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## How Do You Make Music a Body without Organs? Gilles Deleuze and Experimental Electronica

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Gilles Deleuze wrote about music only in passing. Throughout his philosophical corpus, one finds a scattering of musical examples and references to the classical modernists (Berg, Messiaen, Varèse, Stockhausen, etc.) who were clearly his cultural heroes. Yet Deleuze never wrote about music with the same depth and dedication that he devoted to literature, cinema, and painting. It might seem odd, then, that, in the nine years since his suicide, Deleuze’s philosophy has come to be closely linked with music and, moreover, with a musical milieu very different from the one that he called his own. For Deleuze has become the intellectual hero of experimental “electronica”—electronic music with its roots in hip hop, house, and techno rather than in the tradition of classical modernism. This relationship was initially marked by the release, a year after Deleuze’s death, of two compilations of experimental electronica presented in his honor: Mille Plateaux’s *In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze* and Sub Rosa’s *Folds and Rhizomes for Gilles Deleuze*. Since then, the discourse around electronica has referenced Deleuze at every turn.

What accounts for the curious connection between this philosophical ontologist and a music scene about which he knew little and wrote nothing? It is that Deleuze helps us to think how music might become a *body without organs*. This indeed is the achievement of contemporary electronica in its various forms (minimalist house and techno, ambient and noise composition, etc.). This achievement, however, is made possible by a genealogical series that connects heterogeneous moments in the history of 20th-century sonic experimentation, moments that are marked by a single powerful trait: the impulse to deterritorialize musical form and substance.

### The Plane of Consistency and the Body without Organs

What is a body without organs?

*Rewind.* All of Deleuze's philosophy is an effort to construct a post-theological, naturalist ontology that reconceives beings in terms of becomings and events, actual existents in terms of virtual potentialities, fixed forms in terms of mobile particles and flows, homogeneous structures in terms of heterogeneous aggregates and connections, and hierarchical organizations in terms of a smooth horizontal surface populated solely by dynamic singularities, affects, intensities, speeds, and haecceities.<sup>1</sup> Beings, forms, structures, and organizations, Deleuze tells us, are simply ways in which an essentially fluid and heterogeneous nature is temporarily contracted, captured, contained, or slowed down to the point at which its movement is imperceptible.

The theologian or philosopher of being (the Platonist, the Christian, the Kantian) will always assert the existence and primacy of a transcendent plane (a "plane of transcendence" or "plane of organization," Deleuze calls it) that directs, organizes, and forms nature and becoming from without. (The philosopher of being says: *beings* are what becomes, *the subject* organizes experience, *providence* or *progress* directs the movement of history, the *score* governs musical performances, etc.) Yet, true to the naturalism of his philosophical heroes—Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson—Deleuze asserts that there is only one plane, "the plane of immanence" or "the plane of consistency," and that the existence of all beings and organizations can and must be accounted for by reference to materials and processes operating on this plane alone.<sup>2</sup>

"Plane of consistency" is one name for Deleuze's basic conception of nature and the world. Another is the body without organs (BwO): "the unformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body and all its flows," "that glacial reality where the alluvions, sedimentations, coagulations, foldings, and recoilings that compose an organism—and also a signification and a subject—occur." In short, the BwO is the virtual field of the body, the domain of the basic particles and forces ("singularities," "affects," "intensities," "ideas," "perceptions," etc.) from which an actual organism composed. "[I]n order to extract useful labor from the BwO," Deleuze writes with Félix Guattari, the organism "imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences." Yet, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the BwO always subsists and reasserts itself: "the body suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all"; hence "a *body without organs* [. . .] is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate."<sup>3</sup> Through experimental practices, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, we can make ourselves BwOs.<sup>4</sup>

So long as we think of the body as a given functional form, says Deleuze alluding to Spinoza, we will not know what a body can do, what it is capable of.<sup>5</sup> To become a BwO is to destratify the

body, to reconnect it with the intensive, impersonal, transhuman matter that composes and surrounds it, to open it up to new connections and assemblages, to explore the innumerable things it can do beyond the restricted set of habitual actions that characterize the organ-ized body.<sup>6</sup> When one does this, one transforms the body from a given entity with a specified functionality and direction of activity to a construction site of exploration and connection. One no longer actualizes merely the specific set of affects that constitute, for example, Man as a normal, rational, heterosexual, productive human being but the entire (or, at least a larger) range of affects of which this body is capable.<sup>7</sup>

*Fast Forward:* An ontology of being—that is, an “arborescent,” taxonomical ontology of things, forms, and species—will insist on making distinctions between nature, the human body, and music. (Music, it says, is a particular product of human beings who are particular parts of nature.) But Deleuze’s ontology of events, becomings, and haecceities does not distinguish in this way. For Deleuze, a body is simply a contraction of forces and flows. “A body can be anything,” he writes; “it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity.”<sup>8</sup> If music can be a body or an organism, so, too, can it become a body without organs, a plane of consistency, or plane of immanence. With reference to John Cage and the classic minimalists Steve Reich and Philip Glass, Deleuze and Guattari hint at this possibility:

Certain modern musicians oppose the transcendent plan(e) of organization, which is said to have dominated all of Western classical music, to the immanent sound plane, which is always given along with that to which it gives rise, brings the imperceptible to perception, and carries only differential speeds and slownesses in a kind of molecular lapping: *the work of art must mark seconds, tenths and hundredths of seconds*. Or rather it is a question of a freeing of time, Aeon, a nonpulsed time for a floating music, as Boulez says, an electronic music in which forms are replaced by pure modifications of speed. It is undoubtedly John Cage who first and most perfectly deployed this fixed sound plane, which affirms process against all structure and genesis, a floating time against pulsed time or tempo, experimentation against any kind of interpretation, and in which silence as sonorous rest also marks the absolute state of movement.<sup>9</sup>

Suggested by Deleuze and Guattari passing, it is this musical idea that I want to unfold here. In the process, we will see that Cage and the classic minimalists, to whom Deleuze and Guattari attribute this practice, mark only a few of the many efforts at making music a BwO. Indeed, over the course of the twentieth century, through a kind of uneven development and by way of clandestine connections, each of the major domains of Western music (classical, jazz, and rock) has been submitted to this process—a process that experimental electronica takes to its *n*th power.

## The Classical Work of Music and Its Deterritorialization

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe saw the development and perfection of the *classical work of music*. Emerging from a fluid and non-literate musical practice, the classical tradition gradually instituted fixed works of art embodied in transcendent musical scores.<sup>10</sup> Once thoroughly temporal and open-ended, existing only as evanescent performance and non-identical iterations, music became a thing, a being, a kind of Platonic model that governed performance from without and in fidelity to which it was judged. This musical work (the score or Platonic ideal of the work) was (and is) not only atemporal but silent. Instantiated in musical performances, it **nonetheless remained outside of their temporal and physical flow.**

transcendent mode of organization:

tonality

The classical work is governed by another **transcendent mode of organization: tonality.** The tonal system insures that musical unfolding is always tied to the tonic, from which it emerges, to which it returns, and which governs its selection of pitches along the way. Thus is musical becoming tied to being in the form of origin and telos; and thus is that thoroughly temporal art, music, transformed into a mere passage between those two fixed points. The sonata, song, and rondo forms that developed concurrently with the tonal system provided more overarching conceptions of development, tying musical becoming to formal and narrative expectations (absence-presence, conflict-resolution, etc.).<sup>11</sup> Finally, **the classical work found its apotheosis in the symphony, performed by an orchestra that is a vast hierarchy of parts, levels, and structures comparable to a military organization, governed by the authoritarian conductor, himself subservient to that absent (transcendent) genius, the musical composer.**<sup>12</sup>

