


Today, when tradition no longer  
prescribes anything for music, its  
enigmatic character emerges, weak and  
needy, like a question mark—one that,  
admittedly, becomes blurred the  
moment anyone asks it to confess what  
it actually is.

acques Attali writes, 'the only thing common to all music is that it gives structure to noise.'<sup>ii</sup>

When asking the question 'what is music,' perhaps it becomes that 'structured sound' is ~~not~~ the answer. Perhaps music can be listening ~~structureless~~ sound, silence, or what is neither sound nor silence.

Attali continues, 'music, the organization of noise, reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the ... that make up society.'<sup>iii</sup>

Perhaps suppositions as Attali's – that music is 'the organization of noise' – 'reflect the manufacture of society' as much if not more than this supposed 'organization' itself.

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For the ancient poets, music, 'the art of the muses,' is magic. They write at length of Arion, Amphion, Timotheus, and especially, of Orpheus. They write of Hermes' gift of the lyre to Apollo, and of the divine muses themselves, born of Mnemosyne and Zeus, those touched by them sing.

In the Hebrew Bible, God orders his high priest, Aaron, to wear a ceremonial robe with *little* bells when he enters the Holy of Holies, trumpet blasts bring an entire city to ruin; David's enchanting harp impels restlessness from the heart of king Saul.

All the same, the 'gods cannot take fear away from man, for they bear its petrified sound within them as they bear their names.'<sup>4</sup> And so, from the poets to the philosophers music becomes a science of harmony.

Though this becoming 'remains impotent to the extent that it develops from the cry of terror which is the duplication, the tautology, of terror itself.'<sup>5</sup>

The Pythagoreans are fascinated that a plucked-string stopped in half sounds an octave higher than the whole; stopped in third, a fifth higher than the whole; and so on, analogically for them is the harmony of

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everything, the world as a harmonious cosmos, and not only the harmony of the spheres, but also of the body and soul, and so on.

In his *Timaeus*, Plato writes that music is 'to correct any discord which may have arisen in the courses of the soul, and to be our ally in bringing her into harmony and agreement with herself,'<sup>6</sup> against 'irrational pleasure, or the irregular and graceless ways which prevail among mankind generally.'<sup>7</sup>

In his *Republic* Plato banishes all music but the warlike and the pedantic, 'these two harmonies I ask you to leave; the strain of courage, and the strain of temperance; these, I say, leave.'<sup>8</sup>

If music must be a way of listening and not what it listens, if music must be listened with and not to so that what is listened with music is listened as music, then perhaps we ask what music is by asking how music is different from other ways of listening; listening the wind blowing through the grass, the birds singing in the trees, the sonorous star in the night sky, and so on.

Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that the wind, the birds, the star, and so on, can be listened with music. Though perhaps not, as perhaps anything can be listen-



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ed with anything; the birds with the wind, the wind with the star, the star with the birds, and so on. Perhaps no thing demands to be listened with the way we call music, as perhaps no thing demands to be listened with the birds, the wind, the star, and so on.

Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that it affects. Though perhaps not, as any listening the wind, the birds, the star, and so on, perhaps make sure.

Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that it is a disinterested listening. Though perhaps not, as any listening the wind, the birds, the star, and so on, perhaps make sure.

Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that the world it is listened is special. Though perhaps not, as perhaps listening is always a special world; the world of the grass, the world of the trees, the world of the night sky, and so on. Besides, the question 'where is music' may not be the question 'what is music?' If a question about the listening situation in a concert hall is not a question about the listening situation in an automobile, then perhaps neither is a question about the same way of listening in either.

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Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that it is the listening that is of concern for the State. Is there a grand architecture especially to listen the wind? Is there law concerning bird song? Is human being driven to frenzy by the stars? And so on.

Perhaps music is not the listening that is of concern for the State, but is only a concern of the State; the concern is for no thing but the concern. Though perhaps not, e.g., as Gilles Deleuze reminds us with color, the State may only allow knowledge of black and white, that being its instatement, but this instatement is not what color is, color is what allows this instatement. 'This is why we identify, in the last analysis, the domain of intuitions as immediate representations, the analytic predicates of existence, and the *descriptions* of mixtures or aggregates.'<sup>9</sup>

As long as predicates are brought to bear upon individuals, we must recognize in them equal immediacy which blends with their analytic character. To have a color is no more general than to be green, since it is only this color that is green, and this green that has this shade, that are related to the individual subject. This rose is not red without having the red color of this rose. This red is not a color without having the color of this red.<sup>10</sup>

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Do we find ourselves supposing here that some thing exceeds the State? Cannot knowledge change without necessitating an outside about which it changes? Perhaps knowledge is not knowledge of some thing rather it is in and of itself. If so, there is no music but what the State instates, and so the question 'what is music' has an answer, music is what the State states it is.

