its own [choreographic] expression until the advent of the contredanse".

8 Ibid., p. 62 : "The audience in the court of Louis XIV watched individual performers each straining to the utmost to perform the correct expressive gestures of their dance. The audience in a dancehall (most not in actuality spectators, but participants restively waiting their turn) witnessed […] points in an abstract human geometry."

9 Quoted by Allanbrook, ibid., p. 62.

10 The first number, five, is sung on an fifth, d–a, the same one that measures the first bars of the overture.

back again. These formulas - simple fragments of the diatonic scale connecting the two tonal poles - are most banal; they would not deserve to be underlined if it were not for the first *Duettino* of Figaro and Susanna (act I, scene 1), which enacts an similar operation.

Figaro, a sort of vocal geometer, opens this first duet by singing *misurando* (according to the indication in the score). His vocal line is prepared by the first violins, that seem to mimic him as he measures his nuptial room step by step, his gestures becoming broader and broader. Figaro is counting: "Five, ten, twenty, thirty, thirty-six, forty-three". The dimensions are growing until they coincide with those of the room. *Cinque, dieci, venti, trenta, trenta sei, quaranta tre:* his singing is a literal transposition of his measurement, with musical intervals that follow the progress of numbers [10].

Listening to the overture of *Le Nozze,* we can hear a sonic space being defined within the work and for the work. Measuring his future room on the stage, Figaro also measures the aural space with his voice. He exposes it step by step.

This counting is essentially to the plot. In the recitative following the first duet, Susanna asks: "What are you measuring, my dear little Figaro?" *(Cosa stai misurando, caro il mio Figaretto?).* She has decided that she will not stay in the room put to their disposal by the Count, and the reasons of her mistrust become clear in the second *Duettino* that follows immediately.

Figaro sings first. He insists: the situation of the room, between the Count's and the Countess', is very convenient. The servants can answer without delay the ringing of the masters:

> "IF MADAM CALLS YOU IN THE NIGHT, DING DING, DING DING, YOU CAN BE WITH HER IN TWO STEPS. AND IF SOMETIMES THE MASTER WANTS ME, I'LL SERVE HIM

10 The first number, five, is sung on an fifth, d-a, the same one that measures the first bars of the overture.

in three jumps." (Se a caso madama / la notte ti chiama, / dindin, dindin, / in due passi da quella puoi gir. / Vien poi l'occasione / che vuolmi il padrone, / dondon, dondon, / in tre salti lo vado a servir.)

Due passi, tre salti: this second duet also measures the space by steps and jumps. In musical terms, the amplitude of Figaro's vocal line is limited by the high and low f, the sounds of the bells that the Count and the Countess ring *(ding ding, dong dong)*. In other words, in the same way as the servants' nuptial room is *framed* by their masters' rooms, the bells also *frame* Figaro's singing.

As the music modulates from B major to g minor (bar 43 ff), Susanna picks up the high and low f, as the boundaries of the vocal space in which she expresses her doubts:

"If in the morning this dear little Count, ding ding, ding ding, sends you three miles away, ding ding, dong dong, dong dong, at my doorstep the devil takes him, and here he is in three jumps." (Così se il mattino / il caro contino, / din-din, din-din, / e ti manda tre miglia lontano, / din-din, don-don, / don-don, a mia porta / il diavol lo porta, / ed ecco in tre salti…)

In her variation on Figaro's lines, she plays marvelously with the displacements and dissymmetries of the high feminine bell sounds and the low, masculine ones. Susanna renders both the physical and the acoustic space uncertain and disquieting. The closeness of the steps could hide the distance of the miles, and the comfortable jumpings of the servant could easily give way to the master's diabolical leaps.

In the recitative which follows, after asking Figaro to keep quiet

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and listen, Susanna reveals that the Count has the intention of seducing her, exercising a "masterly right" that he had previously abolished. The servants are in an even greater peril due to the "framed" position of their room, in the same way as their vocal space is circumscribed by the bell sounds they have to obey.

Thus, the musical space, as well as the physical one, is potentially exposed to surveillance. If the servants can easily hear the bells, their masters can also hear them. The nuptial room becomes the place of a mutual audio surveillance (the servants listening in on their masters and vice versa). And this non-stop overhearing is expressed not only in the tonal space but also in the use of rhythm.

In the second *Duettino,* when Figaro evokes the nearness of the master (two steps, three jumps), his singing first borrows the light pace of the contredanse; but then, as he imitates the bell sounds, his rhythm follows the pattern of a march, more threatening because its steps are marked more heavily. Furthermore, Mozart contracts the march in a three-bar pattern, instead of the usual four, so that we literally hear the frightening nearness evoked by the words *(due passi, tre salti)*. We can *hear* it: Mozart succeeded in inscribing the political overtones of Beaumarchais' play inside the very texture of the music. It is within the acoustic space of the opera that measuring *(métrage)* reenacts the relations between servant and master *(maître)*. In other words: the metrical definition of distance - the opening and fundamental gesture of the opera - is mirrored both in the melody and in the rhythm, to express the threat of panacoustical surveillance and domination.

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Uncanny / Unwoven

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Transmission engaged, code signal uploaded, cliche remix status open... I sit here in my room and write. This essay is a circular reflection, a mirror of my mind as I sit here and think, watching my thoughts unfold. If you're looking for a smooth clean linear analysis of the condition of art and its engagement with the real, look someplace else. That issue was old news a long time ago. This essay will celebrate hybridity. This essay will engage radically different perspectives on the reality we all live in. Art and environment? Self as suture? Holding the the warp and weave of the fabric of the world together is a difficult task when the threads are all from different cuts of cloth. Trying to grasp the density of the current moment creates a series of disjunctions that make themselves apparent to anyone concerned with the arts in the late 20th century. Trying to describe the density leaves a blank spot in my mind. *"Ceci n'est pas un Pipe"* Magritte

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told us so long ago. I sit here on the verge of writing and ponder the situation he conveyed. The words summoned up by the word "real" – the meanings, connotations, hypertextual linkages and confluences of the space it occupies in our culture flow through my mind like so much water between a pair of cupped hands.

Prosthetic Realism. Proxemic Agency. Frozen Time. Degrees of Amnesia: late 20th Century conceptual realism? A list of names, some relevant as core sources, some as contexual agents: (fill in the blanks)... A series of tenuous observations... A list of associative images, some that offer a conceptual backdrop, others that become relevant only if they are viewed both as precedents and antecedents. Visual ecology, I think, is the common denominator linking all these blank spaces, names that I have witheld. Spaces left open for further examination. Names at the edge of thought. Just beyond recall. Particles of meaning, waves of thought, blurred immediate recall.Visual recoil. The elements of the work reduced to a placid feeling of surveillance – anxiety in the camera, ennui in the observer. Your eyes, absent minded, looking out. These things I leave open, with a hint of why they are referenced...

Situation / Signification --- Sometimes imagery, whether it is presented on canvas or seen as a series of repeated stills (tv, Cd-Roms, movies, etc.), has a way of evoking what some theorists like to call a *"kinedramatic"* imaginal response. Sometimes they leave a blank space that memory later gives meaning to. Somtimes they have an immediate, visceral effect. Angles of incidence leave paths of thought unresolved, a high resolution photo frame-capture, still life, *"nature-morte."* What is the point? Once again, we are presented with a series of images. Looking out my window, I sit here and observe a geography of nowhere paint itself across my eyes. Planes glide by, my fax machine nearby murmurs a continuous feed of paper,

my computer glows in a knowing way and blinks before it goes into screen saver mode. I sit and feel the spectres of invisible presences flow through me. The codes coming back, coming inside... Whether it's the satellite transmissions beaming through my body at any given moment, or the skypage calls that seem to cloud my thoughts with dispersed messages that I'll never retrieve, 1999 for me, was the year of realizing that reality as the generation that preceeded mine knows it, is completely over. Call it total media saturation, prosthetic realism, *"the electromagnetic imaginary,"* or whatever you so desire, but the social construct of a basic sense of concrete reality - viewed by me and the generation to which I belong (a kind of tenuous held group of shared values as reality at best), is now relegated to a consensual hallucination that has taken hold of the very roots of our global tele-mediated culture. *"I tell a tale of bodies that change"* Ovid told us a couple thousand years ago in his "Metamorphosis," that classic archetypal tale of Greek culture and the Western culture that followed in its footsteps. We've come so far from the reality that Ovid described that it almost seems like a migration has occurred from myth to code. Today, this electro-modern reality that we inhabit, this proscenium of presence and absence, is a pantomime dance for the data depleted reservists of what used to be called *"the real"* - or maybe its just the words of someone too exhausted to deal with the paradigm shift that seems to have occurred in the media world. The world as a vast skipping record? Well, a rhyme of sorts emerges from the thought-process: from now to the beginning, let it be like a recod spinning. Rites of passage... a poetics of presence haunted by the after image of selection - choice of reals in the real - trans-modernity: an image of a consumer flitting in and out of the virtual shadows of a mausoleum of objects arouses other phantasmal memories. Who is dreaming who, and who is selling tickets to the show? Suspense of closure, suspense of disbelief. Like an electric current, alternating and direct, world without

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end, that is the thought I send... From now to the beginning, let it be like a record spinning: the songs play a tune we all know, but that seems to be in search of a player. The phantom dance continues while the needle carves a new tune into the flesh of the grooves...

Marshall Mcluhan and Wilfred Watson said a long time ago in their infamous book "From Cliche to Archetype" that *"in the age of electronic technology, the age of the zero gradient, the sacred or divine city of the ancient and native cultures is given archetypal status. In the environment created by electric circuitry, the entire world takes on again the dimension of a "divine animal." All the fragmentation of the Neolithic technologies begins to appear to be a fairly clear cut case of nostalgic archetypalizing, characteristic of all Utopias..."* From a logic of dispersion – the new gathering spaces, the new cathedrals, the museum and galleries of the phantasmal, virtual crafts that we use to extend our sense of tele-presence – an old voice emerges singing a new song, a poetry of what cultural theorist Erik Davis calls *"the electromagnetic imaginary,"* and what I call *"prosthetic realism."* In the movement from Utopia to Heterotopia, the one in the many, the many in the one, we find ourselves caught in a complex web of visual and psychological cues, a form of kinesthethesia pervades everything we do. It's a phenomenon that science fiction writer J.G. Ballard liked to call *"an arraignment of the finite,"* that acts as an uncanny cipher regulating the traffic of plural meanings that bombard us at every moment – for him it is a realm that science fiction and art find themselves in collision at the cross-roads of contemporary culture. *"Above all, science fiction is likely to be the only form of literature which will cross the gap between the dying narrative fiction of the present and the cassette and videotape fictions of the near future[1]"* Ballard wrote in 1971. He could just as easily have been talking about art.