Such was the elaborate organ-ization of music at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. And it is this that the vanguard music of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century slowly dismantled. Arnold Schoenberg accomplished arguably the first deterritorialization of the classical work. Between 1907 and 1909, Schoenberg abandoned tonality altogether, allowing his music to flow over the entire range of the chromatic scale. As such, his atonal pieces are fluid and without any inclination to resolve. No longer unfolding according to given external principles, they force the listener to follow their errant path from within. But Schoenberg would soon reterritorialize his music via the twelve-tone system, which again constrained tonal variation and directed musical development according to a pre-given scheme. Indeed, in the decades that followed, this reterritorialization became more and more severe, as Integral Serialism submitted every musical element (rhythm, dynamics, texture, etc.) to serial organ-ization.

rhythm,  
dynamics,  
textures

Several other musical personae contributed to the deterritorialization of the classical work. Notable among them was Edgard Varèse, who freely abandoned the term “music” in favor of the

description “organized sound,” calling himself “not a musician, but ‘a worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities.’”<sup>13</sup> Varese equally abandoned any real interest in form, pitch, or melody. Instead, he turned to the substance of sound itself, to the exploration of timbre, color, and loudness.<sup>14</sup> In place of properly musical descriptions, he characterized his compositions in richly physical terms, drawing conceptual resources from chemistry, geometry, and geography. “Thinking of form as a point of departure, a pattern to be followed, a mold to be filled,” Varese wrote, is a mistake. “Form is a result—the result of a process,” an impersonal process that, he believed, mirrors the formation of crystals:

There is an idea, the basis of an internal structure, expanded and split into different shapes or groups of sound constantly changing in shape, direction, and speed, attracted and repulsed by various forces. The form of the work is the consequence of this interaction. Possible musical forms are as limitless as the exterior forms of crystals.<sup>15</sup>

Cf. Simondon's  
transduction

Prophetically anticipating the advent of electronic music and noise composition, Varese wrote in 1936:

When new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it, the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived in my work, taking the place of the linear counterpoint. When these sound-masses collide, the phenomena of penetration and repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles. There will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies. The entire work will be a melodic totality. The entire work will flow as a river flows.<sup>16</sup>

Varese's American successors, John Cage and Morton Feldman, further deterritorialized the musical work. Cage's major contribution was to liberate music from human subjectivity, thereby opening up the “transcendental” or “virtual” field of music.<sup>17</sup> Cage insisted that music precedes and exceeds human beings. “Music is permanent,” he wrote “only listening is intermittent.”<sup>18</sup> “Chance” and “silence” were his transports into this transcendental domain. “Chance” procedures allowed the composer to bypass his subjective preferences and habits in order to make way for sonic conjunctions and assemblages that were not his own, or, indeed, anybody's (an “impersonal” and “preindividual” music, as Deleuze would call it). And “silence,” for Cage, named a sort of musical plane of immanence: not the absence of sound (an impossibility, he pointed out), but the absence of *intentional* sound that opens our ears to liberated sound molecules.<sup>19</sup>

Feldman, too, dedicated himself to exploring this “transcendental” sonic field. Claiming no interest in musical systems, structures, or forms, Feldman tried simply to provide a space for the experience of sounds themselves: their births, lives, and deaths. “I don't have any secret,” Feldman once

assemblages

remarked, “but if I do have a point of view, it’s that sounds are very much like people. And if you push them, they push you back. So, if I have a secret: don’t push the sounds around.”<sup>20</sup> As a result, Feldman’s compositions (or “assemblages,” as he preferred to call them<sup>21</sup>) drift, devoid of syntax or connective tissue, concerned only with the growth and decay of sounds, which glide by a different rates and speeds.<sup>22</sup>

unambiguous meaning

### ***Musique Concrète* and *Elektronische Musik*: Schiz/Flux and the Univocity of Sound**

An even greater shock to the classical musical work came with the advent of electronic music in its two basic forms: *musique concrète* (the tape composition that emerged from Pierre Schaeffer’s Paris studio in the late 1940s) and *elektronische Musik* (the classic electronic music of the European and American studios established in Cologne, Milan, and Princeton during the 1950s).

Both practices bypassed musical notation and the standard chain-of-command that ran from the composer through the conductor to the performer and listener. Instead, *concrète* and electronic compositions were experimentally constructed in the studio by a composer who was also the sole performer. At the same time, *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik* foregrounded the univocity of the aural plane. Recording tape effectively dissolved the distinction between “music,” “sound,” and “noise,” providing a neutral surface that could register any sound whatsoever and make it the raw material for composition. Hence, *musique concrète* could dispense with the entire tonal and instrumental apparatus, ignoring traditional musical sonorities and the various discrete instruments and instrumental families that produce them. The electronic signal equally affirmed the univocity of sound, folding the entire musical apparatus back onto a stream of electrons generated by an oscillator. Emerging from this univocal sonic phylum, electronic sounds are distinguished solely by speeds and slownesses, by the contraction or dilation of flows by way of filters and modulators—a fact beautifully illustrated in Stockhausen’s *Kontakte*, where, half way through the piece, a gurgling sweep is slowed down to the point at which it is heard as a woody pulse.

Though distinguished by the sources of their material (*musique concrète* works with found sounds, *elektronische Musik* with sounds built, or “synthesized,” from scratch), both compositional practices operated essentially by way of collage or montage: the cutting and splicing of sonic fragments to create musical assemblages. As such, they very literally model the “schiz” and “flux” that characterize Deleuze and Guattari’s “desiring machines,” those basic connections between singularities and intensities that arise from and dissolve back into the body without organs. Indeed, in relation to the highly regulated and controlled body of classical music, *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik* are polymorphously perverse, celebrating the ability to connect any part (or sound) with any other. This is particularly evident in *musique concrète*, which (like its heir,



turntablism) delighted in connecting, for example, piano tones and percussive knocks with the sounds of train whistles, spinning tops, pots and pans, and canal boats.<sup>23</sup> As such, a *musique concrète* composition is what Deleuze calls a becoming or a rhizome, “a pure and dispersed anarchic multiplicity, without any unity or totality, whose elements are welded and pasted together by the real distinction or the very absence of a link.”<sup>24</sup>

Like Cage and Feldman, *musique concrète* and *elektronische Musik* also disclosed music’s transcendental dimension. Though they began with documentary material, *musique concrète* composers such as Pierre Schaeffer celebrated the fact that tape music could give access to sound itself, liberated from source or reference.<sup>25</sup> Via various techniques (eliminating a sound’s attack or decay, slowing it down or speeding it up, playing it backwards, etc.), Schaeffer and others succeeded in abstracting sounds from their sources, thus eliminating all referentiality and short-circuiting the auditory habits of listeners. Their ability to do this was aided by the fact that tape music was “performed” without any visual element to speak of: no performers or instruments, just pure sonic matter emitting from loudspeakers.

As such, electronic music is often criticized as “cold,” “impersonal,” “dehumanized,” “abstract.” Indeed, these descriptions are apt. Electronic music *is* anti-humanist music and ought to be affirmed as such. It opens up music to something beyond the human, the subject, and the person: the veritable non-organic life of sound that precedes any actual composition or composer, the virtual realm of preindividual and prepersonal sonic singularities and affects. Rather than a music of human desire (the singer, the performer), it is a music of machinic desire: the desiring machines of music and of the musical body without organs.