Debussy's music, like the poetry of Mallarmé, disrupts familiar meaning conventions .. it continually blocks rather than fulfills expectations. The result is a disruption of conventional musical intelligibility and, by implication, the production of a system of counter-intelligibility.<sup>11</sup>

Michael Shapiro reminds us that Attali's answer to the question 'what is music' is a Statist answer in that it falls short of questioning music's capacity to change the State. He reminds us Attali's suspicion that 'the entire history of tonal music involves an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world'<sup>12</sup> is itself already an attempt to make people believe in a consensual representation of the world: that music is this or that, where for Shapiro what is important is what it is not-yet

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The answer 'music is what the State states it is' does not concern the question 'what is music' anyways, for music, only in that the instatement of it changes, is not different from other ways of listening. Was not the wind known as the breath of God? Were not bird calls known as solemn omens? Were not the sonorous movements of the heavenly bodies known as music *par excellence*? And so on

Music no longer has the task of representing a reality that is preexisting for everyone in common, but rather of revealing, in its isolation, the very cracks that reality would like to cover over in order to exist in safety, and that, in so doing, it repels reality<sup>13</sup>

The Middle Ages inherit, from the Pythagoreans through Boethius, the instatement of music as 'a prompt to have us transport ourselves to eternal numbers, where God is more fully found than in the empirical qualities of the temporal world.'<sup>14</sup> *Auctoritas*, the authority of the Fathers, couples this inheritance as music is instated against the 'sensual heathen cults.'

Clement of Alexandria writes of 'the new harmony which bears God's name, the Levitical song,'<sup>15</sup> instating it against the 'raving, intoxicated artful sorcery,'<sup>16</sup> intent on 'corrupting human life, subjecting to the yoke of

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extremest bondage the truly noble freedom of those who live as free citizens under heaven.<sup>17</sup>

But not such is my song, which has come to loose, and that speedily, the bitter bondage of tyrannizing demons, and leading us back to the mild and loving yoke of piety, recalls to heaven those that had been cast prostrate to the earth. It alone has tamed men.<sup>18</sup>

Ephraem Syrus writes, 'where the chant of psalms resounds in deep contrition, there God is present with His angels. Where the playing of the cithara and dancing occurs, there is a feast of the Devil.'<sup>19</sup>

In his *De Institutione Musica*, Boethius stratifies music in three: uppermost, *musica mundana*, the music of the spheres; below that, *musica humana*, the harmony of body and soul; and bottommost, *musica instrumentalis*, or music as Attali imagines it, 'organized noise.'

Boethius also seems to have been the first to use the term *quadrivium*, coupling music, already a science, with the arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.

Finally, Boethius stratifies the origins, or making of music in the *artes liberales* and the *artes mechanicae*, the first, an activity of the upper-classes, is held above the second, an

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activity of the lower-classes involved, moreover, in materiality and in the irrationality of the *instinctus naturalis*, something which is of the utmost contempt for Boethius and the Middle Ages. Now 'composers' are held over-and-above 'performers' and music is bound to the 'greater certainties of that intellect' so that:

None may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. More exactly, not all areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable, some are forbidden territory, while others are virtually open to the winds and stand, without any prior restrictions, open to all.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps we can only think music's difference from other ways of listening through what it often listens. Perhaps the things that would seem, to this type of inquiry, to be mere epiphenomena, camouflaging additions, incidentals from which its essence should be extracted, are precisely its unfolded life, in which it has its truth and in which its essence may be, in fact, first determined.<sup>21</sup>

And so, are not three things most often listened with the way we call music: sound, silence, and everything-else?



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What is sound and why is it often listened with the way we call music?

Perhaps we should not think sound as anything that can be listened, as perhaps such thinking offers us no difference between these three things; sound, silence, and everything-else. Perhaps we should think sound as some thing that is sometimes there with listening, so that when it is there with listening, listening somehow both listens and is *at the same time* as sound.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps sound, rather than, e.g., everything-else, may be most often what is listened with the way we call music, so that many may even suppose the two inseparable, because it is some thing that must be there, open to all. Though perhaps different listenings listen it differently, sound is there, open to all, and so perhaps each listening there that can listen it may. Besides, is not that which is not there but listened with music, e.g., everything-else not there, often offered there, or sounded, to be listened as music, with what we call 'performance' or 'composition'?

To be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning, or in an edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, the margin—at least the sound that is musically listened to, that is

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gathered and scrutinized for itself, not, however, as an acoustic phenomenon but as a resonant meaning, a meaning whose *sense* is supposed to be found in resonance, and only in resonance.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps this 'edge' is why the verb 'listen' is usually intransitive and usually followed by the preposition 'to', this 'edge' being the some thing other than listening with which listening goes.

