

vagrant(ana)music: Three (four) Plateaus of a Contingent Music

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Prelude¹

In the body of this paper exist two essays, two efforts, articulated simultaneously. 1
The first, 'Vagrantana Music', posits an idea of Music, however contingent, that is developed from a collection of writing selected through the vagrant scholarship that necessarily emerges in interdisciplinary studies. To this end, the essay employs Music as a site on which to intersect a selection of ideas from Baudrillard, Derrida, and Adorno. In particular, these ideas are explored within the frames of cosmology, ecology, and sociality.² Here, 'vagrancy' is understood for its nomadic quality, suggesting that these thinkers have wandered into the scope of the essay on their own, rather than being conjured forth in the service of a thesis. The thinkers are not chosen for their centrality, their ability to reduce the field of Music to their thought, but for their singularity. In *this* essay, Music is a conceptually malleable site rather than a material entity, so that its analysis allows these thinkers to be positioned relative to one another without creating an environment of rational (Enlightenment) antagonism. Instead, this perspective mirrors a pedagogical model, where we 'learn what we can' from each perspective without casting out the others.

The second essay found here, coextensive to the first, is titled 'Vagrant 2
Anamusic'. This essay traces the wandering of music itself into the discourses of these thinkers, the wanderings of a music that is not Music. Here, 'vagrancy' is invoked for its nomadic connotations of a lack of home or employment, as well as for its allusion to a weight that is borne by society (as the deterritorializing movement that is immediate to every territory). On the plane of the social, this Anamusic hides the aporia that is the condition of its existence (Lacan's 'Thing'), from which springs its subjective polyvalence.³ That is, through a paradoxical singularity, Music becomes a concept (even under erasure) from which meanings can emerge. However, in the realm of cosmology, this Anamusic assumes its full potential in the form of hypermusic, proving to be the negation that masks the absence of Music – indeed, masks the absence of the Real itself, as understood through the value-form of signification.

Baudrillard – A Cosmology of Simulation and Hypermusic⁴

Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulations* lays out his theory of an impossible Real that is always preceded by its effects, which are simulacra. Although Baudrillard does not specifically discuss Music in the book, there is a strong correlation between the philosophical Real and Music.⁵ Writing alongside Baudrillard, it is possible to understand musical performance as 'simulation': since 'to simulate is to feign to have what one hasn't',⁶ to perform is to feign the 'reality' of Music, a reality which is never 'real' outside of the play of simulation. In the presence of musical composition (which is always already there), there is no longer Music. Indeed, listening with Baudrillard to the emergence of sound (which is always already there), there is no longer Music. 3

From Baudrillard, we understand that 'western art music' performance is no longer that of a 'musical work'. Instead, the performance is hypermusic: the generation by musical techniques derived from Music that is not musical.⁷ The 'musical work' (embodied in the composition) no longer precedes its performance, nor survives it. Since the performed precedes the piece of music, the *difference* between the 'piece of music' and its sonic realization disappears. What disappears with performance, then, is the sonic realization's 'musicality' (as well as its composition), without which the Music itself disappears. The sound of a performance no longer has to be musical, since it is no longer measured against the forms of Music. In fact, since it is no longer placed within a musical canon, it is no longer Music at all. It is, as we have already suggested, hypermusic: the product of a synthesis of musical techniques in a canon without history. 4

'To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has',⁸ so that to study the score of a composition is to dissimulate Music. Studying the composition produces musicality in it, even though it presents the 'study' (the process of studying) as something other than Music. Thus, formal analysis⁹ leaves the music intact: the music is always clear: it is only masked by the score, whereas performing Music threatens the difference between the score and the performance by risking exposure of the fact that Music itself is nothing more than a performance. 5

What of music and discourse? From this perspective, Beethoven's Music has only ever been its own discourse. Had we been able to believe that discourse only *described* the music of Beethoven, there would have been no reason to destroy the discourse's musicality by insisting on its separation from Music. If Beethoven's music is only discourse, that is to say reduced to the descriptions that attest its genius, then the entire canon becomes weightless; it is no longer anything but a musical performance: not unmusical, but a musical performance, never again exchanging in Music, but exchanging in itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference. Performance is characterized by a precession of works already performed, and their orbital circulation constitutes the genuine magnetic field of performing. Musical theories, discourses, and compositions no longer have any trajectory of their own; they arise at the intersection of musical canons; a single work may even be engendered by all the 6

canons at once. A genuine composition no longer exists, just as Music no longer exists.