### **Minimalism: Non-Pulsed Time and the Plane of Immanence**

*Elektronische Musik* and *musique concrète* liberated sonic singularities and affects. But it was classic minimalism that made these fully audible. Minimalism also further challenged the classical work of music by opening it up to the outside and by constructing an immanent musical plane.

Trained in the serial tradition, La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Pauline Oliveros, Tony Conrad and others came to form links with non-classical musics, notably rock, jazz, and non-Western traditions such as Ghanaian drumming, Indonesian gamelan, and Indian raga. Instead of writing for classical ensembles, they were inspired by rock bands to form their own bands, for whom they composed and with whom they performed.

More importantly, the minimalists were guided by an immanent conception of musical process and a new conception of musical time. They rejected the idea that music should be governed by a “plane of transcendence,” a hidden principle that guides and constrains music from without. Instead, they were interested in “immanent” musical processes that composer and listener alike could inhabit and on which they could be carried along. “Music no longer has a mediative function, referring to something outside itself,” wrote Philip Glass, “but it rather embodies itself without any mediation. The listener will therefore need a different approach to listening, without the traditional concepts of recollection and anticipation. Music must be listened to as a pure sound-event, an act without any dramatic structure.”<sup>26</sup> Along the same lines, Reich wrote in a methodological essay: “The use of hidden structural devices in music never appealed to me. I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music.” “While performing and listening to gradual musical processes,” he continued, “one can participate in a particular liberating and impersonal kind of ritual. Focusing in on the musical process makes possible that shift of attention away from *he* and *she* and *you* and *me* outwards towards *it*.”<sup>27</sup>

This is precisely what Deleuze calls “non-pulsed time,” as opposed to the “pulsed time” of classical composition. “Pulsed time” has nothing to do with regular, repetitive pulses (a key feature of musical minimalism to which we will turn in a moment). Rather, it is the time of narrative development. It organizes the musical piece into identifiable sections and landmarks, allowing the listener to know where s/he is and where s/he is going; and it sets up conflicts to be resolved that actively solicit the listener’s sense of narrative time. Hence, Deleuze tells us, pulsed time is the time of the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of education, which “measures, or scans, the formation of a subject.”<sup>28</sup>

The “non-pulsed time” of the minimalists is something else entirely. As Reich notes, it is totally impersonal and processual, caring nothing for “*he* and *she* and *you* and *me*” or for “hidden structural devices.” Minimalist compositions are not organ-ized by the composer (“My music has no overall structure but generates itself at each moment,” Glass has said; “once the process is set up and loaded, it runs by itself,” notes Reich)<sup>29</sup>; nor do they chart the progress of a hero, whether it’s the composer, the solo instrument, or the listening subject. Rather, as Belgian minimalist Wim Mertens notes, “[t]he music exists for itself and has nothing to do with the subjectivity of the listener [. . .]; the subject no longer determines the music, as it did in the past, but the music now determines the subject.”<sup>30</sup> That is, the non-pulsed time of minimalist composition places composer, performer, and listener on a wave of becoming that flows, shifts, and changes, but extremely gradually so that one loses any clear sense of chronological time (what Deleuze calls “Chronos”) and instead is immersed in a floating, indefinite time, a pure stationary process (Deleuze’s



“Aeon”).<sup>31</sup> Hence the extraordinary length of so many minimalist compositions (e.g., Glass’s *Music in Twelve Parts* is over four-hours long, Terry Riley’s *Poppy Nogood’s All Night Flight* lasted twice that long, and La Monte Young’s Theater of Eternal Music performances lasted indefinitely). Immersed in such extended pieces, one loses track of form and clock time and instead becomes aware of something else: **intensive duration** (“time in its unstructured existence,” as **Morton Feldman put it**).<sup>32</sup> One also becomes aware of what Deleuze describes as “speeds and slownesses between unformed elements, and affects between **nonsubjectified** powers, as a function of a plane that is necessarily given at the same time as that to which it gives rise (the plane of consistency or composition).”<sup>33</sup> Reich puts it in more musical terms: such extended, gradual musical processes open one’s ears to “[t]hat area of every gradual [. . .] musical process, where one hears the details of the sound moving out away from intentions, occurring for their own acoustic reasons [. . .] the impersonal, unintended, psychoacoustic by-products of the intended process [. . .] sub-melodies heard within repeated melodic patterns, stereophonic effects due to listener location, slight irregularities in performance, harmonics, difference tones, etc.”<sup>34</sup> Minimalist pioneer Tony Conrad offers a similar description: “Pitched pulses, palpitating beyond rhythm and cascading the cochlea with a galaxy of synchronized partials, reopen the awareness of the sine tone—the element of combinatorial hearing. Together and in pairs in all combinations, the partials combine. The ear responds uniquely.”<sup>35</sup> In short, minimalist practice forgoes not only musical form but fixed and deliberate notes and tones, releasing instead what Deleuze calls “sonorous molecules.”

sonorous  
molecules

To generate and focus attention on these sonic particles and intensities, the minimalists developed a number of musical strategies. The long duration of performances is one of them (one that, perhaps, they owe to Feldman). But there is another, even more fundamental enabler: the fabrication of a plane of consistency on which these particles and intensities could be distributed and from which they could be made to appear. **In the early 1970s, critic and composer Tom Johnson (responsible for the tag “minimalism”)** described it this way:

The form of their pieces is always flat. They are not interested in building to climaxes, or in manipulating tension and relaxation, or in working with large contrasts of any kind. They keep their music flat, never allowing it to rise above or fall below a certain plane. In a way, this flatness is related to the idea of ‘all over’ painting. In both cases, there is an attempt to make all areas of the form equal in importance. **The term ‘static’ is often used in reference to their music, since it never leaves this one level and never seems to be moving toward anything. Traditionally this word has been considered derogatory when applied to music, and in many quarters it still is. But in listening to the music of these composers, one soon discovers that static does not necessarily mean boring, the way we always thought it did. Many interesting things can happen all on one plane. A pitch changes slightly, a rhythm is altered, something fades in or out. They are not big changes, but they are**

changes, and there are more than enough of them to sustain one's interest, provided that he can tune in on this minimal level.<sup>36</sup>

Minimalist music constructed this plane via two different means: the drone (La Monte Young, Tony Conrad, Pauline Oliveros, Charlemagne Palestine) and the pulse (Terry Riley, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Arnold Dreyblatt). Both provide a kind of uniform surface on which sonic micro-particles are distributed. Continuous or repetitious, both highlight duration, process, and difference. They instruct the listener: "Don't listen for harmonic movement, formal development, or narrative progression. You won't find any. Instead, listen to process, moment-to-moment movement, small shifts and changes in timbre, texture, loudness, speed." Instead of the measured arc of the musical narrative, they focus attention on the flat plane and the nomadic elements distributed upon it.

### Free Jazz as Anti-Production

The history of jazz reveals a movement of deterritorialization similar to that to which classical music was subjected. Established on the productive tension between composition and improvisation, the tune and its dismemberment, territory and deterritorialization, jazz has always celebrated the errant flow of a musical material never fully harnessed to structure and form. Yet from swing through bebop, jazz maintained the standard functional organization of music into background/foreground and melody/harmony/rhythm, assigning instrumental roles accordingly. Hence, periodic solos notwithstanding, the drummer's role was to keep time along with the bassist and pianist, who were expected to maintain the underlying harmonic structure of the tune beneath the horn player's melody or improvisations upon it.