What is silence and why is it perhaps often listened with the way we call music?

While perhaps sound is open to all, perhaps silence is what is also open to all that offers the possibility to listen listenings, so that when listened with the way of listening we call music silence may be only listening the way of listening we call music, without having to listen sound or everything-else. And so it is that perhaps 'music that remains true to itself would rather not exist at all, it would rather—in the most literal sense, as it so often appears in Webern's work—be extinguished.'<sup>24</sup>

Silence may offer the possibility to listen the way of listening we call music without having to listen sound or everything else, but does not that forbid us from using silence as way of thinking the specialty of music? Perhaps we



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can think music's difference from other ways of listening through thinking what is often listened with it, but with silence, perhaps we are not thinking what is listened, as silence, when listened as music, perhaps becomes listening this way of listening itself.

What is everything-else and why is it perhaps often listened with the way we call music?

When Robert Schumann writes of a 'gloriousness sounding more wonderful than one ever hears on earth',<sup>25</sup> he may writing be of everything-else, in this instance, the ghostly non-sounds 'in his head' that sound like sound. Perhaps everything-else is what is often listened with the way we call music that is neither sound nor silence. Perhaps everything-else, like sound, may be there: a color, a body, a movement, and so on, and may be not there, e.g., 'in his head,' a number, a memory, and so on. Perhaps neither sound nor silence, everything-else is everything else that can be listened even and especially with the way of listening we call music.

LaMonte Young, Alvin Lucier, Robert Ashley, and so on, all offer to be listened with music. what is everything else; gestures, thoughts, activities, and so on. Even Stockhausen, in his *Aus den sieben Tagen*, offers, e.g., insomnia,

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starvation, paralysis, to be listened with music. While Olivier Messiaen, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Franz Liszt, and other synesthetes, remind that color, shapes, numbers, graphemes, and so on, can be listened with the way of listening we call music as well. 'The music hall is well lit' reminds George Brecht

Composition #5 1960 / Turn a butterfly. (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area. When the composition is over, be sure to allow the butterfly to fly away outside. The composition may be any length, but if an unlimited amount of time is available, the doors and windows may be opened before the butterfly is turned loose and the composition may be considered finished when the butterfly flies away<sup>26</sup>

What could be gained by neglecting all these dimensions of music and how might that neglect 'reflect the manufacture of society'?

We are still a long way from asking this.

Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the burgeoning ideologies of individuality and originality necessitate a radical transformation in the instatement of music: from number to listening, from origin in discovery to origin in creation, and from value in fidelity to authority to value in ingenuity.

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This distinctively Renaissance instatement of music has the advantage over its Medieval counterpart in that soliciting individuality and originality, instead of forbidding them, negotiates their potential in perhaps a much more subtle manner, a negotiating moreover mastered by commercial capitalism.

Music, for the Middle Ages, as for the ancient philosophers, is the science of harmony. In the Renaissance, music is instated as an object of individual enjoyment, having more to do with listening than with number.

This is impossible to determine from what is listened itself; a rondeau by Machaut may 'be an object of individual enjoyment' just as easily as a motet by Josquin. The significant change then, is not so much what is listened, the music, but its instatement, what is said about it.

Tinctoris reinforces this instatement when, in one of his eight rules of counterpoint, he writes, *quod quidem penitus aurium judicio relinquendum cen-seo*, 'this, however, is in my opinion to be left entirely to the judgment of the ears.'

The philologist and student of ancient music, Girolamo Mei, reinforces this instatement in a

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way altogether unthinkable in the Middle Ages when he writes:

The true end of science is altogether different from that of art [ ] The science of music goes about diligently investigating and considering all the qualities and properties of the existing constitution and ordering of musical tones, whether these are simple qualities or comparative, like the consonances, and this for no other aim than to come to know the truth itself, the perfect goal of all speculation, and as a by-product the false. It then lets art exploit as it sees fit, without any limitation, those tones about which science has learned the truth.<sup>27</sup>

For the Middle Ages, to think that music has its origin in creation than in discovery is blasphemy. 'God alone creates,' writes Saint Thomas Aquinas; 'no mortal being can create.'<sup>28</sup> Saint Augustine agrees, the *creatura non potest creare*, the 'creature cannot create.'

Through the Renaissance, individuality and originality are reinforced so emphatically that the origin of music, categorically, becomes creation as opposed to discovery.