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Art and the imagination – the physical and the mental – linked like the first installment of a loan made from the future. Payment is due. Prosthetic realism – a mirror of the mind as its expression unfolds in time [I break it down with a rhyme]: From now to the beginning, let it be like a record spinning/ a poetics of presence/ contents under pressure/got caught in an electromagnetic lecture.... like William Carlos Williams observed a long time ago, *"poetry is nothing but a machine made of words."* The task of art now is to somehow speak of this plurality of *"reals"* in a world moving into a polyphrenic cultural space: the Greek agora, the city center, the museum – all these places of social mutuality – all find themselves adrift. Art is our guide to the new terrains we have, in pursuit of techne and logos, opened within ourselves.

Encoding. It's a strange word to use at the beginning of an essay on sampling and repetition, but there it is. What comes to mind when you say the word? Whether it's written or spoken, several meanings come to mind and in turn lead you down other paths of meaning – no fixed points come into perspective, no key opens the cryptographic realms of the word to penetration. One simply uses the word to refer to a process[2].

Encoding. The word evokes systems of thought, procedures of extrapolation, syntax and stucture, and most of all it evokes a sense of movement and actions taken in a realm of correspondences – of translating one form of code into another. Interpenetration of one form into another mirrors the classic sense of binary movment that writers of semiotic philosophy and literature have been concerned with for several centuries now. Double movement, binary stratification, transience of meaning – all point to a strange game in which absence and presence, form and function, sign and signified, play in an ever shifting field of meaning, a place where text and textuality switch place with blinding speed. The double. Whether it was

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Giordano Bruno writing back in the [tk] century, Hegel with his decree of the end of art written during a time of aesthetic flux in the 19thC or Ferdinand de Saussure writing later in the 19th, and even later, Noam Chomsky with his ideas of generative syntax and performative structure in language, Freud with his explicit psychological explorations of psychological projection and displacement, Derrida with his concepts of linguistic play and textuality, or Barthes with his idea of jouissance, and later Jameson, Guattari and Deleuze: one common feature in the disparate thoughts of these radically different thinkers and the ideas they have had: In the movement from sign to signified, the translation process of language becomes a field of representation from which many meanings are created, and the resonance of those meanings takes shape in some form of linguistic play in literature. It does seem like a big jump to pull such different people together under the sign of play, but then again, that's what mixing is about: creating seamless interpolations between objects of thought to fabricate a zone of representation in which the interplay of the one and the many, the original and its double - all these things come under question.

From Plato's myth of the cave-shadows to todays frequency drenched landscape of electro-modernity, in the electronically accelerated environment we call home a turbulent cloud of paradoxical meanings arises whenever the notion of consensus is engaged. Today we live in a society defined - in many senses, and by almost all the connotations associated with the word as well - by the word *"current."* Alternating or direct, descriptions of transcience and modality, in a menagerie of representations brought to us by the physics of a world governed by the movement of electrons - in this strange binary world of fiber optics, digital information technologies, and global economics, a logic of alterity is at play. The old hierarchies of linear thought, sublime (and sublimated!) engagements with art, etc

etc all of these systems of thought are no longer needed to do the ideological work now conducted again along the lines of *"current"* through all-inclusive data networks that transform individual creation into interchangeable parts, Lego building blocks of consciousness in a world that moves under the sign of continuous transformation and atomized perspectives of what I to call *"electro-modernity."* *"Only on condition of a radical widening of definition will it be possible for art and activities related to art to provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power,"* Joseph Beuys tells us. *"Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathline: to dismantle in order to build A SOCIAL ORGANISM AS A WORK OF ART....[3]"* One thing that the thinkers I have listed above have never engaged fully is the role that the machinery of culture acts out in the theater of the mind - and how we navigate through the abstract realms of the systems we use to maintain meaning in the transitory spaces that we create to act out the roles we have assigned one another. It's all, as we say in the dj world, *"in the mix."* What is the common denominator that holds all these people together? Perhaps, simply put, this essay, this piece of paper you hold in your hands, and the ideas it generates in your mind. All other considerations are conceptual engagements, paths of flight through densely layered and intensely cross-referenced thoughts with no beginning and no end save where I put the last mark on the page, the last comma and *"period"* demarcating the end of the written text. The rest of the action takes place in your mind.

"The fact is," Lewis Mumford wrote in his manifesto for a new kind of art in his book "ART AND TECHNICS," *"...in every department of art and thought we are being overwhelmed by our symbol-creating capacity; and our very facility with the mechanical means of multi-folding and reproduction has been responsible*

for a progressive failure in selectivity and therefore in the power of assimilation…between ourselvs and the actual experience and the actual environment there now swells an ever rising flood of images which come to us in every sort of medium… as the result of this whole mechanical process we cease to live in the multi-dimensional world of reality…we have substituted for this, largely through mass production of graphic symbols - abetted indeed by a similar multiplication and reproduction of sounds - a secondhand world, a ghost world, in which everyone lives a secondhand and derivative life. The Greeks had a name for this pallid simulacrum of real existence: they called it Hades, and this kingdom of shadows seems to be the ultimate destination of our mechanistic and mammonistic culture.[4]"

The 20th century has been a place where art has come under serious pressure to evolve away from the systems that gave it substenance in the middle ages and early phases of industrial culture: in a sense most of the kinds of art that flourisuhed during those time periods and were held in esteem by the patrons of those eras could almost be said to be unsustainable in contemporary life - the role and function of art as the past engaged it, during our century of extreme flux, has changed and migrated into new realms of representation. The *"real"* that we knew from the perspective paintings of the Renaissance, the sacred objects of formal patron system art, the *"sublime"* of Kant and Burke and Longinus refracts off of Barnett Newmans infamous claim to transcience: *"the sublime is now!"* Ideas invoked by these systems of thought - all seem to have been absorbed by the place in culture that has come to be called *"mass"* and in a way, their functions have spread out and resurfaced in a radically different context of interlocked networked electronicized systems, geographically dispersed cultures of digital exchange, and a sense of velocity - things just move more rapidly than ever before in human history. If the artist is an interpreter and,

indeed, originator of the signs of culture then there needs to be some exploration of the phenomenon of decentralization and dispersion that we are living in and under in contemporary culture, a place immersed in what I like to call *"electro-modernity."* If we move from Mumford's rather harsh indictment of 20th century mechanistic culture and its engagement with the arts to another viewpoint based in the 19th century of Hegel, we find a similar indictment of art and culture.

In 1828 Hegel wrote a kind of post-mortem analysis of the kind of art that he felt had been the end product of a Golden Age of European art. *"Considered in its highest vocation,"* he expounded, *"art... is and remains for us a thing of the past."* The terms with which we view and experience art as through the filter of all the different aesthetic principles of the different *"Sublime"* experiences and aesthetic connundrums of the different philosophers of the ages, for Hegel, had somehow dispersed in a world moving rapidly into a milieu of complete mechanization of the artistic process. A century or so later, Mumford's words echo a similar sentiment. One has to wonder – what is a beginning and what is an end? Hegel felt that a twilight had descended on the aesthetic principles of European art and it was science that had somehow displaced the principles that had, for so many years, driven the artistic impulse in European art. *"Neither in content nor in form is art the highest and absolute mode of bringing to our minds the true interests of the spirit... the peculiar nature of artistic production and of works of art no longer fills our highest need...it is certainly the case that art no longer affords that satisfaction of spiritual needs which earlier ages and nations sought in it and found in it alone, a satisfaction that, at least on the part of religion, was most intimately linked with art. The beautiful days of Greek art, like the golden days of the later Middle Ages, are gone."[5]* For both Hegel and Mumford art was a dialectical engagement with the external world and

its ability to invoke emotion and intellectual responses in the viewer. In a sense, there's a double movement from outside/inside to cause/effect in both of these radically different thinkers. But there are other ways to apply their observations to a contemporary world riddled with perceptual paradoxes and the deeply referential mimetic qualities of identity.

In a century informed as much by Duchamp and the critique of the found object that his work represented as by the constant appropriation of non-European values into core aspects of the artististic process in the Industrialized West, there have been many changes in what could even be considered art in the context that both Hegel and Mumford were writing about. In his 1966 installation entitled "WORKING DRAWINGS AND OTHER VISIBLE THINGS NOT NECESSARILY MEANT TO BE VIEWED AS ART," the artist Mel Bochner created what is considered by many to be the first exhibition of Conceptual Art. In his installation Bochner took elements from the everyday and recontextualized them in the gallery context: graphic spreadsheets of mathematical analysis, business reports, diagrams from radically different fields of human endeavor such as calculus, algebra, accounting, etc etc. All found themselves neatly enfolded onto four binders put on pedestals. Needless to say the textual engagement with the objects under consideration underwent a strange transformation in which context became the all pervasive motif, and the sense that the *"objects"* were a kind of generative syntax for other, radically different interpretations of their *"use value."* There was a strange sense of, for lack of a better word *"un-cathexis"* in Bochner's work. The material in binders on the pedestals meant only as much as the viewer brought with them - the baggage of their interprative abilities was based on their knowledge of the material at hand and the context in which they found themselves. Could it be, that in a silent way, Bochner referenced the Hegelian screed that I pointed out

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at the beginning of the essay, and in one fell swoop, created artwork that embodied Mumford's fear of a world of cross-referenced double meanings, a world of Derridean textuality where the double (and all the Freudian concepts attendant to the idea of the double) becomes the foundation for art and the way we experience its textuality. There are many parallels to this kind of interpretive/analytic process of questioning to the point of textual atomization. Plato's myth of the cave, the Hindu concept of samsara, and in a more contemporary mode, the notion of *"virtual reality":* all of these aesthetic movements place perception whether in sound or symbol in a place where meaning is a highly contested space in culture where, unlike the "fixed" forms of the past that were enforced by religion and social codes – it becomes a floating signifier, a reference point that is in-itself a collection of other reference points. All of these historic precedents focus on a reality of aesthetic and philosophical impulses that are somehow held together by an underlying structure that holds *"truth"* and *"meaning"* to be a kind of transcendent quality. *"Sublime attributes stimulate esteem, but beautiful ones, love[6],"* Kant wrote a long time ago in his "Observations onThe Beautiful and the Sublime." But in this strange world of mimetic reality and displaced manufactured entertainment where vicarious experience and what I like to call *"franchise identity"* hold sway, who is dreaming who, how are the connections made, and who's selling tickets to the show? What do love and terror, beauty and reflection have to do with a where governed by relativistic speeds and information theory? The *"real"* in art and culture – the "sublime" as Kant and Burke tended to express it –is something that is held above the everyday, and the symbols we use to represent culture and our place in nature are put in a binary opposition to the eidetic qualities of a consensual *"real"* based on human interaction. Sound, memory, thought, perception – all of these act as a replication function in an aesthetic world governed by rules and regulations, a kind

of forced and en-forced system of representation: the real and it's double re-presentation a la Mumford, is a binary relationship whose evolutionary dynamic from aesthetic principle to reality principle has been a powerful trope in almost all 20th century art. Interiority and transcendence in an age of coroporate logos, mass production and cybernetic replication. What role does art have in a world where as Hal Foster wrote so long ago *"generally, mass culture abstracts a specific content (or signified) into a general form (or signifier): a social expression is first reduced, then mediated as a "popular" style.[7]"* But if we compare this notion of styles and systems, we are lead back to one of the original precepts that underpins 20th C thought: cybernetics.