The emergence of Free Jazz in the 1960s challenged precisely these features. In relation to the organized and hierarchized body of jazz, it served as a force of anti-production, disarticulating standard connections and dismantling established hierarchies.<sup>37</sup> Free Jazz said: "Forget the tune, forget background and foreground, ignore established instrumental roles. Instead, treat each instrument as a sound-making device on par with every other. Play as an collective ensemble and release a collective energy." Hence, pieces such as John Coltrane's *Ascension* unleash torrents of sound, wild and intensely vibrating distributions of sonic particles and blocks.<sup>38</sup>

The allied tradition of improvised music pushed these tendencies further.<sup>39</sup> Improvisation became the occasion for a mutual becoming: one musician meets another, perhaps for the first time, and music is made between the two, drawing each musician into a zone of indeterminacy with the other.<sup>40</sup> The aim is to play with the other and against one's established tendencies: music as a line of flight, a disarticulation of mental and manual habits. Improvised music equally deterritorialized

the musical instrument and standard performance practice. Instead of treating instruments as a fixed entities to be mastered by virtuoso technique, improvising musicians came to explore the immense variety of ways in which their instruments can be made to generate sound: rubbing the body of the violin or the upright bass, playing only the mouthpiece or bell of a horn, singing into a drum head, etc.<sup>41</sup> Paraphrasing Spinoza, the improviser says “we don’t yet know what an instrument can do.” Unsettled in this way, instruments, musicians, and music itself are freed up for new connections and assemblages.

### **Rock Desedimented**

Notwithstanding its reputation for sonic and erotic liberation, few musical genres are more rigidly stratified than rock. Like classic jazz, rock is built from a standard instrumentation organized according to a basic spatial and auditory hierarchy: (from front to back) voice, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, bass, and drums. Rock is deeply human music that invests desire in conventional ways. It may be about the body and sexuality; but, for the most part, rock’s sexuality is genital and orgasmic. The rock song’s verse-chorus-verse structure organizes desire into short cycles of tension and release. Obsessed with presence and authenticity, rock cathects desire onto the voice and the story of love, loss, and rebellion it cries. Rock is equally tied to the visible gesture of the human hand. Hence, it fetishizes the live event and devalues recordings, studio effects, synthesizers, drum machines—anything not immediately visible, sensible, or present.

Neu!

Of course, rock has always had a counter-tradition: the minimalist drones of the Velvet Underground, the machinic pulses of Kraftwerk, Can, and Neu, the ambient soundscapes of Brian Eno, etc. But only in the 1990s did these forces come together with others to fully challenge rock’s core ideology. As always, the provocation came from the outside—in the first place, from disco. Emerging from a largely black, Latino, and gay underground, disco unsettled rock’s macho sexuality. Machinic and repetitive, it equally threatened rock’s investment in presence, authenticity, humanism, and genital sexuality. Focused on the dancefloor (a mobile assemblage of bodies) and the ambiguous figure of the DJ (at once creator and mere medium), disco challenged rock’s individualism and its cult of personality.

In response, rock lashed out with an overtly racist and homophobic campaign, shouting “disco sucks” and organizing occasions for the mass destruction of dance records (the most spectacularly violent of which occurred on the night of July 12, 1979, when rock DJ Steve Dahl presided over a bonfire of disco vinyl between games at a baseball doubleheader in Chicago’s Comiskey Park). But such displays only confirmed what a profoundly disruptive tremor disco had sent through body of rock. Mainstream rock plodded on. But rock’s experimental fringe slowly began to forge alliances

with the emerging DJ Culture that coalesced around a loose collection of musical forms: house and techno (disco's heirs), hip hop, and dub reggae. Slowly but surely, these alliances began to desediment rock's strata such that, by the mid-1990s, perceptive critics could declare the birth of "post-rock," an international movement that represented rock's self-overcoming.<sup>42</sup>

Rock and pop operate essentially according to the logic of the refrain, producing tunes, ditties, hooks, and choruses that get stuck in our heads and that we sing, hum, or whistle as we move through the world. "The refrain," Deleuze and Guattari tell us, "is essentially territorial, territorializing, or reterritorializing." It not only marks musical territory but psychic and geographical territory as well, soliciting memory and charting out zones of comfort and control. As such, "[t]he refrain is [. . .] a means of preventing music," of capturing and restricting the flow of sonorous material. Conversely, "music," in this special sense, "is a creative, active operation that consists in deterritorializing the refrain." And, because the voice is the privileged vehicle of the refrain, "[m]usic is a deterritorialization of the voice."<sup>43</sup>

Post-rock largely did away with the lead singer and, hence, with the hero and focal point of the rock song. Rock's narrative structure soon collapsed as well, melting into an ambient pool or stretched out into an infinite drone or groove. While often retaining rock instrumentation, post-rock submitted these instruments to a profound *détournement*. Outfits such as **Main** and **Flying Saucer Attack** did away with chords and progressions, instead treating the guitar as an electronic tool for the generation of timbres and textures. Taking lessons from hip hop and techno, post-rock groups **Techno Animal**, **Stereolab**, and others supplemented rock instrumentation with samplers, drum machines, analog synthesizers, and laptops. **Gastr del Sol** and **Tortoise** embraced studio effects and manipulations associated with *musique concrète* and dub reggae, effectively countering rock's obsession with presence and humanism.

### **Electronica: The Becoming-Sound of Music**

In myriad ways, experimental electronica is marked by this heterogeneous ancestry. Across the generic and traditional differences between classical music, jazz, rock, dance music, etc., it selects and intensifies a single trait: the impulse to make music a body without organs. In minimalist house and techno and ambient and noise composition, we find all the ways and means of doing this. Let us rehearse these procedures and clarify the ways in which electronica deploys them:

1. *Disarticulation and Destratification*. We saw that the classical composition, the jazz tune, and the rock song are bodies composed of fixed strata or organs (e.g., strings/winds/brass/percussion; voice/guitar/bass/drums) that capture sound and harness it to particular functions (e.g.,

melody/harmony/rhythm, the refrain, narrative development, etc.). Organized from without by a pre-determined, transcendent scheme (the score, the chart, the song), they move in accordance with a pulsed time (the time of development, form, narrative, and the refrain). Experimental electronica disarticulates sound from the strata and liberates it from pulsed time. Sound appears in its virtual form: as a free-roaming flux, pure possibility, no longer or not yet attached to musical forms or functions. In place of narratives, melodies, and themes, we hear sounds themselves. We hear sonic forces, affects, singularities, and intensities, the grain of sounds, textures, timbres, etc. As Deleuze puts it, “the inaudible makes itself heard and the imperceptible appears as such: no longer the songbird, but the sound molecule.”<sup>44</sup> Recording under the apt moniker Gas, for example, German producer Wolfgang Voigt lets loose swarms of sonic particles, fragments of rhythms and melodies set afloat in vaporous drones. Francisco Lopez’s *La Selva* immerses us in the teeming soundscape of a tropical rainforest. Devoid of the visual clues that would allow us to carve up space and attach sounds to their sources, we are confronted with dense and vibrant masses of sounds differentiated solely by their speeds, textures, and timbres, and moving according to their own logics and rhythms.

1. Disarticulation  
and Destratification

This experience of sound itself is equally the experience of a non-pulsed time. For, we no longer track the subject of a narrative; instead, we are drawn into the impersonal, asubjective life of sounds. Time is no longer spatialized, charted, and territorialized by formal markers; instead, it appears as a qualitative immersive flow. Rather than structure and genesis, we hear process and duration. This connection between attentiveness to the life of sounds and liberation from chronometric time is richly noted by noise composer Bernhard Günter, who remarks that sounds grow, live, and die at different speeds, producing a variegated “continuum” in which time is “stretched and relaxed like a rubberband” such that the listener loses track of clock time.<sup>45</sup>

**2. Laying-out of a Plane:** But experimental electronica does not unleash sonic chaos. For the plane of organization it substitutes a plane of consistency: a smooth surface on which sound particles are distributed, loosely held together, and offered up to experience. Noise composition, minimal techno, and micro house are organized from within, according to an immanent logic of presentation that places the listener in an immersive, indefinitely extended flow that highlights becoming, duration, and continuous regions of intensity.