Contemporary composition, then, is hypermusic. It retains all the features, the whole discourse of traditional production, but it is nothing more than its scaled-down refraction. Thus the hypermusic of performance is expressed everywhere by Music's striking resemblance to itself. Performance of a composition is nothing but the object of a social demand. Completely expunged from the aesthetic dimension, it is dependent, like any other object, on production and mass consumption. 7

Consider the role of music institutions from this perspective. For example, it would be interesting to see whether a music school would not react more repressively to a performance of non-music for a graduating recital (a talk, for example) than to an unmusical performance itself. For an unmusical performance only upsets the order of things, the aesthetics of the institution, whereas a performance of non-music (a talk, perhaps) interferes with the very principle of Music. Unmusicality is less serious for it only contests the effectiveness of the institution. Talking (Anamusic) as performance is more dangerous to the music institution because it always suggests that Music itself might be nothing more than a performance, nothing more than talking. 'Everything is metamorphosed into its inverse in order to be perpetuated in its purged form. [...] Every situation speaks of itself by denial, in order to attempt to escape, by performance of its antithesis, its real ambivalence'.¹⁰ 8

The conclusions from this perspective are clear: the simulated tensions between Music and performance, between the composition and its realization, all serve to mask the fact that there is no tension, that they are equidistant from a reality that is not Real, a music that is not Music, but only a simulacrum. These tensions are the map that precedes the territory of Music – the '*precession of the simulacra*'.¹¹ From these conclusions, we can understand Baudrillard's philosophy in *Simulations* as cosmological, that is, as expressing a particular philosophical mode that has the *effect* of a universal (non)structure. Interestingly, this cosmological understanding elucidates both Baudrillard's departure from the Lacanian subject *and* his ultimate attachment to it. That is, Baudrillard radicalizes Lacanian subjectivity by reading it through itself; 'at the exact point where its psychic principle of reality is confused with its psychoanalytic reality principle, the unconscious becomes [...] another simulation model'.¹² 9

Baudrillard's relation to Lacan is perhaps best exemplified in Žižek's analysis of the impossible-real of global capitalism in *The Ticklish Subject*, where capitalism is the fundamental fantasy structuring contemporary political culture (which is to say, for Žižek, contemporary culture itself). After a rigorous and scathing analysis directed at poststructuralism's (and the risk society's) foreclosure of the political in the economy, the absolutely crucial manœuvre (for Žižek) of returning capitalism to the centre of political thought is made in a single page with the simple argument that the logic of risk is rooted in and structured by the logic of capital (*Ticklish*, 350). Why capital is the foundation is never made clear, except perhaps 10

through Žižek's ultimate fidelity to dialectical materialism (which ignores the dialectic of the dialectic; the dialectic's fatal overcoming in simulation).¹³ Crucially, then, Baudrillard's simulation does not disagree with this assessment, but rather recontextualizes it in a field of reflexivity; couldn't one say that the logic of capital is rooted in risk? The Lacanian/Žižekian answer to this rejoinder is that the radical reflexivity of Baudrillard denies the Freudian Unconscious, but this answer again falls prey to the same argumentation that it relies on: if the Unconscious is crucial to the Lacanian subject-object relation, isn't it obvious -- and, in fact, a sign of a theory's efficacy -- that a theory that radically redefines this subject-object relation simultaneously redefines the Unconscious? The nature of Baudrillard's redefinition is truly radical, though, because it occurs at the level of the structural law of value. Thus, it is a redefinition that is fatal to the system that it redefines; that is, the Unconscious is redefined as a simulacrum.¹⁴

The limit of simulation, then, is that Baudrillard was never able to extend it to an adequate analysis of subjectivity. This limit is understood here through the designation of Baudrillard's thought as cosmological, where the social is explained as an extension of this cosmology; the social subject is not absolutely excluded, but is considered only in its support of the cosmology that defines it such that this support is implicit. As such, there is no allowance for ethics in Baudrillard's thinking, since the concepts involved in his reasoning are always predetermined (and not Real). Similarly, subjective agency is never possible, since there are no longer 'really any actors grappling with events, [...] but [only] a storm of events of no importance'.¹⁵ In fact, one could read Baudrillard's writing in general as a lament for the loss of the Deleuzian moment; a resentment of the disappearance of the possibility of 'becoming'. Baudrillard's cosmology, then, is a theory of social inertia, the musical effects of which have been detailed above. 11

Considered another way, when Baudrillard's thought is relocated from the cosmological plane to the social one, it simultaneously changes from a philosophy to a poetics. For Baudrillard, various arguments must always be taken up in the same mode (that of simulation), so that the results differ only in their metaphors, that is, in the way that the ends are reached. That is, 'there is no longer 'any scope for interpretation, except for all interpretations at once, by which they evade any desire to give them meaning'.¹⁶ With this loss of specificity, Baudrillard himself loses access to agency and ethics. This feature is seen even in his description of the social itself, which he variously describes as 'completely removed'¹⁷ and engulfed by a black hole.¹⁸ The shift from a cosmological frame to a local one is a fundamentally qualitative shift that also contains a concomitant quantitative shift resulting in a change of the outcomes that are measured. In any respect, Baudrillard's cosmology posits an organization of effects – even in their non-Reality – that are organized fractally, not so that cosmological modes 'trickle down' to the social plane, but rather so that the social plane is continually returned to a hypersaturated cosmological plane. In this way, the social, for Baudrillard, both oversaturates and is oversaturated by the surface play of cosmological simulation. 12