"Our tissues change as we live," Norbert Wiener, the principle creator along with information theorist Claude Shannon, of our century's engagement with systems of information and control. *"The food we eat and the air we breathe become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and the momentary elements of our flesh and bone pass out of our body every day with our excreta. We are but whirlpools in a river of ever-flowing water. We are not stuff that abides, but patterns that perpetuate themselves.[8]"* So from the binary oppositions of the past, we are now led into a world of permanent flux and continuous change, patterns within patterns folded in on one another as a basic way of engaging the multi-verse - man made and natural -the boundary between the two seens to have been suspended around ourselves with the tools of both art and science. Mass culture is a place where people live vicariously though the signs and symbols generated by the social environment that surrounds and moves through them. It's a strange eco-system balanced just as much by human dreams as by the machines we use to create and distribute them. Documentation can be a dangerous thing. What I'm pointing out is a kind of abstraction of human essence into the machine process - a place where identity acts as a distributed

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network of double representations, and mass culture becomes the crucible for the paradoxes of the singular and the plural, the original and its double. For W.E.B. Dubois writing at the turn of this century, identity for the African-American was implicitly one of doubling, of living in a world defined by racial characteristics that were abstracted on a general level, and that, in this sense, became the reference point for almost all individual identity. Mass culture for him was a place riddled with the paradox of the double - and in this way he preceded much of the discourse around individuality and identity that later psychologists like Freud (with his concept of *"the Uncanny,"* an idea that I explore later in this essay) and Sherry Turkle and the existential movements in philosophy of Sartre and De Beauvoir that later spoke in general terms when relating people to the objects that surround them - and that they live through. *"Born with a veil, and gifted with a second sight in this American world,"* Dubois wrote of the African American condition, we are faced with *"a world which yields... no true self consciousness, but only lets [us] see [ourselves] through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others... one ever feels his two-ness - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder[9]."* Where Dubois felt a system of dual identity become part of the basic fabric of his definition of self, many years later, we live in a time where most information we get about everything from the news to how much we have spent on our credit cards each month, comes from the data that surrounds and moves through the systems of representation we have surrounded ourselves, and indeed, defined ourselves by. The double has come home to roost, and it is not original. It is a remix: in the world of digital information, have we all become the psychological equivalent of the African-American condition

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that Dubois wrote of? The sense of *"doubleness"* lurks strangely on the horizon of 20th century writing, and sometimes, what has come to be called *"binary logic"* or a *"logic of alterity"* seems to be one of the major tropes of 20th C life.

There are other parallels to the mix that Dubois summoned up, and many of them have to do with the sense of psychological projection that he described in his classic "THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK." But I'd like to posit that the sense of displacement that Dubois so lyrically summoned up in his critique of the American situation, has found other resonances in the hyper-mediated world we inhabit. Art, sculpture, writing, almost all human creation, it seems to me, in our late 20th century electronically accelerated and media saturated world, come to us through the symbol systems that, as I pointed out abve, Mumford and Hegel were speaking of long ago. Freud's take on the condition is one that he called, in a relatively prescient way, *"the uncanny:"* *"After having considered the manifest motivation for the figure of a "double," we have to admit that none of this helps us to understand the extraordinarily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades the conception; and in our knowledge of pathological mental processes enables us to add that nothingin this more superficial material could account for the urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself. When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the "double" being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted - a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The "double" has become a thing of terror, just as, after the collapse of their religion, the gods turned into demons... if we take another class of things, it is easy to see that there, too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds what would otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere, and forces upon us the idea of something*

fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of "chance…[10]"

It's kind of amazing how the sense of theater, repetition, and a sense of personal displacement that Freud was talking about when he explored the psychology of the double parallels the later explorations of Dubois's conception of *"double consciousness."* But, to me, the extent to which people are always immersed in a third set of conditions – the psycological machinery of the projection – that allows for a kind of triple consciousness. Self in a menagerie of reflections, a mime dance of presence and absence, minds within minds, reflections within reflections: the 20th C has bequeathed to the creative mind a panoply of identities and created a space in culture where most previous generations of artists and people involved with the arts, would have only had recourse to theater. In his 1938 manifesto and collection of essays, "The Theater and Its Double," on the mediated quality of life in the West that inessence was a condemnation of the banality of life in an Occident where magic and a sense of transcendent awareness is remote from a bleak quotidian world of normalcy Antonin Artaud wrote *"and if there is still one hellish, truly accursed thing in our time, it is our artistic dallying with forms, instead of being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames.[11]"* Though Artaud was writing back in 1938, much of his ideas of theater as manipulation of symbolic actions – *"la realite virtuelle"* – and encoded gestures has a resonance with todays contemporary reality of digital creativity. Artaud later in his book wrote, *"where alchemy, through its symbols, is the spiritual Double of an operation which functions only on the level of real matter, the theater must also be considered as the Double, not of this direct, everyday reality of which it is gradually being reduced to a mere inert replica… but of another archetypal and dangerous reality…for this reality is not human but inhuman, and man with his customs and his*

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character counts for very little in it...all that was *REPRESENTATIVE*, *i.e. theatrical, in the whole series of* *SYMBOLS*...*in the almost "dialectical" sequence of all the aberrations, phantasms, mirages, and hallucinations which those who attempt to perform these operations* *BY PURELY HUMAN MEANS* *cannot fail to encounter... all true alchemists know that the alchemical symbol is a mirage as the theater is a mirage. And this perpetual allusion to the materials and th principle of the theater found in almost all alchemical books should be understood as the expression of an identity... existing between the world in which the characters, objects, images, and in a general way all that constitutes the* *VIRTUAL REALITY* *of the theater develops, and the purely fictitious and illusory world in which the symbols of alchemy are evolved.[12]"* In the passage above, Artaud established himself as the first person to use the word *"la realite virtuelle"* – one must remember that it was in the context of theater, object/subject relations, and their expression in a *"dialectical"* sequence of phantasmal representations. In short, Artaud anticipates todays contemporary digital culture by a long shot.

Current. Electricity Movement. Textuality. *"The word* *ELECTRI-CITY* *entered the English tongue in a 1650 translation of a treatise on the healing properties of magnets by Jan Baptist Van Helmont a Flemish physician and Rosicrucian[13]..."* Erik Davis tells us in his book *"Techgnosis,"* in the middle of an exposition on what he calls the *"electromagnetic imaginary."* Mirroring Artaud's concept of theater and symbolic interaction as a kind of *"virtual craft,"* Davis forges an alchemical milieu in the middle of what many people consider to be the scientific domains of an electronic art that is a kind of fusion between techology and the human: *"virtual reality was not hatched in the hopped-up halls of Silicon Valley,"* he tells us. We've come a long way since 1938 when Artaud used the phrase in his essay, and in many ways, when we add electric current to the heady mix that he describes, we

have to realize that the true arena for the unfolding of almost all of these different aspects of human creativity have become a kind of *gesamtkunstwerk* – a total theater in which art and science, technology and the creative impulses driving them all, have become part of the everyday reality we find ourselves immersed in, prosthetically tied to the images we have carried with us from time immemorial. When viewed in this light, the possibilities of artistic creation seem to involute and fold in on themselves, to become, as it were, a kind of dance between the self/subject, and the *"original"* and the myriad reflections of self as other, an unknown object of affection floating on the edge of perception, reflecting back at us like some virtual Troy, a city of layers and geological time, summoned up and displaced by the keystrokes and electric currents we, multiplied, inhabit, and that we see reflected back at us in the multiplying mirror of memory.

"In other words, I am three. One man stands forever in the middle, unconcerned, unmoved, watching, waiting to be allowed to express what he sees to the other two," Mingus wrote at the beginning of his classic "Beneath the Underdog." He goes on to later say: *"The second man is like a frightened animal that attacks for fear of being attacked. Then there's an over-loving gentle person who lets people into the uttermost sacred temple of his being and he'll take insults and be trusting and sign contracts without reading them and get talked down to working cheap or for nothing, and when he realizes that what's been done to him he feels like killing and destroying everything around him including himself for being so stupid. But he can't – he goes back inside himself."* Like I said in some of my earlier posts, it's always amazing how much music paralles the developments of other mediums – and in a way, anticipates them. Mingus shows us a third path and, in a sense, after seeing the dialog around how much people need *"franchise identity"* to modulate their perceptions of themselves

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i.e. why we seem to have this extreme need to discuss ourselves through the fixtures of actors and movies, books, and other stories, perhaps points to a realm that Richard Wright wrote of in his poem – reconstruction beginning where the out side ends, innerspace as a way of mediating outerspace. Here's Wright's poem again – check it out in this context:

Current: it's the root word / description of electricity. Flow. Alternating or direct, it moves through almost everything we're doing at the moment, and leaves us open to the spectral space of the decoded surfaces of a culture of saturation. Just a thought as I begin my day. I think back to the argument between Keats and Newton. Keats felt that the scientific investigations of Newton had destroyed the sense of wonder that the natural world he inhabited created in the human mind. Newton, by decoding natural light through the use of a prism into its component elements, had created a new way of seeing the environment around us, and Keats echoes so many people today when he wrote of the mysteries of art and science, poetry and passion, art and its interface with it's environment. For Keats, the decoding of light spelled the end of natural wonder, and he took up the theme in several of his poems. But the strange thing about this poem, the uncanny echo reverberating though his thoughts - is the unweaving of his own flight from the new magics of a world of science which would make almost all previous wonders seem paltry. We have inherited the world he, and Hegel and Mumford feared so much, but his poetry speaks to the demise of the past that we have, perhaps uncosciously, shed:

> DO NOT ALL CHARMS FLY
>
> AT THE MERE TOUCH OF COLD PHILOSOPHY?
>
> THERE WAS AN AWFUL RAINBOW ONCE IN HEAVEN:

We know her woof, her texture; she is given

In the dull catalogue of common things.

Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,

Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,

Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –

Unweave a rainbow, as it were erstwhile made

The tender–personed.... melt into a shade. [14]
Again, here's the haiku Richard Wright wrote a
long time ago, and it, too, is about flow:

The guard on dutysees all visitiors except

The beads of spring dew.Engineer and poet, scientist and artist
– from Keats to Newton, From Emerson to Edison, from Wright
to Artaud, from real to imaginary – the connections linking
them unfold and weave a web of intrigue, a Borghesian library
where all information flows together, comes apart, becomes
componential – becomes trans-modern. This is what Derrida
called Difference. Remix this sentence: [Kinesthetics is the word
often used to convey how people relate to the objects around
them] – they way they move through an environment of relative
velocities and trajectories of movement. But what happens
when the environment becomes invisible and the way we move
becomes configured not by what we can see but how we feel in
relation to the presence of the intangible. Physical feedback –
kinesthetic consciousness, proxemic agency. Music has often led
the way in this dialog of two-fold thought. From Dubois double
consciousness to Mingus's triple consciousness and then to

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Garrett A. Morgan the inventor of the traffic lights system, and then to conceptual art and environmental sculpture and social sculpture: repetition and Warhol, repetition and the sense of art as trance, a place where old and new mix in the virtual spaces of the imagination, a new sublime, that, paradoxically, is incredibly old.

From the doubled faces peering out from Picasso and Braque's paintings at the beginning of the century, to the Italian Futurist's engagement with speed and denisity, on up to the extreme visual repetition of Warhol and Vasarely, to the fractured music of jazz and hip-hop, the 20th century has been a realm of disappearance and re-inscription, an electro-magnetic dance between the real and unreal - a place where presence and absence become two signfiers of a condition of dispersed identity. Soniture/ecriture - combined with a critique of object as stable unitary reference point, the creative act now becomes part of a system of relational/referential meanings - adrift in an ocean of mediated signs and images, the imagination creates by association, the realm that Breton spoke of so long ago when he said *"vous n'avez pas lu jazz!,"* (you haven't read jazz!), a phrase that became the Surrealist's motto as they explored the realms of the unconscious and its interaction with the world of media that they found themselves immersed in during the early portions of this century. They simply called the phenomenon *"automatic writing."*

Derridean difference and its re-engagement with textuality as the musical parallels to a world circumscribed by what thinker Mcluhan used to call the *"Gutenberg Galaxy"* take us to a place where all is flux - the boundaries between the different mediums have long ago faded. Sound and sentiment, symbol and signified - all that is old news, flotsam and jetsam floating in the strange continuum Tesla and Marconi created long ago when they matched electricty with radio waves and lead to a

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continuum of what Davis calls *"the electromagnetic imaginary."* One can only wonder what the 21st century holds in store for the thing we call *"Art."* The future in that light, seems utterly boundless. Or as Phillis Wheatley, one of the first African Americans to write a book, and who was named after the ship that brought to this strange country where identity was erased and left as an open ended variable to be used as a palimpsest, said long ago in one of her rare poems. I sit and look out my window from the top floor of my lair, 226 years and the theme of the ocean makes me hear waves in the NYC nite air...Ocean by Phillis Wheatley: How muse divine, thy heavenly aid impart, / The feast of Genius, and the play of Art. / From high Parnassus' radiant top repair, / Celestial Nine! Propitious to my prayer. / In vain my eyes explore the watery reign / By you unaided with the flowing strain. // When first old Chaos of tyrannic Soul / Wav'd his dread Sceptre o'er the boundless whole, / Confusion reign'd til the divine Command / On fleeting azure fix'd the solid Land. / Till first he call'd the latent seeds of light. / And gave dominion o'er eternal Night. / From deepest glooms he rais'd this ample Ball, / And round its walls he bade the Surges roll, / With instant haste the new made Seas complyd. / And the globe rolls impervious to the Tide: / Yet when the might Sire of the Ocean frownd / "This awful trident shook the Solid Ground." / The Kings of Tempest thunders o'er the plain, / And horns the azure monarch of the main, / He sweeps thy surface, makes they billows rare, / And furious, lash the loud resounding Shore. / His pinion'd rare his dread commands obey,Ly----,----, Boreas, drive the foaming Sea! / See the whole stormy progeny descend! / But cease -----, all thy winds restrain, / And let us view the wonders of the main / Where the proud Courser paws the blue abode / Impetuous bounds, and mocks the driver's rod / There, too, the Heifer fair as that which bore / Divine Europa to the Cretan shore / With guiless mian thy gentle Creature strays / Quaffs the pure stream, and crops ambrosial

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grass // Again with recent wonder I survey / The finny sov'reign bask in hideous play / (So fancy sees) he makes a tempest rise / And intercept the azure vaulted skies / Such is his sport: but if his anger glow / What kindling vengeance boils the deeps below! // Twas but o'er now and Eagle young and gay / Pursu'd his passage thro' the aierial way / He aim'd his piece would C----f's had to more / Yes he brought to pluto's dreary shore / Slow breathed his last, the painful minutes move / Perhaps his father's just commands he bore / To fix dominion on some distant shore / Ah! me unblest he cries Oh! Had I staid / But ah! too late. – Old Ocean heard his cries / He strokes his hoary tresses and replies / What mean these plaints so near to our watrythrone? / And what the Cause of this distressful moan? / Confess Iscarious, let thy words be true / Nor let me find a faithless Bird in you / The voice struck terror thro' the whole domain / And by his frowns the royal youth began, / Saw you not Sire, a tall and Galiant Ship / Which proudly scum the Surface of the deep / With pompous form from Boston's port she came / O'er the rough surge the dauntless Chief prevails / His fatal musket shortens this my day / And thus the victor takes my life away // Fain with his wound Iscarious said no more / His spirit sought Oblivion's sable shore. / This Neptune saw, and with a hollow groan, / Resum'd the azure honours of his Throne…. The truth of Wheatley's poem? The reality of the images her words summon? Mime dances, rituals of repetition, and so on and so on. The truth? The real…. to end with a quote, another reflection of the circularity of meanings summoned up in the mesh of sound, symbol and sentiment… or as Derrida said at the conclusion of his "THE TRUTH IN PAINTING"– *"Be careful…what is a motif? ….If not something like the iron shadow of the motet of an unutterable antique music, like the leitmotiv of a theme despairing of its own subject…[the real] – You don't have to render anything. Just bet on the trap as others swear on the Bible. There will have been something to bet. It gives to be rendered. To be put back*

on/put off.–It's just gone.–It's coming round again.–It's just gone again….[15]" or as Marshall Mcluhan and Wilfred Watson wrote in their classic "From Cliche to Archetype," in a section called "Art as Lie:" *"Today the multimedia have, as noted, demobilized consciousness. We speak of a lie as "credibility gap." "Truth" once again becomes "trust," not Cartesian certainty.[16]"* ...Derridean difference and its re-engagement with textuality as the musical parallels to a world circumscribed by what thinker Mcluhan used to call the *"Gutenberg Galaxy"* take us to a place where all is flux - the boundaries between the different mediums have long ago faded. Sound and sentiment, symbol and signified - all that is old news, flotsam and jetsam floating in the strange continuum Tesla and Marconi created long ago when they matched electricty with radio waves and lead to a continuum of what Davis calls *"the electromagnetic imaginary."* One can only wonder what the 21st century holds in store for the thing we call *"Art."* The future in that light, seems utterly boundless. Or as Phillis Wheatley, one of the first African Americans to write a book, and who was named after the ship that brought to this strange country where identity was erased and left as an open ended variable to be used as a palimpsest, said long ago in one of her rare poems.... but wait. I sit and look out my window from the top floor of my lair, 226 years and the theme of the ocean makes me hear waves in the NYC nite air... The poem floats on the screen, the words of its composition adfrit in a space that is oceanic, but definitely not an ocean...

Prosthetic Realism. Proxemic Agency. Frozen Time. Degrees of Amnesia : late 20th Century conceptual realism? A list of names, some relevant as core sources, some as contexual agents: (fill in the blanks)... A series of tenuous observations... A list of associative images, some that offer a conceptual backdrop, others that become relevant only if they are viewed both as precedents and antecedents. Visual ecology, I think, is the

common denominator linking all these blank spaces, names that I have witheld. Spaces left open for further examination. Names at the edge of thought just beyond recall. Particles of meaning, waves of thought, blurred immediate recall.Visual recoil. The elements of the work reduced to a placid feeling of surveillance - anyxiety in the camera, ennui in the observer. Your eyes, absent minded, looking out. These things I leave open, with a hint of why they are referenced...

[1] J.G. Ballard, A Users Guide to the Millenium, essay entitled "Fictions of Every Kind," pp205 [2] for those interested in the digital and analog versions of information and representation, a good place to start is Jeremy Campbell's "Grammatical Man" (Simon and Schuster) [3] Joseph Beuys lectures from his talk "I am searching for a field character" from the catalog of he ICA 1974 exhibition entitled "Art into Society/Society into Art" [4] Lewis Mumford, Art and technics, pp96-98 [5] G.W.F. Hegel, Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics, pp12-13 [6] Immanuel Kant, Observations on the Feeling of the Beutiful and the Sublime, pp51 [7] Hal Foster, Recodings, pp51 [8] Norbert Wiener, The Human Use of Human Beings, pp96 [9] W.E.B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk, pp5 [10] Sigmund Freud,Writings on Literature and Art, pp213-14 [11] Antonin Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, pp13 [12] ibid, pp49 [13] Erik Davis, Techgnosis, pp41 [14] John Keats, "Lamia" excerpt from: Keats: the Complete Poems, pp431 [15] Jacques Derrida, The Truth in Painting, Univeristy of Chicago Press, pp 381-82 [16] Marshall Mcluhan and Wilfred Watson, From Cliche to Archetype, pp34

Dalibor Davidović
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Archipelagos of sound

Navigating the sound straits...

Sound and vision are set as apart as they are dependent on each other. How can we understand the world without putting this correlation in motion? This rather simple question is in the very heart of our videocentric world. And it is in the same time an important question when approaching possibility of the new analysis of contemporary, in particular, digital music.