In both [the melodic inventor and the contrapuntist] this is to be ascribed more to the energies of genius, and to some natural and inborn talent than to craftsmanship. And this can be proved through those who never studied

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music, and nevertheless show a miraculous ability in inventing melodies, as is apparent in our vernacular [folk song], the Celtic [French] or the German, but also through those who are masters of counterpoint although they were often poorly taught—to say nothing of the other disciplines. From this it appears certain that neither is possible for a man unless he is born for it, or, as the people say, unless his mother gave it to him—which is just as true for the painters, the sculptors, and the preachers of the Divine Word (for about the poets there can be no doubt) and for all works dedicated to Minerva<sup>29</sup>

Nothing demonstrates more the Renaissance emphasis on creator as origin than the theorist's new habit of referring to a specific work by a specific composer. Medieval theorists rarely name composers or refer to specific works.

Glareanus, who printed in his consummate *Dod-ekachordon* no fewer than 121 polyphonic compositions, lists each composer by name. The new emphasis on creation is emphasized in other ways as well. Tinctoris dedicated a treatise to the two composers he admired most, Ockeghem and Busnois,<sup>30</sup> going so far as to call the former *optimi ingenii compositor*, 'most ingenious composer.'<sup>31</sup>

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All this is reinforced as well by new talk of the 'creator's personal and psychological constitution.' So that, e.g., the poet Serafino dall'Aquila's sonnet '*Josquino suo compagno musico d'Ascani*' tells, not of the Master's music, but of his 'fits of melancholy and despair,' in that the 'heavens are cruel to him.'

Manlius too, writes not only of Josquin's outbursts of temper during rehearsals, but also of his unending search for perfection, his going over his compositions again and again, changing, polishing, refining.<sup>32</sup>

Glareanus writes mere anecdotes of Josquin's witty musical responses to forgetful or demanding patrons.<sup>33</sup>

Even musical performers, relegated by Boethius to the *artes mechanicae*, now receive appreciation. So that Tinctoris dedicates one of his writings to a singer of the Papal Chapel.<sup>34</sup>

In his *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault may perhaps be after what is happening here when he writes that disciplinary power means the 'the reversal of the political access of individualization.'<sup>35</sup> Unlike perhaps, the Middle Ages, where 'individualization is greatest where sovereignty is exercised and in



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the higher echelons of power,'<sup>36</sup> the Renaissance becomes where 'individualization is descending: as power becomes more anonymous and more functional, those on whom it is exercised tend to be more strongly individualized'<sup>37</sup>

Thus, Josquin, becomes not merely another scientist of sound, but 'the loner, the temperamental conductor, the ceaseless refiner of his works, writing when his inner voice compels him, a deep melancholic in life, and in his music a specialist in melancholy.'<sup>38</sup> Or Lasso, 'the sufferer of a mental collapse' and Gesualdo 'the murderer of his wife and her lover.'

We should distinguish this exercise of power as individualization from the Renaissance through Romanticism from the similar phenomenon of celebrity in commercial capitalism, as the former seems to be a means of controlling something potentially antagonistic to the dominant flows of power and the latter a means of reifying something that is part and parcel with the dominant flows themselves.

What is important is that all this chatter, this 'individualization,' circumscribes a kind-of void, something that always escapes it.

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[I]n every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.

The Renaissance thinking of music's origin in creation, coupled as it is always with the emphasis upon the 'poet being born and not made,' works together with another of the Renaissance's significant transformations. The Middle Ages, dominated by *auctoritas*, think not only the origin, but the value of music as well, in fidelity to the authority of tradition, to rules, whether the rules of the Church or of the Cosmos, perhaps the distinction between them being was ambiguous as the distinction between the cosmos and positive science today.

Spataro, e.g., characteristically deploys the concept of 'natural and inborn talent,' the *instinto naturale*, not only as the reason the creator can create, but also as the justification for his breaking of the rules. Boethius and the Middle Ages, conceived the materiality and the irrationality of the *instinctus naturalis* as bad. Contrarily, Spataro and the Renaissance oppose *instinctus naturalis* to rationality as a higher, almost divine, form of awareness.



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Zarlino writes that 'poetic license' is allowed to the composer as well as to the poet,<sup>39</sup> 'There are as many kinds of poetic rules as there are kinds of poets.'<sup>40</sup>

The written rules can well teach the first rudiments of counterpoint, but they will not make the good composer, inasmuch as good composers are born just as are the poets. Therefore, one needs almost more divine help than the written rule, and this is apparent every day, because the good composers (through natural instinct and a certain manner of grace which can hardly be taught) bring at times such turns and figures in counterpoint and harmony as are not demonstrated in any rule or percept of counterpoint.<sup>41</sup>