The plane of organization can be likened to the sedentary, striated, hierarchical space of the city or the state. The plane of consistency, on the other hand, is like the smooth, open space of the desert on which the nomad roams. Electronica tracks are just like this: deserts of sound, the only landmarks of which are the singularities, haecceities, and affects that populate them.<sup>46</sup> No doubt this is why electronica is fascinated with those archetypes of smooth space: air, sky, sea, ice—broad,

open spaces on which elements can be freely distributed and connected.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari's description of the desert ("ice deserts" and "sand deserts" alike) nicely characterizes the soundscapes of Thomas Köner, Steve Roden, and Richard Chartier, and the minimalist beats of Jan Jelinek, snd, and Plastikman<sup>48</sup>:

[T]here is an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of ice, the tactile qualities of both). It is a tactile space, or rather "haptic," a sonorous much more than a visual space.<sup>49</sup>

Reanimating the discoveries of classic minimalism, electronica constructs this plane by two different means: the drone and the pulse. Noise composition is the heir to the minimalist drones of La Monte Young, Tony Conrad, and Pauline Oliveros. It often presents blocks of sound that gradually reveal themselves to be composed of myriad microparticles.<sup>50</sup> Rather than discreet tones organized according to background/foreground and charted by formal markers, it discharges molecular swarms of vibrating granules that immerse the listener, drawing him or her into a world populated solely by a sonic flux that permeates the body and makes of it a sonic force field. In some noise composition, it is not so much the dense drone but silence itself that forms the plane of consistency on which sonic particles are distributed.<sup>51</sup> In the work of Bernhard Günter and Richard Chartier, for example, silence forms a surface from which microscopic sonic events spring into being and into which they fall back.

Techno, house, and their offshoots reanimate the musical strategy of pulse-driven minimalism, generating difference through repetition. Despite a superficial resemblance, the repeated pulse has nothing to do with a ticking clock or with the objective chronometrical time it marks. On the contrary, as the classic minimalists often noted, such repetition generates a peculiar sensation of time that is not extensive (directional, progressive, goal-oriented) but intensive (static, suspended, immersive, fluid), not quantitative but qualitative: the time of duration.<sup>52</sup> The regular pulse short-circuits the listener's desire to listen for form, structure, or development, and instead focuses attention on the moment-to-moment appearance and disappearance of sounds, events, and intensities. In this way, repetition highlights difference. Fine-grained shifts in timbre, texture, interval and intensity take center stage, and repeated sounds begin to appear in different guises. "I was noticing that things didn't sound the same when you heard them more than once," Terry Riley told an interviewer. "And the more you heard them, the more different they did sound. Even though something was staying the same, it was changing."<sup>53</sup> Riley underscores the Bergsonian point that there is no pure repetition, since each repeated instance is inflected with those instances already



accumulated in the memory.<sup>54</sup> Minimalist house and techno tracks thrive on this conjunction of difference and repetition. Maurizio's "m6," for example, repeats the same two-note figure hundreds of times, each time bending, contracting, or drawing it out to elicit different textures, timbres, depths, and speeds.<sup>55</sup> Here, electronica learns from *elektronische Musik* and minimalism alike: rich in wild, sonic matter, classic electronic music was often too busy and structurally complex to make that matter fully audible; via minimalist-style drones and pulses, however, electronica puts this sonic stuff fully on display.<sup>56</sup>

*Pause:* The recent profusion of glitch-ridden electronic minimalism intensifies these two features of repetition (ateleological movement and the foregrounding of sonic matter).<sup>57</sup> In a fine discussion of repetition in black culture, James Snead gives us a way of understanding this. Contrasting Europe's obsession with historical-cultural progression and black culture's affirmation of repetition, Snead writes:

In black culture, repetition means that the thing *circulates* (exactly in the manner of any flow [. . .]) there in an equilibrium. In European culture, repetition must be seen to be not just circulation and flow but accumulation and growth. In black culture, the thing (the ritual, the dance, the beat) is "there for you to pick it up when you come back to it." If there is a goal (*Zweck*) it is continually deferred; it continually "cuts" back to the start, in the musical meaning of "cut" as an abrupt, seemingly unmotivated break (an accidental *da capo*) with a series already in progress and a willed return to a prior series.

A culture based on the idea of the "cut" will always suffer in a society whose dominant idea is material progress—but "cuts" possess their charm! In European culture, the "goal" is always clear: that which always is being worked towards. The goal is thus that which is reached only when culture "plays out" its history. Such a culture is never "immediate" but "mediated" and separated from the present tense by its own future orientation. Moreover, European culture does not allow "a succession of accidents and surprises" [as Hegel characterized African culture] but instead maintains the illusions of progression and control at all costs. Black culture, in the "cut," builds "accidents" into its *coverage*, almost as if to control their unpredictability. Itself a kind of cultural coverage, this magic of the "cut" attempts to confront accident and rupture not by covering them over but by making room for them inside the system itself.<sup>58</sup>

Against our expectations of formal development and narrative progress, the turntablist's scratch or cut and the electronica artist's glitch accentuate the value of repetition. The scratch and the glitch interrupt or pause the forward movement of the track, throwing it back upon a prior moment. Snead continues:

The 'cut' overtly insists on the repetitive nature of the music, by abruptly skipping back to another beginning which we have already heard. Moreover, the greater the insistence on the pure beauty and value of repetition, the greater the awareness must also be that repetition takes place not on a level of musical development or progression, but on the purest tonal and timbric level.<sup>59</sup>

In affirming the value of repetition, then, the cut or the glitch detaches sound from its forward temporal and harmonic movement and instead draws attention to its texture and sonic matter. In Deleuze's terms, the scratch and glitch "stutter" music, withdrawing it from meaning and instead display "a pure and intense sonorous material [. . .], a deterritorialized musical sound, a cry that escapes signification, composition, song, words—a sonority that ruptures in order to break away from a chain that is all too signifying."<sup>60</sup>

*Play:* Repetition or the steady pulse can be thought of as producing a kind of "fixed plane" for the presentation of sound particles. But "fixed," Deleuze notes, "does not mean motionless; it indicates the absolute state of movement as well as of rest in relation to which variations in relative speed themselves become perceptible."<sup>61</sup> That is, in the first place, the plane and the elements that occupy it are not ontologically distinct. The fat, grainy beats of Pan Sonic, the waterlogged throbs of Porter Ricks, and the tactile ticks of alva noto, for example, remind us that the repeated pulse is itself sonic matter, composed of the same stuff as the material that is distributed upon it: the univocal plane of electronic signals or digital bits. Secondly, house and techno are built from loops such that the only distinction between the steady pulse and the sonic figures that move across it is that of speed and slowness, regularity and singularity. Everything is at once rhythm and pitch-timbre; and whatever distinction we draw between these is relative, not absolute.