One of the crucial moments in my life as a movie-goer-consumer-aficionado was screening of Alexander Sokurov's Taurus – second part of his tetralogy dedicated to great political (dictator) figures of 20th century. Taurus is about the last day of Lenin's life. We are introduced into dysfunctional and anarchic atmosphere (better to say a-hierarchical, unstructured) of his last dwelling, which resembles very much the famous setting of the classical Russian literature – an aristocratic country house. In fact it is such an estate – and we are transposed into world of silly characters of some slightly distorted Chekhov's play. Lenin, being old and having suffered the stroke, is infantile, mumbling figure – to borrow the Italian word, he is »rimbabito« – he became infant again. His wife and his sister are merry, but not completely benevolent female guardian figures, that fit perfectly into this cut-off,

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slightly bizarre, out-of-time place. Servants (that are in the same time spies) are behaving in the same erratic manner, remanding us of the long tradition of Russian comediography of Absurd. We are drawn to this world of greenish filters and gamma, where Lenin's face appears to be the same as his, real, mummified body. This is, and here lays fascination and uncanny spirit of this movie, a cinematographic world without musical soundtrack. Indeed, in Sokurov's film there is soundtrack – and it functions almost in literal sense of this world – as a congregation of sounds. What we hear in the film are sparse words, dialogues without »real« meaning and lots of sounds – human and inhuman. Human sounds are the most startling in the whole film – these are murmurs, humming, sighs, and little cries that characters are producing in every second of their existence. We hear breathing, we hear attempts of uttering words, we hear laughter, sighing, deep breathing, clicking and sizzling of human life. And we hear wind blowing through trees, poplar trees and long, tall grass, squeaking of doors, thump of steps, sound of someone walking.

In every minute of listening experience I have to ask myself as a musicologist, how I can escape the phenomenology of sound?

The situation of Sokurov's Taurus is that it offers the spectator a simultaneous role of the listener, without excluding the viewing process. It means, in other words, that this film is more acoustically engaging then conventional ones, where music is merely the sound-embedment (colonna sonora), subjected to fearsome grip of signifying and directing the spectator's gaze. Here, we are confronted with »everyday« sounds and the most un-sublime sounds we know – the sounds of our body living.

I am not speaking right now about the sounds of the Body, about that glorified Body that is the center of cultural-gender-ideological discourse. I am talking about something that is to be found under and beyond concept of the Body – about sounds of us living. These sounds, these humming auditive entities and in particular, the sound of breathing, are engaging into dialogue of their own without

seeking our permission. They are one of the keys that would unlock our sound-vision limbo and that would show us a path towards a-phenomenological constituency of our sound/music experience. So, we have to focus now onto sounds that are undertones and that are overtones of our life vibrating…

The interesting thing about the films of Sokurov, at least about the ones I have seen, is indeed the avoidance of film music functioning as sound-embedment. It could be said they don't follow the pattern of the narrative, the Hollywood (or »Wagnerian«) type of film. Since both of us are musicologists the way we are listening is of specific nature, we are looking for certain references, »scanning« things in a special way (people in this profession are said to be »ethnocentric«, for they concentrate on what they define as »musical« or »auditive« and relate all other elements to that framework). Sokurov has made a typical effort to minimalize and to reduce: an element is being crossed-out, in order to allow us concentrate on what has left. The sound-related elements therefore gain on their effectiveness. Let us take a scene from the Father and the Son for instance. The two of them are alone in a room, both half-dressed, the boy has just arrived from the army and the father, an ex-military officer, has made him lunch. As the boy turns on the radio, we hear the last movement of The Pathétique (we have already heard this piece on the intro), and he addresses his father: »You like Tchaikovsky«. Since the whole film has being made in the register of the »sublime« (and the »sublime« can by definition in every moment be misunderstood as the »banal«), the sound details of this kind present the »traumatic points« for the understanding of the movie. These points are there to produce and carry the »meaning«, but at the same time they have a disruptive role. My own understanding, for example, took two directions. On one hand I was thinking about historical context: I imagined Russian officers must have had good education in order to react on the reference of Tchaikovsky (if some of the father's potential

popular music favorites had taken its place, the entire »magic« would have been gone). The knowledge of classical music could have made part of the military education in the Soviet Union, it could have served as a kind of »psycho-technique«. (If we wanted to refer to the Foucault's research on the historical forms of »bio-politics«, this would make a fine starting point for an analysis of Russian techniques of government. Our question would be what is the role of music in it, or furthermore, what was the role of music education. My association developed towards the figure of ancient Greek warrior brought up to participate in ethically »elevated« musical practices, as well as towards a figure analyzed by Hannah Arendt: that of a classically educated criminal, who goes to »work« every morning to concentration camp headquarters and plays violin in the afternoon for elevation.) What makes this historicizing reading of Sokurov's film difficult is his careful blending out of historical traces (a typical proceedings in discourses aiming at the »Absolute«): there are no indications whether the film is about the communist or post-communist period. The »Russian« background is also a questionable one; I suppose it is about Russia judging from the language and the names of the protagonists, but in the film it has been left vague. On the other hand, I perceived this moment of music unbearably loaded with emotion as a »hidden clue« to the father-son relationship in this movie. Tchaikovsky serves as an »icon« to a homoerotic relationship. The father and the son touch each other, fondle, and act unusually closely to each other. This physical closeness is the more unexpected (or expected, depending on the point of view) when we think about the fact that they are both soldiers. The difficulty lies in the fact that the »body« and the »physical« may not necessarily have homosexual or sexual implications, and certainly not subversive ones (which is, as you have mentioned, something that the »cultural« and »gender studies« take for granted). This is what they are only within a certain discourse. We can also perceive this father-son relationship as a culture-specific one, which was often

the case with e.g. Bergman's Cries and Whispers. (It deals with very »physical« relations between women.) Let's put aside the »subversivness«, the reading that uses Tchaikovsky to attach a homoerotic meaning to the relationship between two handsome male bodies could be just a paranoid reading, as Adorno points in Minima moralia. He claims that paranoia is indeed inherent in homosexual desire, for it looks for, and accordingly finds, »hidden signs« of homosexuality in any relationship between two guys. It does not matter if they are attractive bodies of Sokurov's film, or sick and ruined of the Bergman's. The very notion of »body« is differently defined by Cartesians and by phenomenologists. The latter distinguish human »body« from all other »bodies«, claiming that the former ignore that difference in order to subordinate all bodies under the ideal, geometric order. But there are different kinds of geometries, not all of them being Euclidian...

My first association to the title The Archipelagos of Sound was not a particular film, but rather a sort of a video or a postcard with tropical islands, palm trees and blue sea, alluring some »Hawaiian« music. The very word »archi-pelagos« contains a maritime component. I was thinking about why you had chosen for this word when finding a title for the project. You could have used another one of a similar meaning. Why not »constellation«, though more loaded with theoretical meanings, but a more precise one? Why a maritime word? I have recently found on the Web a true picture of my kitschy Hawaiian fantasy: it is an orange-colored photo of a jagged coastline. The camera was placed high above, so one can't discern details of the islands. We don't know whether they are inhabited. Cloud-like forms or a sunset make the background. This is a perfect material for eco-tourism propaganda, suggesting the untouched »paradise«. When we read the inscription underneath, the meaning changes completely: it is the sea not of water, but of liquid gas, methane. The picture actually shows the surface of the Titan, the Saturn's satellite visited by the Huygens probe launched jointly by NASA

and ESA. This is a 3-D simulation by Mike Zawistowski, based upon the two-dimensional photograph taken by the probe. The »Hawaiian« analogy goes even further: in the media, together with the pictures, we could also hear the probe's sound recording of Titan's atmosphere. I would like to find out about the status and function of this record. It seems to fulfill the often quoted fantasy of hearing the »air from other planets«, as one of Schoenberg's pieces says, this all due to modern technology...

When you speak about »sound from other worlds« as music from another planets I have an instant association – harmony of the spheres. But, I don't want to go into this problem yet. The problem of the unsounding sound of the universe.

What strikes me as important is the possibility of sound (maybe before the image itself) to create world for us, or better, to create a sensation of the world. Sound, being foremost some kind of movement of/in the air in the first place and in terms of life forms other then plants it is always conected to visible breathing as the primary sound position. Excuse me for my very unscientific way of discussing acoustic processes, but physics was always the arcane knowledge for me that I can only tackle frivolously. Breathing as a sound production is for a human being somehow always connected with possibility of language, with possibility of being able to decyphre the communication. This is the false hope of mankind – that speaking language has to be understandible even in smallest portion. And there lays the possibility of salvation. But, what if language fails? As it is the case with Sokurov, as is it is the case with Titan sounding and emitting its own image? I will quote now Michel Chion from the ending of his study about Terrence Malik's THIN RED LINE: »It is probably because of the language that we feel that we are part of the world without being part of it; language allows us to bless the world, to glorify its brilliance, but in the same movement it exiles us, because it is ours alone. This too is the earthly paradise lost: feeling foreign to the world, because we have the language.«

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Paradise lost – this is the first thing that comes to my mind when I think of islands. »Archipelagos of sound« are part of this island picture (and of your yellow tropical Titan) as in lyrics of the Arto Lindsay's song »Illuminated« that inspired the title of this edition:

I know the world holds many words
Pearls hang down in necklaces
Islands come around in archipelagos
I get all my life from one light bulb
I stand illuminated.

What I am talking about here is an extreme solitude, insularity of the human being; and about an extreme insularity of our artistic expression.
You see the picture of the Titan as the photography of your paradise lost. As a snapshot of Your Island that is lonely and perfect because it cannot be repeated. Our private paradises are worlds that are as much the things of the past as they are the things of the future. The same goes for the sound-image sequence (in the movies, art, etc) that constitutes our life-experience. The world holds many words that are pointing out the loneliness of the individual – and his/her worlds of images.
The sound (and the sound of the image) is ours alone. Because the hearing is ours alone. The utterance is ours alone. What we hear we process in as many ways as possible, yet none of these versions is utterly flase nor utterly truthful. Each and every of them is just singular. The sound of Titan (some little crackling noise), of its atmosphere, is possibility of the real. Yet, how can we create the world just from the small sound core?

Is that image of the »paradise lost« essentially different from the image of the »Promised Land«? Or is it actually the same image, reached for, over and over again, in some unpredictable historical rhythm? Once I read a »confessional« text by Boris Groys where

he said he could not identify himself with the positions that stood for particular »ethnic« or »gender« group (his »targets« were Western multicultural particularism on one side and the recent »nationalization« of historical avant-garde movements by eastern-European ministries of culture on the other), because he grew up in communism, which was based on the universalist rhetoric of progress »in the name of humanity«, where former astronauts had a status of »celebrities« (recently the film Good bye, Lenin reminded us of that). As a child, I saw a step forward in universal »progress of mankind« in every space expedition, too (I suppose it was the result of my upbringing, which was in the name of »universal values«). Some of those feelings I still have, in spite of all the books I read later, where science and technics were being »denounced« by reducing them to something else (to »Lebenswelt«, body, social constructions, colonialism, etc.). So, I was moved by the recent news of Titan, and in a way, I thought it could be a new »chance« for us. But, even skepticism of those who don't allow themselves such naïve sentiments can not avoid falling into a »trap« – in their case it just happens differently. By not finding anything »meaningful« in those possibilities opened by science and technics, they would rather »return to Earth« all knowledge, stop all scientific research transforming it into »local« phenomenologies, and reduce technology to that »good«, »meaningful«, »small«, »handy«, which would be enough for everyday functioning of »Lebenswelt«. The problem is, of course, that by doing that they reject the possibility that science and technics could »save« us. Yet, their disappointment is sometimes so sublime... So Hans Blumenberg contemplated on »sense« and »nonsense« of those attempts in his book The Genesis of the Copernican World, written right after first images of human crew on Moon were taken, and the news of two »Voyager« probes lift offs, which took images of humans into »far« space with them, as well as some gramophone records with the »sounds from the Earth«. He considered the images of barren Moon surface were

the final confirmation of the naivety of human fantasies, where »man« always played an important, even the central role in the universe. In his opinion both Ptolemaic and Copernican system were in some sense »anthropocentric«: if in the Ptolemaic system the man's world, the Earth, was literally the centre of the universe, it was the Copernican system where man became a kind of new Odyssey, a cunning being who could compensate his »eccentric« position in the universe with the brilliance of his mind, which gave him possibility to control and change the reality. In Blumenberg's case the images of the Moon surface caused a deep disappointment, which always takes place if we come in touch with the barren, lifeless and meaningless »Real«, after we initially had wild fantasies about it, including those that it was a place full of beings dangerous for us (the whole genre of the SF horror is based on such an assumption, that there had to be something »meaningful« and even »evil« there »far away«). But, there was nothing on the images of the Moon surface, nothing that would make astronomic discoveries »meaningful« in the eyes of the sceptic like Blumenberg. »What are we looking for there, in that desert?«, he asked.