Baldassare Castiglione, in his *Il Cortegiano*, has the Count uphold the ingenuity of a great artist against Signor Federico's insistence on imitation of the great masters. The Count asks Federico, 'who should have been Homer's model, and whom did Boccaccio and Petrarch imitate?'<sup>42</sup>

And the position of philosophy vis-à-vis musical objectivity, i.e., the attempt to respond conceptually to the question of the enigmatic that music poses to its listeners, demands that these constellations be determined down to the most intimate details not only of the technical procedures but also of the musical characters

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themselves Only by means of such meditations, and not in the immediacy of the question of pure being, can thought even begin to come close to what music is <sup>43</sup>

Is not the sound music listens often at a pitch? Or only a very few of an infinitude of possible sonorities? And does not the pitch or sonority around which a relativity may be opened often modulate, and so on, in such a way that it is organized? In other words, regardless of everything that is not sound that might be listened with music, isn't sound always 'organized' in the way Attali mentioned?

What is sound at a pitch and why is it perhaps often listened with the way we call music?

Perhaps the sounds, and everything-else that sounds like sounds, often listened with the way we call music, are at a pitch. Perhaps this is because sound at a pitch may be more open than noise, it can enter into a relativity with itself, and/or other sound, especially other sound at a pitch, in almost all the ways noise can, and in many ways noise cannot.

Perhaps sound at a pitch is what makes into a semi-presence a whole system of pitched sounds, perhaps that is what primitively distinguishes sound at a pitch from noise.

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Perhaps noise gives ideas of the causes that produce it, dispositions of action, reflexes, but not a state of immanence to an intrinsic family of ...<sup>44</sup>

Noise may be precisely a sound which lacks a distinct enough pitch to open the relativity offered in being so. Perhaps pitch may be a color within a chromatic field and noise may be its blur; gray-scale relative to full-color, the natural numbers relative to the real numbers. The distinctness of sound at a pitch, of color, may not be closing because it in no way forsakes the possibilities of the indistinctness of noise, of blur, except to allow for the opening offered in being so. Perhaps being at a pitch does not forsake being noise-like, and being noise forsakes being pitch-like. Even and especially if we think 'noise [as] a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission.'

Perhaps being at a pitch opens relativity.

The word 'relativity' comes from *relatus*: re-'to trace-back or restore' and -latus 'broad, wide, or extensive.' Relativity may be the tracing back or restoring of broadness, wideness, or extensiveness. Relativity may be a concurrent opening and closing, as it offers itself it does not offer what it may not be, yet it

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may be necessarily 'elaborated with the aim of making itself snap,'<sup>45</sup> it may be wrapped-up in un-wrapping itself. Movement may be always relative to some thing and what we are calling relativity may be the offering of this thing just to go from it: going away from, going towards, or going through.

Why are the sonorities often listened with the way we call music perhaps so few respecting the infinite possibilities?

Perhaps the few sonorities listened than the many possible are the few that open the opening to all that sound may be. Do music theories, from Pythagoras to Rameau to Schenker, found themselves upon this suspicion? That the timbre of any sound may be determined by the relative volume of the overtones that make up that sound we, that the commonest of these same overtones comprise the sonorities most often listened with the way we call music, e.g., 'major triad,' 'dominant seventh chord,' and some think 'minor triad.'

Already, Aristotle notes the octave above always within sound at a pitch. And with Mersenne is listened, in sound at a pitch, not only the octave, but the octave plus fifth, double octave, double octave plus major third, and the double octave plus major sixth.

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Perhaps this 'overtone series,' like pitch, may be a nominal approximation for some thing that has to do with sound as it may be there, open to all. Perhaps it opens this opening to all that sound at a pitch may be. Perhaps this 'harmonic series' may not be a structuring of sound as it may be there, but may be the approximate structure of sound as it may be there.

What concerns us is that perhaps the sonorities listeners often listen in the way we call music open the opening to all that sound at a pitch may be. Like the 'performers' of so-called 'minimalist music' who sound the psychoacoustical effects they listen arising anomalously within the drones and almost-endlessly-repeating sonorous figures surrounding them, perhaps the sonorities often listened with the way we call music open sound as it may be there.

Perhaps the pitch or sonority around which perhaps a relativity is opened, perhaps often listened with the way we call music, often modulate. What is modulation and why is it perhaps often listened with the way we call music? Perhaps a relation often centers on a sonority or a sound, its home, or tonic, the relative some thing it perhaps offers as a thing to go from, go to, or go through. Perhaps

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modulation is the movement wherein this some thing can become some thing other, a key change. Perhaps we even often temper sounds at a pitch listened with the way we call music to allow modulation.