Nonetheless, the drone and the pulse mark out the plane or BwO that defines electronica tracks and holds their elements together in a provisional assemblage. As such, they model the plane of immanence of Nature itself, in relation to which they present a particular slice or plateau.<sup>62</sup> Viewed on the scale of millennia, bodies, species, states, cities, and languages are like waves on an ocean, evanescent forms that dissolve back into Nature's fluid mass. So, too, in electronica, tones and

timbres come and go as the pulse carries on, or retreat back into the block of sound or silence from whence they came.

3. *Distribution of Singularities and Haecceities, Affects and Intensities.* The symphony was marked by thematic exposition, development, and recapitulation, the pop song by the alternation of verse and chorus (or refrain). But you don't hum or sing along with electronica tracks. There are no tunes or refrains to get stuck in your head. Rather, electronica tracks are marked by musical individuations of a different sort. Upon their smooth spaces or planes, electronica tracks distribute sonic singularities and haecceities, affects and intensities: pure aural qualities, quantities, and aggregates disarticulated from melodies, forms, and structures.

event-kind

*Singularities and haecceities* are events, moments when particles and forces come together to form an assemblage that attains some degree of individuation. On the surface of an ocean, a wave rises up, an eddy or vortex spins the surface downward, a warm current momentarily passes through—each of these is a singularity or haecceity, an individuation not of the subject- or object-kind but of the event-kind. These same sorts of individuations characterize electronica tracks.

!!!  
differentiates  
btw plateau  
and haecceity

Oval's "Textuell,"<sup>63</sup> for example, begins with a stuttered flow composed of jittery ticks and a fuzzy tone that vibrates in the interval between two neighboring pitches. In themselves, these elements (ticks, tone, pitches, interval) are not yet haecceities or singularities. Rather, they hang together to form a basic surface or plateau. A few seconds in, a bass thud pulls this surface quickly downward then sends it leaping up to a new plateau marked by slower clicks, a richer and more resonant sonic palette, and a three-pitch figure. This is a haecceity, a sonic event in the flow of a track, an event that draws elements together into a provisional configuration and that marks a difference of intensity and sonic quality from that which precedes and follows it. The new plateau is soon traversed by more subtle, smaller-scale haecceities: flutters of woody pops, sets of shallow bell tones, dubby bass notes that slow the flow. A few minutes in, another major event: the shift to a new plateau, this one marked by a regular bass pulse and slow tonal shifts between the poles of a wider interval. For the remainder of the track, these various haecceities (plateaus, flutters, bell series, bass pulses, etc.) drift across the auditory space, recurring at different speeds and frequencies.

Haecceities and singularities provide the topography of an electronica track, the *extensive* dimension on which occur cuts, shifts, zones, levels, etc. But electronica tracks are described or measured by another dimension as well: by the *affects* or *intensities* that correspond to these haecceities and singularities. "Intensity"<sup>64</sup> names the ways in which these singularities are sensually experienced, their peculiar quality and force. When we describe a track or its parts (haecceities, plateaus, intervals) as "cold," "warm," "hard," "soft," "sharp," "bright" "sludgy," etc. we are, albeit

crudely, describing its “intensities,” the ways in which it affects us, the quality and quantity of the forces it transmits.

In a passage Deleuze alludes to often,<sup>65</sup> Varèse already imagined a music delineated solely by its “zones of intensities”:

These zones would be differentiated by various timbres or colors and different loudnesses. Through such a physical process these zones would appear of different colors and of different magnitude, in different perspectives for our perception. The role of color or timbre would be completely changed from being incidental, anecdotal, sensual or picturesque; it would become an agent of delineation, like the different colors on a map separating different areas, and an integral part of form.<sup>66</sup>

More than a half-century later, contemporary electronica realizes Varèse’s vision. Noise composition—the work of Merzbow, for example—all but dispenses with musical form in favor of massive glacial or molten flows that collide, intersect, and interpenetrate to produce a textured surface of peaks, valleys, fissures, and plains. Pulse-driven electronica is equally marked by such “zones of intensity.” Minimal techno and micro house tracks flow like waves that rise and fall, tracing zones and levels of intensity as they flow.<sup>67</sup> Composed of loops (waves) moving at different speeds and with different amplitudes, they create interference patterns marked by nodal points of intensive confluence. The work of Carsten Nicolai (a.k.a. noto and alva noto) is exemplary here. Deploying loops of various thicknesses, depths, and speeds, his tracks produce aural equivalents of the liquid ripples and patterns that characterize much of his visual art.<sup>68</sup>

As distributions of haecceities and intensities, electronica tracks invest desire in ways rather different than do rock, classic jazz, or classical music. In place of the tension and release that characterize rock and pop, and the conflict and resolution that characterize classical music, electronica substitutes myriad “plateaus”: “continuous regions of intensity constituted in such a way that they do not allow themselves to be interrupted by any external termination, any more than they allow themselves to build toward a climax.”<sup>69</sup> Not verse and chorus, but thresholds and continuums of intensity, the confluence of flows, waves, or loops on a plane that is itself a plateau, an indefinitely extended continuum of intensity.

4. *Construction and cartography of a body or assemblage.* A track, then, represents a particular slice, section, or plateau of the sonic phylum. It is a plane of consistency or composition that selects, articulates, distributes, and holds together a set of tones, timbres, and rhythms. As such, a track forms a body, though not an organism: a body without organs. It presents the minimum of

composition or consistency necessary to individuate a body without allowing it to harden into an organism.<sup>70</sup>

A body, Deleuze tells us, is not defined by form, function, substance, etc. Rather, its definition takes the form of a map [*plan*] that charts a piece of territory according to longitude and latitude.<sup>71</sup> By “longitude,” Deleuze means the relationships to one another of the particles that compose a body (which is always a multiplicity). Following Spinoza, who argues that bodies are distinguished from one another not by reason of substance but solely by reason of the relationships of motion and rest, speed and slowness that obtain between their component parts, Deleuze describes the “longitudinal” relationships of a body’s parts to one another as “relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles.”<sup>72</sup> By “latitude,” Deleuze means the affective and intensive capacities a body has in relation to other bodies, the concentrations of power and ability that distinguish it.

“Maps of speeds and intensities.”<sup>73</sup> This Deleuzian (and Varèsian) form of description is ideally suited to the analysis of electronica tracks. They do not readily admit of description in terms of form and development; but they can be perfectly described in terms of longitude and latitude, “variations of speed between particles or molecules of sound,” and the “free floating affects” and intensities generated by these particles and their conjunctions.<sup>74</sup> They lend themselves to geometrical, geological, and geographical description: description in terms of vectors, thresholds, gradients, peaks, valleys, and plains.

Abstract, molecular, machinic, and desubjectified, electronica tracks are simply selections of sonic particles set in relation to one another and in relationship to those of other tracks. At the longitudinal level, a track is a body, machine, or assemblage, a collection of sonic particles that occupy the same territory and that move at speeds measured in relationship to those of other particles. They form temporary conjunctions (loops, slabs, haecceities, etc.) with other particles and move together with them. At the latitudinal level, a track is defined by its intensities, its accumulations of force and their qualitative effect upon us. Longitude and latitude, speeds and intensities also measure a track’s relationships with other tracks, for a track is itself simply an element in a larger machine, *the mix*, itself a kind of macro-track. A track’s speeds and intensities, then, will determine which other tracks it can link with and what sorts of relationships (flow, rupture, affective modulation, etc.) it can have with these other tracks. The term “mix,” here, is significant, for it highlights the fact that, from the micro- to the macro-levels—from the level of a track’s component haecceities to the level of the mix as a whole—electronica tracks are not closed

“compositions” or “songs” but open-ended, provisional assemblages that, at any level, can be connected with, or plugged into, other assemblages.