Though his analysis of the »problematic« sides of scientific discoveries was very sophisticated, I would not make the same conclusion as he did. I am not sure whether we should forever reside where we are now, as well as I am not sure we would be »lost forever« if we make some steps outside of our supposed »home« (as suggested by the last sentences of The Wizard of Oz, the most famous pop cultural fantasy of the »other world«, maybe with the exception of Alice in Wonderland). But I share his opinion that there is indeed a kind of irony in the gramophone records with the »sounds from the Earth« which were launched with »Voyager« probes. The scientists who arranged the space expeditions simply forgot that the »earthly« time measures are not the same as the »cosmic« ones. Even if the probes would return to Earth, where the atmosphere necessary for the sound vibrations exists, their

records could hardly be decoded to produce the sound. In 50 or even 100 years who else will have an idea how the gramophone, the technological invention of the late 19th century, worked, beside the small number of »media archaeologists« and similar techno-freaks?

One of the most famous SF films is based on such cyclic scenario, the first one of the Star Trek saga. It is a story of the probe »Voyager« which gathered so much knowledge on its long space journey that it became a kind of intelligent »life form«. In the meantime the space expedition with the human crew appears in its domain. The members come in contact with that being which calls itself »V'ger« (because the label which is positioned at his core is partially covered with dust) and find out that its only wish is to know its own »creator« and to become one with him.

That film opens the same set of questions you posed: is there a relationship between language and creation? Is the knowledge possible without language? Considering that the field of the music was often related to language, even to breath, it seems that the answer to those questions depends on the definition of language. Is language something »technical«, or is it rather something on the other side of »technicality«? In the first case language is considered as basically communicative, its function should be to transport information with the least possible »noise« in the communication channel. The more the language structures are formalized, the more successful communication should be. If the musical »sense« is defined with the relation to language as a communication medium, it should be calculable in the same way the language is. There were, for example, some projects on MIT based on the assumption that music was structurally a language. A number of Mozart's pieces belonging to the same type (actually some relatively simple minuets) were analyzed and reduced to the schemes of generative grammar. Then the schemes were formalized into a computer programme to generate new Mozart's compositions. So the famous Turing's question in that case

would be, whether we are able to recognize which of the pieces were composed by »historical« Mozart and which of them were generated by our Amadeus 3000, a machine containing Mozart's so called »spirit«. Which are the consequences of that definition of music as language? Let's not get confused, the procedure I mentioned is not something originated in SF films (or even in the scientists' bizarre minds); it is one of the basic mechanisms of our culture. For example, the commercial »casting pop« (not to say »minimal techno« or something like that) is based on the much formalized schemes on the level of grammar. That kind of music is daily manufactured, just like the series of goods are daily produced on an assembly line. In certain types of musical discourses, let's call them »classicist«, being faithful to the authority of the scheme is valued as something »good« and »desirable«. After all there were still the »ancient« critics of culture who condemned such »uniformity« (for example, Rameau's theory of harmony was criticized by Rousseau as a kind of »corset« imposed on the freedom of melody). It is known that in the history of music there was a model of »resistance« to that definition of music as language, and it was actually only – a second definition of music as language. In that second case the language was not considered a formalized system of rules, but something absolutely singular, some kind of »wonder« that should not be taken into calculation procedures, but celebrated as such. To celebrate language meant to celebrate life, whereas »life« was frequently identified with »human life«. (Jean-Luc Nancy pointed out that even Foucault's concept of »bio-politics« silently reduces »life« in such a way.)

Both definitions of music as language were historically significant, and they are effective even today. On one side there were – and there are – musical discourses that are strictly »technical«, because the field of music is considered to be »technical«, something »empty« that can be quantified, something »without beginning and without end« (as the »technical« was defined by Nancy). On the other side there are attempts to escape the »technical« at

the field of music. To be sure, the »technical« cannot be escaped; the relationship between two types of musical discourses is not a dialectic one, where the first type would be the »negation« of the second one. The second type of musical discourse just »smuggles« the »technical«, it cannot really escape it. There is not the »technical« on the one side and the »un-technical« on the other, but only singular and concrete cases of »calculability« which can – with the word of Heidegger – be »hidden«. I am thinking of the anthropological theories from the 18th century, for example of Herder's, where the visual regime, as the regime of panoptical control and calculation, is opposed by the »ear«, as something that is supposed to be on the other side of the visual control. Even in Adorno's theory of musical reproduction there is something like »refuge« from the »world of instrumentality«, and that is writing, the musical notation. But is the musical notation really on the other side of »technicality«? It is even standardized, and it operates no more and no less than in the visual regime, where the »musical« is defined by those parameters that can be controlled and calculated by the notation system. I'd like to remind you that the European standardized musical notation operates just like Cartesian coordinate system does: it is a two-dimensional visual system with the horizontal and the vertical axis, where the first one represents the duration and the second one the tone pitch. Since 1600 it is permanently established that each discreet unit of duration (crotchet, quaver etc.) stands in proportion 1:2 to the next shorter one. The discreet unit of the vertical axis is a tempered half-tone. The »musical sense« is a result of concrete calculations of those two parameters, which can be represented by European notation. Like our winamp, the standardized musical notation implies a panoptic gaze »from above« on the field of the »musical«.

Not only Rousseau knew that the European musical notation was a kind of control (he even invented an »alternative« system of notation, and the funny thing was, that it was based on numbers),

but all those who found, in the European rural music, in the music of overseas or in the »new music« of the 20th century, the »empirical evidence« that the »musical sense« beyond the visual regime of the European notation was possible. What did they reach for, in order to grip the »musical sense«? Well, what they reached for was only another system of visual control of music. The discipline of ethnology took rise in that moment when the visual control of music beyond the European notation was possible: the phonography. In order to »save« those music practices that could only become damaged, if the coordinate system of European notation were imposed on them, the ethnology applies another technique of visual control. Therefore the central sort of knowledge of the »musical« for the ethnology and for the »new music« of the 20th century is not the »music theory«, a discipline related to musical notation since its dawn by the ancient Greeks, but the acoustics and the psychoacoustics. Some of the greatest ethnologists of music, like Stumpf and Hornbostel, were at the same time psycho-acousticians. The »hard science«, the »psychophysics« of Wundt, was the »salvation« for Leoš Janáček, who was afraid that the European notation could only misrepresent the so-called »speech melodies«, where he supposed to find vibrations of the »people's soul«. With the English translation of the famous book by Helmholtz On the Sensation of Tones at the end of the 19th century the »ethnomusicology« was constituted, the discipline which thereafter made every effort to »rescue« the »Other« from the selective system of the European notation, and turned for help to the newest technology of visual control (the recent standard for ethnomusicologists is digital encoding of sound and image). A trace of conflict with the European notation as a system of visual control can be seen in Bartók's attempts to add new signs (for tone intervals smaller than a half-tone, for special tone articulation etc.) to the standard notation, in order to write down as precisely as possible those sound qualities of the rural music that normally could only be »thrown up« by the

system of European notation, as an »indigestible« rest of the »Real«. Because of the same conflict with the European notation the very »hard scientific« knowledge of Claude Shannon, Abraham Moles or Werner Meyer-Eppler became so important for the »new music« after 1945 (no matter how »dilettantish« it was received there, as some »genuine« engineers pointed out). After all, already Busoni dreamed of some sort of »liberated music« that should be like an »air from other planets«, so that in the same breath he mentioned a funny instrument that could play 31 tones in the single octave, invented by the English acoustician Bosanquet at the end of the 19th century. The very idea of an »alternative« articulation of the tone system by means of mathematics was, of course, nothing new, at least for acousticians. For Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens, who lived in the 17th century and after whom the Titan probe was named, the mathematical division of the single octave on 31 intervals was just a normal possibility. Due to its Philhellenism, which was as least as strong as the Philhellenism of the »music theory« oriented on musical notation, the possibility of tone systems other than those favored by European notation was for acoustics always actual. Tone systems with the intervals smaller than half-tone, described in ancient Greek writings on music, were for the acousticians, but not only for them, something like »paradise lost« that should be restored. The adventure of restoration resulted not only with musical »wonders« made by isolated eccentrics (such are Nicola Vicentino's madrigals in Greek enharmonic system or new instruments made by Harry Partch, in order to play »new music« in Greek scales), but with the acoustics alone, the science which made possible our technological »wonders« – from phonograph to digital audio systems. Both the »avant-garde« and the »popular« practices were born from the »spirit« of the acoustics. In order to escape the European standardized notation, the ethnology and the »new music« of the 20th century use other visual representations of music. Their graphs and lists represent condensations and dilutions of the air

– and that is indeed the way the sound is defined by acoustics. The acoustics produces knowledge that is visual par excellence. Already the term »sound waves« is a visual metaphor.