In response to this heteronymous relation, the dehierarchisation of harmony – the elimination of functional referents such as the tonic and dominant that teleologically reduce all musical harmony to *relationships* – received its first shocking sounding in Western music in the ‘Tristan chord.’ Like Deleuze’s concept of internal difference itself, the Tristan chord forces us to abandon relational thinking. How can one single harmonic event be so many contradictory things at once, in other words, how can it be internally, and not relationally differentiated?<sup>46</sup>

Some would have it that the relations often listened with the way we call music would be a kind-of fascist imposition upon things from without. As if one thing moving past another, movement, considered abstractly, is an imposition.

But this objectivism turns into its opposite. The force that imagines it is overcoming the arbitrary rule of the subject, that obvious element of the possibility of doing everything differently—the very thing that had been striking fear into composers ever since its emergence during the romantic era, which,



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nevertheless, encouraged it—is identical with complete reification the desire to be pure nature corresponds to the purely manufactured thing <sup>47</sup>

With commercial capitalism, music finds itself instated in ways previously unimaginable. One of these ways, is as pop.

R. Stevie Moore is an index, a diachronic subjection to music through the singular truth of pop music; such naked fidelity as his remains considerable. Ariel Pink is subject as well, to the *now* synchronic singular truth of pop; bringing-forth that it is infinite and always consequential. After the similarity of these chronologically discrete subjects of pop, perhaps thinking may place itself under the condition of truth they configure. This means, thinking that truth's wager on how to bring-forth the immediacy of the way of listening called music universally. It also means, partly at least, reckoning with the epoch in which they find themselves.

But we know already that the question of our time is about the 'world's night,'<sup>48</sup> that our time is the 'destitute time in which it would be that the ground has failed to come,'<sup>49</sup> the time of groundlessness where we 'with man-made stars flying over head, unsheltered even by the

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traditional tent of the sky, exposed in an unsuspected, terrifying way, carry [our] existence into language, racked by reality and in search of it,'<sup>50</sup> insisting as we do, and sometimes even celebrating, that our destitute time would not even be able to experience its own destitution, as it would be without an abyss from which to experience it, and thus always ever more destitute

Our time is the 'time of the world's night,' yes, we know this already, but what does it mean that the night of the world would be a night without the abyss of its darkness? (This being is absolutely destitute character). It means that our time, the time of commercial capitalism, is precisely the time that is never its time enough. The insipid banalities, bullying in the bullying manner proper to our time, obscure the way that our time might fall into profundity, its absolute threat. Because our time is an endless regime of circulation, a surface brought-forth on the basis of instruments of consumption, communication, desire, and enjoyment; instruments which transform into an active power the passivity that is their essence, into a power of affirmation their neutrality, into a power of decision the impotence and indecision that is their relation to themselves, it is the time which settles and decides by way of a speech that does not decide and that does



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live in the intimacy of this absence, become responsible for it, assumes its risk, and endures its favor.'

From the would be abysslessness of our time, pop music reaches into an abyss, becomes a plenipotentiary of that which is not distorted by exchange, profit, and the false needs of a degraded humanity, exactly through that which is distorted by exchange, profit, and the false needs of a degraded humanity. It is where our time, in all of its untruth, becomes our time enough and thus more than its untruth.

Thinking this wager through its discrete subjects does not mean thinking it as such, it means thinking the particulars these subjects concurrently use and exceed in making it. These particulars include standardization, materialization, and multiplication.

Standardization, materialization, and multiplication are contingent particulars, they are contingent upon the situational state for which they are to concentrate surplus value and social meaning – commercial capitalism. Thus, contingently, concentration is commodification. In excess of contingency is universality, e.g., concentrating through subjection concentration itself into a universal as regards the way of listening called music.

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In the pop song 'Hobbies Galore,' R. Stevie uses the particulars of his musical situational state to exceed that situation, to concentrate neither surplus value nor social meaning, but an excess of all particularity as regards the way of listening called music.

The similarity of R. Stevie and Ariel, is above all, that they exceed the standardization of pop through excessive affirmation of this particular in all of its own particulars: standardization of form, standardized emotional intention, standardization of genre, and so on.

Standardization of form is the commodification of what is listened in the way called music, that it will meet particular standards: song form, tonality, periodic rhythm, and so on. In the pop song 'You Are True,' R. Stevie exceeds standardization of form through affirmation of it, this pop song is *too much* a pop song (c.f., 'She Don't Know What To Do With Herself'). This affirmation exceeds what there is. In it, the untruth of the situation becomes obvious not through negation, which commercial capitalism can always appropriate and thus even solicits, but through excessive affirmation, subjective *expression* of what there is. This is one definition of genius, 'to achieve the objective subjectively.'