Such, then, is the anatomy of the musical body without organs. We have also traced its genealogy. It is marked not only by the perceptible haecceities and intensities that are distributed upon it but also by a set of historical singularities that stretch across the music of the 20th century and that supply its genetic code, its transcendental or virtual conditions of possibility. Listening to the classic minimalists in the late 1970s, Deleuze began to hear how music might become a body without organs. With the advent of experimental electronica—which, courtesy of Sub Rosa’s Guy-Marc Hinant and Mille Plateaux’s Achim Szepanski, Deleuze heard only in the last two years of his then ailing life<sup>75</sup>—all the forces of musical deterritorialization are brought to bear and music has truly become a BwO. No subjects, forms, themes, or narratives; just flows, cuts, aggregates, forces, intensities, and haecceities laid out on the smooth surface of pulse and drone.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These interrelated terms are discussed more fully below. Rigorous definitions would take us too far afield. For the moment, suffice it to say that all of these terms are ways of describing and individuating entities from the standpoint of nature conceived as a collection of heterogeneous flows rather than from the standpoint of the stable, bounded subjects and objects that make up our ordinary ontology. For Deleuze, what is given is this univocal, fluid nature; and ordinary entities are seen as temporary accumulations or contractions of the flows and micro-particles of which Nature consists. Hence, entities (or “bodies”) are individuated in respect of their relative speeds and slownesses (the internal, kinetic relationships among the elements that compose them), their “affects” (their dynamic relationships with other entities), and the degrees of intensity (accumulations of energy, force, or power) of these affects. Deleuze often calls such fluid, event-like individuals or entities “haecceities” or “singularities,” which he opposes to stable beings, subjects, or things. We can think of music in this way too. Instead of conceiving it as a set of given entities (tones, pitches) that are articulated into scales, melodies, forms, and narratives, we can think of music more physically or materially as a heterogeneous fluid substance (the sonic phylum) that is momentarily articulated into various speeds, intensities, and affects. All music can be conceived in this way. But, as Deleuze argues—and as I argue here—certain forms of music make this more evident and palpable than others.

<sup>2</sup> On the “plane of immanence” and “plane of transcendence,” see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 265–72 and Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 92ff. Manuel De Landa nicely develops the concept of the self-organizing “plane of immanence” in *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (New York: Zone Books, 1997) and *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London: Continuum Books, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 8, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 43, 159ff.

<sup>5</sup> Spinoza’s text reads “no one has yet determined what the body can do,” and, later, “they do not know what the body can do,” *Ethics* II, P, S in *A Spinoza Reader*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 155, 156. Deleuze often refers to this text, paraphrasing it “we do not even know what a body *can do*.”

<sup>6</sup> Of course, “[y]ou never reach the Body without Organs, you can’t reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit,” a regulative ideal for experimental practices. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Massumi offers a nice description of this process in his *User’s Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Zone, 1992), 93ff.

## Notes (cont.)

<sup>8</sup> Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), p. 127.

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 267. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Reich and Glass in a footnote to this passage. A rather similar paragraph in *Dialogues* runs: "Some contemporary musicians have pushed to the limit the practical idea of an immanent plane which no longer has a hidden principle of organization, but where the process must be heard no less than what comes out of it; where forms are retained only to set free variations of speed between particles or molecules of sound; where themes, motifs and subjects are only retained to set free floating affects" (94; cf. 33). Indeed, when describing the "plane of immanence," Deleuze often raises the example of music. In addition to the passages just cited, see *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 123, 126, 128 and *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> See Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, pp. 91, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Deleuze and Guattari discuss this briefly in *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 189–91, 195.

<sup>12</sup> For a short characterization of the classical work, see Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 1ff. For a similar critical analysis, see Christopher Small, *Music, Society, Education* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1996) and Chris Cutler, "Necessity and Choice in Musical Forms," in *File Under Popular: Theoretical and Critical Writings on Music* (New York: Autonomedia, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Edgard Varèse, "The Liberation of Sound," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Expanded Edition, ed. Elliott Schwarz and Barney Childs (New York: Da Capo, 1998), p. 207.

<sup>14</sup> See Varèse, "Liberation of Sound," p. 197.

<sup>15</sup> Varèse, "Liberation of Sound," p. 203. This is precisely how Bernhard Günter describes his own process of composition. See "Interview for *The Wire*," [http://www.bernhardgunter.net/frame\\_int.html](http://www.bernhardgunter.net/frame_int.html).

<sup>16</sup> Varèse, "Liberation of Sound," p. 197. This is an astonishingly apt description of the way in which much noise composition (e.g., Merzbow, PanSonic, Fennesz, Fenn 0' Berg) works.

<sup>17</sup> A composer, Cage remarked, should "give up the desire to control sound, clear his mind of music, and set about discovering means to let sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories or expressions of human sentiments." Cage, "Experimental Music," in *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 10. Note that, following Kant, Deleuze distinguishes the "transcendental" from "the transcendent." The former names the conditions for the possibility of actual sensual experience, while the latter names what transcends sensual experience altogether. The description of a "transcendental" or "virtual" field that precedes the subject occupied Deleuze throughout his career, from *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 100–17 to "Immanence: A Life," in *Pure Immanence*, trans. Anne Boyman (New York: Zone, 2001), pp. 25–33. In the latter text, Deleuze elaborates on the distinction between "the transcendental" and "the transcendent."

<sup>18</sup> Cage, *Themes & Variations* (1982), in *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology*, ed. Paul Hoover (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), p. 623. Compare Deleuze and Guattari: "music is not the privilege of human beings: the universe, the cosmos, is made of refrains." *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 309.

<sup>19</sup> "There is no such thing as an empty space or an empty time. There is always something to see, something to hear. In fact, try as we may to make a silence, we cannot," *Silence*, p. 8. "[T]o me, the essential meaning of silence is the giving up of intention." John Cage, in *Conversing with Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Limelight Editions, 1988), p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> Morton Feldman, "The Future of Local Music," in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. B.H. Friedman (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change Press, 2000), p. 157–58.

<sup>21</sup> Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> I owe this fine characterization to Kyle Gann, writing on Feldman in *The New York Times* (February 17, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Such are the sounds that make up Pierre Schaeffer's *Études de bruits* ("noise studies"). Pierre Schaeffer, *L'Oeuvre musicale* (EMF).

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 324.

<sup>25</sup> See Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1966), ch. IV.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Wim Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, trans. J. Hautekiet (London: Kahn and Averill, 1983), p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> Steve Reich, "Music as a Gradual Process," in *Writings About Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1974). In his comments on musical minimalism and the plane of immanence (see note 9, above) Deleuze clearly has this text in mind.

<sup>28</sup> These characteristics of "pulsed time" are presented by Deleuze in the "Vincennes Seminar Session, May 3, 1977: On Music," trans. Timothy S. Murphy, *Discourse* 20:3 (Fall 1998), pp. 209ff.

## Notes (cont.)

<sup>29</sup> Glass, cited in Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, p. 89; Reich, “Music as a Gradual Process.”

<sup>30</sup> Mertens, *American Minimal Music*, p. 90.

<sup>31</sup> On Chronos and Aeon (also Aion) and their relationship to music, see the “Vincennes Seminar” and *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 262. Deleuze first introduces the Stoic distinction between Chronos and Aeon in *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin Boundas, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). Deleuze and Guattari discuss the difference between Goethe’s *Bildungsroman* and Kleist’s “pure ‘stationary process’” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 268–9.