I mentioned psychoacoustics together with acoustics because they come always together for those who try to escape the visual regime of the European notation. For them the acoustics stands as the domain where sound object can be »liberated« from the »corset« of the European notation (which can not, for instance, exactly represent the parameter of sound intensity, one of the acoustics' central parameters), but the price that should be paid is its submission to other system of visual control. Psychoacoustics stands for them as a field purposed to »control« the hearing process, to make research work on it, maybe even to change it for the »better«. Although it is not right to reduce such a comprehensive discipline to a single figure, and even such a marginal one, the psychoacoustics is interesting for my argument only as a field where that last purpose, to make hearing »better«, can be seriously negotiated. If acoustics is a »technicized« knowledge (as Husserl said in his analysis of the »crisis of European sciences«), a knowledge that is conditioned by certain technology and finds its »fulfillment« in certain technology, then its domain at the present state of technology is the »computer science« and its »fulfillment« can be found in digital systems for data processing, which have to be as small as possible, as mobile as possible and as effective as possible. Can we think in such a way about psychoacoustics? The research of perception as something conditioned by technology, from Benjamin onwards, always took for granted that the perception was formed and could be transformed only by means of exposure to a certain technical dispositive, which consisted of some media on the one side and the set of techniques of their use on the other. However, today's so-called »life sciences« open some new possibilities. What would happen if some scientist comes to an idea that perception, including the perception of sounds, could be »optimized« by means of genetic manipulations?

We could for instance get greater capacity of brain to memorize and process information. Or we could even get »newly born ears«, or completely new sensors on our body which could make us possible to »hear« those vibrations classified by psychoacoustics as ultrasound and infrasound. The idea seems monstrous and marvelous at the same time…

Acoustics, as you have mentioned before, has disciplined music as much as historiography has made it become a scientific and theoretical discipline, as we know it. We have both, often, mentioned this problem, which is dealing with history as continuum made of revolutions and slow metamorphosis. Music, contemplated in this way, is always contingent and its materiality – if we draw here attention to French tradition – is absolutely ahistoric. This is a paradox. Musicology is historical and descriptive, and its object is ahistorical and nondescriptive (if we want to stay in realm of musical abstract nature).

When one speaks with musicians, with instrumentalists, when one reads writing of the virtuoso players d'autre temps, when one goes through interviews of performers and composers, what is apparent there is faith in some musical all encompassing presence, that is as natural and expected as air. With introduction of diverse traditional music systems in performance practice as well as in composition, in last decades, this belief has made a firm ground. Or better, we now strongly believe that between performance of early music and the traditional ones (European, Asian, African, South American) there is significant similarity, almost some kind of musical correspondence. Of course, I am not using here this term from symbolist poetics in its original meaning even though this belief that there are similarities between music of »charming little people« (charmant pettit peuple) as Debussy states and ours is something to be traced back to musical impressionism.

What I am interested in is where this affiliation between baroque

music performance, on one hand, and »world music«, on the other, comes from? Is it because the performance of Early European music has among first conquered the field of »period performance« – musical execution in accordance with notions (theoretical and acoustic) of certain age? This, in other words, shows the intrusion of history and historicism into music (practice) itself, which has been dwelling until that moment in blissful oblivion of an ahistorical and abstract art form. This denial of history is as close to hart to ideology of romanticism, as it is close to home in symbolism and modernism – and with it bears, within music, a very serious political consequences (I refer to the important study Musica Ficta by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe). This lacuna of history in music, that is mere ideological utopia, has put its mark on many famous performances – let us recall for a moment Furtwängler's »beautiful« but long, so long visions of Beethoven symphonies, or almost unbearable, massive performances of Bach's »Mass in b-minor« by Karajan or Solti (I could go on with this naming amongst all great conductors of 20th century until Celibidache). With the rise of »period performers« this line of music execution has been questioned and filed, in some way, under anachronistic and conservative line of contemporary performance practice.

What are the consequences of this musical (period) historicism? Does it really make possible the »authenticity« of music – this other dangerous utopia/ideology of European cultural history? (Of course, »authenticity« has something to do with graecophile presumptions of modern disciplines or with philological orientation of the academic discourse.) In other words, how and to what extent a reading of a musical treatise from for example 17th century – entitled On performance and other things that are coming from the lyre of Orpheus, written by an author whose identity is hidden under his (hers) nom de plume belonging to a member of certain Italian academy, – could instruct us how the music sounded 300 years ago?

According to performers and scholars of early music this kind of

philological, archival and ethno-archaeological approach to music (in this case traditional music still preserved today could be of great help to find out how the musica colta of ancestors sounded like – for example, South Italian »Tarantulism«) is possible and even welcomed as methodological intuition. This situation however has confined musicological discourse and made it seek other ways of dealing with the past and present musical issues. Musicology has become in the nineties »new musicology« (theorizing of music from the standpoint of cultural studies, sociology and anthropology), or it regressed to historical musicology of the traditional sort, or it became something else – still undefined as are all discourses about arts that tend to leave scientific background and to become similar to aesthetics or philosophy. It is perhaps, for that reason, that philosophers have written some of the most intriguing studies about music in the past decade. Or they are work of those musicologists who find philosophical discourse very close to their heart. Musicology, as we know it, it stagnating.

Therefore, if we go back to the issues of performance, we can observe that today only »real«, »authentic« and canonized performances of early music are those performed on period-original instruments. I think that we can agree that »authentic« performance doesn't exist as such. In a way this is the ideological difference between Gould and Richter. When Gould solicits for recording technology in which the moment of the performance is captured, but also manipulated, and when Richter states that there is only one way to read certain score – we are in fact faced with two »ideal« performances. One that can be altered, and the other that cannot. Or to put it better, one that was altered previously (and therefore rendered »inauthentic«) and the other one that wasn't tackled previously but that was marked by the impact of the performer in question. Both of these approaches to performance are revealing the vagueness of »authenticity« in music.

Performances of early music, however, are clearly calling upon history as a main reference for its »authentic« existence. In this way

we are getting to the point where historical specification of music becomes the engine for new musical generalization. The rhythmic and phrasing richness of today's early music performances is partially due to traditional music practices, but also to the »up-to-date« taste of the performers themselves. Therefore, a new globalization of the »musical« is emerging: instead of the historical lacuna of musical »substance« according to which all music is similar because it is music (here we have to agree what music is for us), and we are faced today with undiscriminating historicism of musical practices where different cultures must have influenced each other in given historical circumstances. New musical world order is in fact a part of the globalization machine (respect for the differences is a way to point out how they are coming from the same source), biogeographical encounters of different ethnicities, traditions and historical cultures.

Music is therefore an ambiguous matter, and yet in some cases it is all to well aware of its identity. For example, the restoration of 19th century klezmer music form Eastern Europe – this is a beautiful example of methodological approximation – is done by the agency of recordings, of the existent Roma and traditional music of eastern European nations, and of ornamentation used in European baroque music. We are arriving finally to »authentic Jewish klezmer« as to some alchemic distillate, which passed through filters of different traditional music legacies. Therefore, what we hear today as klezmer, or baroque music of Southern Italy, or anything that we perceive as »authentic«, is a simple record of transformation of a new musical alchemy. It is always an ongoing process, and it is exciting because it is a process that cannot pretend to become an undisputed fact.

Musicology as a discipline is therefore faced with a special transformation. It is a test of musicology, whether it will be capable of responding to changes in production and distribution of music. It is a test of whether it will have the means to develop analytical approach that would be able to deal with »distillates« (that were

existing always) so apparent today, because we are disposing of the security of the written music. To be sure, we could discuss what kind of security that is, but it seems undisputable that musicology originated in the epoch of the written music. Music is today any kind of intentional sound activity and, to most of us, music is dwelling somewhere between glorified »Sound« and tonal formalism, between omnipotence of the vocalism and almost inexhaustible possibilities of machine sound. Music is a satellite of everyday life – something that is »affective work« and that is not. Music is found today in a grey zone of its reutilization and its restoration.

What is interesting here is how music re/creates the world for us – as a critical machine, alternative communication channel, as a kind of communitarian activity. This is in fact music as archipelagos of sound – formation of singularities, of differences, and of sound similarities.

In today's digital music we can find two tendencies: one is the urge for making catalogues, play-lists, sound archives, the other one is the remaking of music by using these extant sound data banks. This is the sound alchemy of today, using the sound archives of analogue epoch for purpose of digital sound production. Afterwards, we hear digital sounds embodied in infinite melancholy and imperfection.

Performance (laptop performance as well) is in this way incapable of giving us right answers to the question of »authenticity« and »nature« of musical experience. Why? Because the recording as such is always a part of past. Actually, it is past captured. If we use an analogue recording we are introducing »past« or »history« in the new composition. Therefore, it is up to musicology as reflection upon music to understand the new place of history in contemporary musical practices. If the artist today is counting on old sound recording, and by doing so has entered into sound history or even archaeology, is it because he wants to state the timeline of its own world? And of music, of course? I will conclude with a little quotation from Jean-Luc Nancy's Mondialisation ou

Creation du Monde: »Is it possible to assume non-foundation of the West as the cause of its own history? Taking into account that this history is becoming the history of the world: is it or is it not possible to envisage non-foundation of world history? This means: is it possible to make history.« And I might add (with Nancy's whisper in my ear) – is it possible to start again?

Reproduction seems indeed to be of crucial importance when discussing the historic aspect of music, an issue you have mentioned in this project's proposal. I'd say that the visual control of music and its history are not necessarily two separate things, but that they relate to each other continuously, should we avoid reducing the visual control to the Cartesian coordinate systems the acoustics is resorting to. Historical quality ought to be defined differently – not as a continuous movement but as a permanent structure or scheme. History would thus become a series of discreet events in diachronous order. The main question is how to define an »event« and what it is that causes it to happen. For, in order to promote a series of events to »history«, these particular events must be the repetition of the same material. In other words, there must be something that will happen over and over again, and this »happening« will make a series that is »history«. In order to have such chains of events in music there must be a »medium«, a musical score for instance. The score is like a synchronous structure bearing »potential« for multiple and different readings. (Such synchronous structures have been called »pregnant«, some of the meaning still recognizable in the general meaning of the English word.) In order to bear such potential for multiple performances, a synchronous structure must have its limits, otherwise we couldn't be talking about a series, a »history« of it. Scores have their boundaries clearly defined by the beginning and the end. History comes only with a beginning and an end. Unfinished texts do not disturb this »logics« for they also have a

beginning and an end. It is our culture's fault that we feel in those cases there is something missing, for the discourse rules we are following insist that the limits must be approved by someone who »authorizes« this text. This is where the notion of the authorship comes in.