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Standardized emotional intention is the commodification of catharsis, a provisional release through consumption that reconciles consumers to their contingency upon the State. In the pop song 'No Know,' R. Stevie exceeds standardized emotional intention through affirmation of it, this pop song brings-forth a subjectivity that is not reducible to what there is. In an R. Stevie or Ariel pop song, the emotional intent is obvious, *so much so* that this *intent* resists reconciling its listeners to their State, bringing-forth as it does something exceeding this state – supreme longing, suffering, despair, or joy, and so on.

Standardization of genre is the commodification of choice and the reification of consumable identity. All of the so-called genres of pop are in themselves almost meaningless, commercial capitalism uses them to dupe consumers into thinking they have choice – choice for this or that standardized identity.

'Hobbies Galore' is 'folk', 'You are True' is 'punk', 'No Know' is 'psychedelic,' and so on, though all these genres are chance. R. Stevie and Ariel exceed the standardization of genre in that they are not reducible to any of the genres they use. In an untrue situational state where everyone is 'self-evidently equal' and

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therefore 'replaceable,' such an affirmation of subjectivity is truthful. Moreover, this affirmation is the progressive purification of pop towards its truth through the subtraction of genre. Compare this with that pop music which, instead of taking-part in the progressive purification of itself towards its truth, synthesizes singular procedures of truth thus diminishing their transformative power

Adorno writes, 'the positive tendency of consolidated technology to present objects themselves in as unadorned fashion as possible is, however, traversed by the ideological need of the ruling society, which demands subjective reconciliation with these objects' <sup>51</sup>

Materialization of pop means, e.g., pop as consumable object, the pop record album's inextricability from the materials of its production, and so on. While the fact of pop as consumable object is outside the scope of this text, the pop record album's inextricability from its materials of production is not. R. Stevie and Ariel use production materials in all of their manifestations, not only those currently in fashion. As the situational state continues to 'improve' its means of production, i.e., through new products and planned obsolescence, the use of now obsolete materials speaks to something in excess of it

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Moreover, R. Stevie and Ariel foreground the materiality of these obsolete materials. On several of R. Stevie's pop songs ('Records,' 'Part of the Problem,' 'Goodbye Piano,' and so on) listener's may listen to the production materials (tape hiss, room resonance, DC offset, and so on), a whole dimension for listening in the way called music is opened singularly by pop – the sound of a whisper. Here intimacy and immediacy are related; R. Stevie is so close to us we can hear him breathing

'Multiplicity' is the catchphrase of this situational state, and rightfully so. The radical multiplicity pop invokes, e.g., of genre, of mood, of production materials, and so on, is another manifestation of the situational state's imperative towards expansion more markets for more identities. Moreover, through concentrating greater multiplicity into a lesser package, the situational state can concentrate the amount of products consumed. That the situational state so effortlessly appropriates multiplicity must mean that it is not really multiplicity, it is multiplicity turned-over to the oneness of commercial capital. The pop record albums of R. Stevie and Ariel are an affirmation of multiplicity, a wresting of it from the oneness of commercial capital in the turning of it over to a subjective sameness in

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excess of that situational state and the immanent differences it maintains for its sustenance. The subjective sameness of R Stevie and Ariel unbounds the multiple as such because it is both and/or neither one and/(n)or multiple, it is a universal over which the situational state can have no dominion, a void around which it can only ever circle

Though the cruelest master music has ever known (think how unlike other musical truths the musical truth of this situational state is), is unable to prescribe entirely what we listen to in this way called music Both discrete subjects of the singular truth examined show thinking what remains in excess of this prescription Moreover, they show thinking that this excess is subjectively wrested through concentrating the contingent particulars of standardization, materialization, and multiplication Finally, they show thinking that these particulars, though often dismissed, offer a universal way of bringing-forth the immediacy of this way of listening called music

Neither intention nor expression is appropriate for thinking this violence, rather, we should choose attention, from *attendere* ad- 'to' and -tendere 'stretch' Listening in the way we call music, as an attention, as a stretching towards,



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or *development* can never really territorialize, this is apparent by *Mille Plateaux*, at least where music is concerned.

Jen-Luc Nancy has already noted this 'stretching,' though for Nancy, the stretching is towards the 'self' ... 'To be listening will always, then, be straining toward or an approach towards the self (one should say, in a pathological manner, *a fit of self*: isn't sense first of all, every time, a *crisis of self*)?'<sup>52</sup>

Though is a 'self' really what is being attended to by this attention? Can the listener be barred? And can we bar the listener without barring the listened? Perhaps, for not only does barring the listener not abolish the listening, but is necessary by our thinking of listening. Without this barring of the listener, the possibility of listening might be forbidden. Without this barring of the listener, who would otherwise remain, the listened might disappear as such.