<sup>32</sup> Feldman, *Give My Regard to Eighth Street*, p. 87. Discussing his late pieces, some of which last longer than five hours, Morton Feldman said: “Up to one hour you think about form, but after an hour and a half it’s scale. Form is easy—just the division of things into parts. But scale is another matter [. . .] It requires a heightened kind of concentration. Before, my pieces were like objects; now, they’re like evolving things.” Quoted by John Rockwell in his liner notes to a recording of Feldman’s *Crippled Symmetry* (Bridge Records, 9092A/B).

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 267–8. “Unformed elements” correspond to Spinoza’s “simplest bodies,” the atomic entities of which any composite entity (assemblage or multiplicity) is formed. See *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p. 127, note 3.

<sup>34</sup> Reich, “Music as a Gradual Process.”

<sup>35</sup> Conrad, “LYssophobia: On *Four Violins*,” liner notes to Tony Conrad, *Early Minimalism, Volume I* (Table of the Elements).

<sup>36</sup> Tom Johnson, “La Monte Young, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Philip Glass,” originally published in *The Village Voice* (September 7, 1972), reprinted in *The Voice of New Music: New York City 1972–1982* (Eindhoven: Apollo Art About, 1989), pp. 44–45.

<sup>37</sup> On “anti-production,” see *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 8ff.

<sup>38</sup> John Coltrane, *Ascension* (Polygram)

<sup>39</sup> “Free Jazz” generally describes a largely African-American tradition that emerged out of bebop and is associated with the names Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, (late) John Coltrane, Sun Ra, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. “Improvised Music” generally describes a British and European tradition associated with the names Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Han Bennink, Misha Mengelberg, and others. While “Free Jazz” often retained a connection to the blues, “Improvised Music” combined the liberatory impulses of Free Jazz with the sonic worlds of vanguard classical music (Webern, Cage, etc.).

<sup>40</sup> On “becoming” as mutual deterritorialization, see “1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible . . .,” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 323–309.

<sup>41</sup> For a further catalog and discussion of these “extended techniques,” see Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), pp. 98–102, and John Corbett, “Writing Around Free Improvisation,” in Krin Gabbard, ed., *Jazz Among the Discourses* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 229–36.

<sup>42</sup> See Simon Reynolds, “Shaking the Rock Narcotic” *The Wire* 123 (May 1994), and “To Go Where No Band Has Gone Before: Rock Travels Past Its Own Borders,” *Village Voice* (August 19, 1995): 26–32.

<sup>43</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 300, 302.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 248.

<sup>45</sup> “I try to create a time continuum that gives the listener a chance to hear sound appearing, slowly presenting itself, changing, intertwining with others, being repeated in different configurations, and finally disappearing [. . .] The basic measure of time in my music is slow, relaxed breathing, which I manipulate by slowing it, or speeding it up, in small, homeopathic doses, stretching and relaxing time like a rubberband. Most people completely lose their sense of [clock time] after awhile and can never tell how long the piece lasted.” Bernhard Günter interviewed in *Halana Magazine* 3 (Winter 1998), on-line at: [http://www.bernhardguenter.net/int\\_halana.html](http://www.bernhardguenter.net/int_halana.html)

<sup>46</sup> Edgard Varèse named his first electronic composition *Déserts* (1950–54). Reanimating Varèse’s impulse, Global Electronic Network titled an early Mille Plateaux 12” (and a subsequent full-length CD) “Electronic Desert,” a phrase that has since become common in the culture of electronica.

<sup>47</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 480.

<sup>48</sup> E.g., Köner, *Teimol/Permafrost* (Mille Plateaux), Roden, *Four Possible Landscapes* (Trente Oiseaux), Chartier, *Of Surfaces* (L–NE), Jan Jelinek, *Loop-Finding-Jazz-Records* (~scape), snd, *makeSNDcassette* (Mille Plateaux), and Plastikman, *Consumed* (Mute).

<sup>49</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 382.

## Notes (cont.)

<sup>50</sup> For example, much of the work of Merzbow and Francisco Lopez. Jim O'Rourke's "As In" and DJ Spooky's "Invisual Ocean," both on Mille Plateaux's *In Memoriam Gilles Deleuze* compilation, provide other good examples.

<sup>51</sup> On silence as a *plan sonore*, see Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. 94.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, the comments of Philip Glass and Terry Riley in K. Robert Schwarz, *Minimalists* (London: Phaidon, 1996), pp. 9, 35. On duration as qualitative, intensive multiplicity, see Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), chs. 1 and 2 and *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Random House, 1944), ch. 1. Also see Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone, 1990).

<sup>53</sup> Terry Riley quoted in Schwarz, *Minimalists*, p. 35.

<sup>54</sup> See the opening pages of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*.

<sup>55</sup> Maurizio, "m6 [edit]," M CD (M/Basic Channel).

<sup>56</sup> On this feature of minimalism, see the opening section of Kyle Gann's "Minimal Music, Maximal Impact," *New Music Box* Issue 31, vol. 3, no. 7 (November 2001): <http://www.newmusicbox.org/page.nmbx?id=31tp00>; also see Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., the tracks and artists on Mille Plateaux's *Clicks & Cuts* compilations.

<sup>58</sup> James A. Snead, "Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture," *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., (New York: Methuen, 1984), p. 67.

<sup>59</sup> Snead, "Repetition," p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 6; cf. also pp. 21ff. On "stuttering," see Deleuze, "He Stuttered," in *Gilles Deleuze and the Theater of Philosophy*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas and Dorothea Olkowski (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 23–29.

<sup>61</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. 94.

<sup>62</sup> "The plane of consistency [of Nature] would be the totality of all BwO's, a pure multiplicity of immanence [. . .] A plateau is a piece of immanence. Every BwO is made up of plateaus. Every BwO is itself a plateau in communication with other plateaus on the plane of consistency." *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 157–8.

<sup>63</sup> On *Systemisch* (Mille Plateaux)

<sup>64</sup> Deleuze generally reserves the term "affect" for the description of organic entities (plants, animals, human beings). The term "intensity" is used more broadly to describe the nonorganic world (metals, language, colors, sounds, etc.). Hence my musical analysis here is largely in terms of the latter.

<sup>65</sup> Deleuze's oft-used phrase "zone of intensity" (e.g., *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 156) is clearly taken from this passage.

<sup>66</sup> Varèse, "Liberation of Music," p. 197.

<sup>67</sup> See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation* (Paris: Éditions de la Différance, 1981), ch. 6.

<sup>68</sup> E.g., alva noto, *Prototypes* (Mille Plateaux) and *Transform* (Mille Plateaux/Raster-Noton) and the visual art installations *Milch*, *Fluid Interferenz*, *Hertz + Wave*, and *Telefunken*.

<sup>69</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 158, cf. pp. 21–22. Also cf. Tony Conrad: "Western music, with its ever-present investment in progression, animates a sense of absence—of suspension and expectation. This irresolution corresponds to the conflict that provides a forward impetus in narrative story telling. Indian music also conveys feelings of suspension and resolution, but much differently—always in the presence of its object. Its operative figure is balance, or repetition, not absence and conflict." "LYssophobia."

<sup>70</sup> See *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 158 and *Francis Bacon: Logique de la Sensation*, ch. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Deleuze's clearest and most succinct presentation of this idea appears in "Spinoza and Us," the final chapter of *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. See also *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 260ff.

<sup>72</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics* II, P13, L1. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, p. 123.

<sup>73</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. 93.

<sup>74</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> On Hinant's and Szepanski's correspondence with Deleuze, see Hinant's liner notes to *Double Articulation: Another Plateau* (Sub Rosa) and Simon Reynolds, "Low End Theories," *The Wire* 146 (April 1996).