The problem is more difficult if the score cannot be seen, which is the case with the oral traditions in music. Those who believe the oral tradition to be essentially different from the written one will stop reading this text here. The others can call Derrida for help, since his research on the discourse logics defended by the opponents of writing pointed out that both oral and written culture (usage of an »empirical« sign system) originate from the same source he called »writing prior to letters«. This makes two systems of writing possible: the »empirical« and the »oral« one, even though the signs of the latter cannot be seen. Oral musical practices also exploit fixed formulas, a sort of a »program« that is always being re-read and re-embodied, which brings about a series of events recreating a »one and the same«. On the other hand, a gramophone record or CD is those pregnant script being re-read (it is the laser head that reads). In order to produce history in this sense there must be some sort of a medium for individual events. How this will happen, what will be the »rhythm« of their repetition, we cannot judge from the script itself. Some of them have a rich history, some don't. What is also needed for history making is a reproduction machine – a digital system or any other »instrument«. It could be argued that a pregnant synchronous structure in the »oral« and »writing« cultures is performed by »acoustic bodies« (a tricky term, but I fail to produce any other joint name for the usual vocal and instrumental sound reproduction systems), and, in the case of a mechanic script, the respective technical equipment. The rhythm of performances depends greatly on this. For instance, in order to research the history of performance of a Beethoven's composition we should take into consideration not only the script (liable to copying and

distribution), but also the system of standard reproductive bodies in the 19th century (philharmonic orchestra on one, piano on the other hand), which enables performance of the piece in non space-related conditions. As well as the technical equipment, the acoustic bodies such as the orchestra and piano must live up to the standards, be independent of a location in order to make the performance the performance of always the same text, and thus create its »history«. I resorted here to an example of instrumental music, but this all goes for its other kinds, if we keep in mind that the »writing prior to letters« is what makes possible any empirical structure, any pattern to be reproduced, the very repetition.

Let's say this is one level of the »history« problem, what Ingarden called »the history of the work«. (However, should we read his essay on the identity of musical work more carefully, we can see that the definition of »work« – according to Ingarden a system including the »points of indeterminacy« to which every performance gives shape – coincides with the definition of pregnant synchronous structure we have been discussing here).

I'd say that what we call the »period performance« presents a single case of reproduction, since there is a sort of »alternative« reproduction machine involved, alternative in comparison to the original standard (piano and philharmonic orchestra). What we could call the »technique of reading« is also different. In order to reproduce digital data we need a code to transfer them to analogous signals, which is also the case with musical scores: together with a reproduction »instrument« we need a set of instructions how to read it, sing it or play it. Musicologist Wolfgang Scherer for instance elaborated on the »psycho-techniques«, on the techniques of giving »into« music and »living it through«, what pianists from 18th century onward must have been doing. This utterly »personal« act originates in something external. If we follow these notions, music is governed by the same principle Friedrich Kittler applied to the literature around 1800, being the concept of the »literary work« produced by the writer's genius, to

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which the reader gives over. These views came together with the new pedagogy and a new legislation (the compulsory reading and writing classes throughout the country). A »period performance« replaces set of rules pointed out by Scherer with another one. I would rather not further discuss the paradoxes of one or the other kind of reproduction. What does seem important though is that they are both of entirely »technical« nature. The mannerism of Furtwängler's performance seems to me as technical as that of the Norrington's. Thy both offer »illusions« and cover up their technicality, and I take them for what they are. I believe that the »hiding« of the technical side is constitutive to both: if we would »disenchant« them, or try to resist their »siren call« at any costs, the whole magic would be gone. I can personally enjoy both kinds of performance. (Ok, I admit I'm listening to Norrington more often for he's shorter.)

But your question, if I understood it correctly, does not refer to what extent different performance techniques are »true«, but to their status nowadays. I find the amount of energy lately invested in casting off the »magic« of the »period performances« quite fascinating. Musicologist Richard Taruskin for instance believes that they can be »denounced« by pointing to the similarity of their taboos with those present in the world of »new music« in the 20th century. The ideal performance in the 20th century »new music« is indeed the close and precise reading of the script, in order to bring to light the structure of music. I know this may sound exaggerated, but there are not so many differences between the performance techniques of Rudolf Kolisch and Pierre Boulez on one hand, and Stravinsky's mechanical piano on the other. In the »new music« system there is a rule that the compositional technique is the only level of any importance, while the performance technique should be basically always the same. (In the 20th century there is also a model of performance insisting on the importance of giving »into« the music and »living it trough«. The accent is here put on the performance – even to the »personality« and »charisma« of

the performer, most often being the conductor, pianist or singer, while the composition is basically always the same, taken from the standard concert repertoire.) However, Taruskin finds the »coldness« of both »new« and »period performance« concepts suspicious, for he believes music to be something »humane« (but not »universally humane«!), subject-related, and that to leave these coordinates would not only means to fall into something »inhumane«, but that it is fundamentally impossible to leave them. Taruskin and the whole »new musicology« therefore bear a negative attitude towards the »dry« philology and a »scientific« theory of music. (The attacks on the acoustics are less frequent, probably because the musicology curriculum seldom prescribes acquaintance with that kind of knowledge, despite the fact that the musicology program, formed in the second half of the 19th century, proposed that acoustics, organology and suchlike fields of knowledge should make part of this new discipline.)

The program of »new musicology« shows that they all aim at a general sort of discourse called »criticism«. Criticism does not mean the usual reviews in the newspapers, but isn't far from it either. Musical criticism, the discourse established in the 18th century, insists on the liberating process, the emancipation and letting go the established rituals, customs, occasions that all follow the permanent and unchangeable rules formed by the »government«. Music criticism owes to what Foucault called »critical attitude«, the distrust of the rule, gesture of rebellion, freeing from tutelage. When a critic writes about music, one should, according to Foucault, hear in his writing the emancipation gesture, the confirmation of one's own judgment of music independent of the Master's sword. Critical discourse aims at questioning attitude or turning against the »unquestionable«, the »universal« and »generally true«. The »new musicology« accepts that all knowledge has its origin in »Lebenswelt«, that the knowledge striving to be »universal« can be disputed, and that pure »ideology« serves for the purposes of the governing party to fix the extant power hierarchy by

prescribing the limits between the »universal« and that which is beyond it. If we put it this way, the »new musicology« seems to be rather unoriginal. That is exactly the problem: does it present a significant »event« or not? If we compare it with something we have already seen, we will undermine its appeal of the »novelty«. In the last 15 years there have been many such attempts, oftentimes welcomed as a »rebirth« of the phenomenology of music, a »delayed« reading of Adorno in English-language musicology, a sort of »ethnomusicology«, or a typical product of American culture, supposedly characterized by a sort of »amnesia«. What I find interesting about the »new musicology« is not so much the question whether it is »new« or »old«, but whether it achieves its goals. It easily rejects science and technics as dangerous »ideology« used by the »government« to secure a status quo. Its logics is similar to the one I have already discussed: the whole knowledge should be replaced into the »Lebenswelt« and science should be resorted to only to help its reproduction at the level presently achieved. The emancipation should increase to the extent of »humanization« of science and technics, their framing into »Lebenswelt« and human body. But could we also claim the opposite: the emancipation will increase to the extent of technical development, growing possibilities for freedom of movement, simultaneous calculation of more parameters and processing of greater amount of information? What happens if not only turning away from the technical, but also its further integration is the way of »salvation«? The »new musicology«, being self-reflective, did not turn a blind eye to this problem. We could say it triggered the branching in the mid nineties. Ever since there seem to exist two fractions operating inside the »new musicology«: the first one persists that there is only one way out, being the one that tries to put an end to isolation from »Lebenswelt«, and the other one resorting to indecision, claiming both ways are possible.

Among the islands of an archipelagos there is a water space marking and even quantifying the distance. When you have been talking about the imaginary islands that Huygens probe picked up on Titan, I remembered the fact that the image traveled back to Earth for some hours or more. Speed of sound and the speed of light. The everlasting delay in the verbal/auditive communication when we reach the new worlds.

But, I'll go back to a troubling, and yet revealing relation that we tackled earlier, the relation between music and language. What if language is disappearing slowly, if it is losing, in some of its forms, ground in our world? What if we are forgetting the language, if we are forgetting how to speak? What if we lose our mother tongue and if we lose the very means of remembering? What will then become of music? This vision is not altogether uncanny and disturbing. Maybe the limbo of intersection between the two is somehow connected to the vanishing point of both systems – the verbal and the auditive one.

Remember the Sokurov's Mother and son, where scarce dialogues are wrapped in the sounds of nature and household sounds (like the sound of fire) fused together with music taken from works by Otmar Nussio. This amalgam is somehow comforting and warm, immediately understandable like that of mother's voice. And yet, communication between the barer of the language (mother) and the receiver (son) is shattered and almost inexistent. They don't try to speak, because that would tire dying mother, but occasionally whisper and moan. The language is here in the process of forgetting itself. This situation is evident in Taurus as well, but here language is slipping away in straightforward and irreversible fashion. And yet, somehow there is no comfort coming form the music soundtrack. The bareness of existence is doubled by bareness of the sound – we are faced with trivial sounds, everyday sounds as there are, and as they appear when surrounded with perfect sound isolation of a studio recording. This intervention, this sound engineering, brings an uncanny moment into our perspective and delimits the power

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of music as »salvation«. Muffled and superposed soundtrack that impedes on us to concentrate on particular music work, is a sound metaphor of language deterioration.

And yet, it doesn't imply that music is same as language, but that music is somehow different from it or more precisely, music is not language because of its »unintelligible« component, which makes it recognizable as something different than language. On the other side, language can never become music, trying to prevent and hide its own capacity for forgetfulness. Within musical system there is a potentiality for forgetting, there is an impulse for oblivion. Music was since early times connected to realm that is beyond – even beyond the sound and that is the realm of forgetfulness of the world.

In music the »animal« and the »human« coexists, the life forms and the mechanical reborn talk to each another. Music is always less, and forever more then just a language. This is why the song of the Sirens – singing and narrating in the same time – is dangerous. Music can assume sometimes that it is a language, but by doing so it makes a final transgression of the linguistic into auditive. Music pretends, but it also tries to help language to sustain itself.

Yet, the song of Sirens is a song you must hear and then forget. Only through forgetfulness we can sustain and preserve ourselves. This is where one intrinsic quality of music is coming to the light – the endless variation of the tune, the infinite progression of the rhythmic pattern. This is also a place where music can assume its political role, the one that is decisive for understanding of this new world to come. In our society music is not innocent, a sweet naive girl who just came to town. In its various sound forms, music is a commodity and a sign of abundance.

The question then is to be posed: how can music change its comodified reality to a reality of pure, uninhibited production of many? How can music reflect our comprehension of the world that is united through the multiplicity? Or to put it better, world is one, because it is never one, it is always multiplied and differentiated.

This richness is not the result of the addition, it us rather the recombination of the existent. Music in the new world order, in the situation where politics is internalized, is yet another means of social discipline. But, music can be more: a recomposition of our existence, a bold venture into rescheduling of the past, a brave statement that the beginning is upon us. Music can persuade us that we are not on the verge of the prophesized and expected salvation of the (cultural, sociological, historical, and biological) end of life, as we know it. But, that there is something going on right now – and that we are living – as surfing paradise on Titan – our own best world possible. This is what the Archipelagos of sound promises – a navigation, voyage, and adventure of the music production that makes possible a new communitarian experience to appear.

Impressum