As much as Deleuze and Guattari would like to suggest that there is such a thing as a 'territorial' *ritournelle* all their attempts to think it show that it is impossible, the relation is always wrapped-up in un-wrapping itself. Besides, development is an un-wrapping of this wrapped-up-ness in un-wrapping, listening in

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the way we call music is an attention that develops.

Considering very briefly all of what listeners listen in the way we call music that seems to want nothing to do with any kind-of development; we must ask ourselves, what is development if not the difference between a 'perfect fifth held for a really long time' and the same perfect fifth listened in the way we call music? What is the way of listening we call music, this violence, doing to that interval?

It is not that music can be a listening the un-structured, it is that music is only a listening the un-structured. Even when listening structure in the way we call music listeners are un-structuring it. If we can think anything through most of what listeners listen in the way we call music, i.e., why they listen it, it is that listening in this way is always an un-structuring.

Adorno thinks what he calls 'popular music' is some thing that listeners cannot listen in the way we call music because it listens for itself. 'Popular music' forbids an attention that develops because in it structure is absolute; it is never its un-structuring. As the listener always knows the relations of 'popular music'



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already, listening and structuring are the same. Other thinkers think some thing similar to 'popular music' when they think that listeners cannot listen, e.g., 'classical sonatas,' 'baroque fugues,' 'variations,' and so on, in the way we call music because in them listening and structuring correspond.

Adorno writes, 'it is perceived purely as background. If nobody can any longer speak, then certainly nobody can any longer listen.'<sup>53</sup> 'They cannot stand the strain of concentrated listening and surrender themselves resignedly to what befalls them, with which they come to terms only if they do not listen to it too closely.'<sup>54</sup> 'They suspend the critique in which the successful aesthetic totality exerts against the flawed one of society.'<sup>55</sup>

Not only do the listening subjects lose, along with freedom of choice and responsibility, the capacity for conscious perception of music, which was from time immemorial confined to a narrow group, but the stubbornly reject the possibility of such a perception [... ] They listen atomistically and dissociate what they hear, but precisely in this dissociation they develop certain capacities which accord less with the concepts of traditional aesthetics than with those of football and motoring. [...] But they are childish; their primitivism is not that of the undeveloped, but that of the forcibly retarded<sup>56</sup>

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Does this thinking even concern the question 'what is music'? Music, for us, is always an attention that develops and where listening and structuring are the same music is not at question. Our concern is that both Adorno and these thinkers think some thing that listeners cannot listen to in the way we call music, were we think anything could be.

Both Adorno and these other thinkers suppose the identical. They suppose identities that forbid any attentive development because they are always identical to what they are. If listeners may listen, e.g., the wind, the birds, the fountain, and so on, in the way we call music then they may listen, e.g., 'classical sonatas', 'baroque fugues', 'variations', and so on, in this way.

Adorno and these thinkers also suppose 'performance', 'composition', and 'improvisation' are different from each other and different from the way of listening we call music. Even if they are different, unstructuring becomes in listening and not in 'performance', 'composition', and 'improvisation'. Does the piano player sitting before the sheet music have any more chance to unstructure than the Sitar player does about to play a Raga? Does the third violin in a

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symphony orchestra have any more chance to un-structure than its conductor does?

If 'performance' and 'composition' mean anything, it is the bringing of what-is-neither-sound-nor-silence to the opening to all. The how and the where of the bringing of what-is-neither-sound-nor-silence to the opening to all are not what music is. Music is the listeners listening of these things as music. We can think about the State of this bringing but this is not a thinking about music.

In view of our thinking, Adorno's concept of 'popular music' cannot be. Listening in the way we call music is always an un-structuring, i.e., an attention that develops. Though, it is unthinking to dismiss Adorno. Adorno's thinking of 'popular music' is that it is the State's making impossible the way of listening we call music. Perhaps it is not that listeners cannot listen 'popular music' in the way of listening we call music; it is that listeners do not. Either way, the question 'what is popular music' is not the question 'what is music'.

Perhaps music is different from other ways of listening in that it is always an un-structuring, i.e., an attention that develops. Listening the wind blowing through the grass, the birds singing in the trees, the dripping fountain in

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the kitchen, and so on, is always only exactly that. When listeners listen the wind, the birds, the fountain, and so on, as music, the wind, the birds, the fountain, and so on, become some thing more.

Answering 'a listening that is some thing more than listening' or 'an attention that develops' to the question 'what is music' is exactly that, an answering, i.e., it is never an answer. Thinking cannot identify non-identity; it can only answer to it through questioning. This is the more to music that even the most flexible State cannot control. A thinking that begins by supposing music is this or that, e.g., 'structured sound', is not a thinking that answers to music.

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