Adorno – Music and the Social

In contrast to Baudrillard, Frankfurt theorist Theodor Adorno constructs Music foremost from the plane of the social. For Adorno, truth in music 'is a matter of being true to the real condition of social relations in society',¹⁹ and music that ignores the current age of 'antagonistic and alienating social relations [deals] in dreams and illusions, not in truth'.²⁰ In Adorno's opinion, the flaw of contemporary music is that it is constructed such that it 'no longer recognizes history',²¹ a condition which he identifies and interprets through the lens of Marxist commodity analysis. 'Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and sublime which are generously accorded it, serves in America today as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music'.²² 13

Throughout his writings on the culture industry, Adorno pejoratively identifies jazz music as 'a commodity in the strict sense [whose] marketability permeates its production. It is the laws of the market and the distribution of competitors and consumers which condition the production of jazz'.²³ As such, Adorno sees in the surface-level complexity²⁴ of jazz a 14

delight in the moment [that] becomes an excuse for absolving the listener from the thought of the whole, whose claim is comprised in proper listening. The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser. No longer do the partial moments serve as a critique of [the] whole; instead, they suspend the critique that the successful aesthetic totality exerts against the flawed society.²⁵

In this way, Adorno positions the ecstatic moments that are salient to jazz's transgressive claims not as 'bad in themselves, but in their diversionary functions [because] in their service of success they renounce [the] insubordinate character'²⁶ that initially justified the form.

For Adorno, the superficiality of jazz that is announced by the absence of any transgressive politics leads to 'inattentiveness of the listeners'.²⁷ This inattentiveness allows 'mass music' to be perpetuated through a never-ending cycle of 'forgetting and sudden recognition'.²⁸ This cycle appears on the surface of a music that Adorno identifies as 'so strictly standardized, down to the number of beats and the exact duration, that no specific form appears in any particular piece'.²⁹ While proponents of jazz might suggest that this diversion from the whole could be 'optimistically interpreted as a new rupture of the disciplining function',³⁰ Adorno insists that the fixed underlying structure causes any dissonance to act as a 'virtual consonance'.³¹ Without explicitly saying so, this emphasis on the reciprocal nature of the binary opposition 'dissonance/consonance' situates the argument within Adorno's larger philosophical project of problematizing western metaphysics. 15

Central to Adorno's construction of Music as a social commodity is its 'relation to the psychoanalytic tradition',³² in particular the notion of the fetish (which Adorno 16

takes up in relation to Marxism and 'alienation'). 'The world of musical life [...] is one of fetishes'³³ so that 'the familiarity of a piece is a surrogate for the quality ascribed to it. To like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it'.³⁴ 'The formula to which Adorno repeatedly returns is that of the commodity that must be 'just like' all the others and yet 'original' – the hit tune must unite an individual characteristic element with utter banality on every other level'.³⁵ Using this formula, Adorno interprets an enormous range of 'musical' fetishes ranging from the 'virtuosic' vocalist, to the conductor, to the 'substance [of music] itself'.³⁶ This latter critique is particularly remarkable in that it addresses 'the ostensibly serious practice of music'.³⁷ Performances of famous classical works do not fetishize the surface, as is the case with jazz, but instead work under a 'purity of service to the cause'³⁸ that fetishizes the 'flawlessly functioning, metallicly brilliant apparatus as such, in which all the cogwheels mesh so perfectly that not the slightest hole remains open for the meaning of the whole [...] It presents [the performance] as already complete from the first note. The performance sounds like its own phonograph record.'³⁹

In addition to their individual value, the *collective* leveling of these criticisms is notable in that it connects these various fetishized elements towards a determination of Music through the plane of the social. This interplay, for Adorno, forms the realm of Music. Included in this realm is the listener, for whom these dominant fetish categories are so prevalent that any attempt to verify listeners' reactions (to a piece) are met with answers that conform 'in advance to the surface of that music business which is attacked by the theory being 'verified'.⁴⁰ In this way, the 'fetish character of music produces its own camouflage through the identification of the listener with the fetish'.⁴¹ This feature of Music establishes a homology with its surrounding culture, through which Adorno observes that the 'discrepancy between essence and appearance has grown to a point where no appearance is any longer valid, without mediation, as verification of the essence'.⁴² What is presented by Adorno, then, is a fetishized Music that is both inside and outside of its own fetishization. 17

In the context of Adorno's socio-political conception of Music, the ultimate shortcoming of contemporary music is its 'depoliticization'.⁴³ This is clearly the fate of jazz music for Adorno, which takes yesterday's music and renders it harmless by releasing it from its historical element to prepare it for the market. In particular, this is accomplished in jazz's 'toying' with quoted melodies, rather than composing a new form from them.⁴⁴ Similarly, Adorno sees in the jazz expert, the 'regressive listener', a despecialization of skills that gives the illusion of systemic resistance while actually rigidifying the listener's subordination. However, Adorno is also critical of the politics of 'serious' music, even that which he otherwise seems to admire. For example, Adorno rejects the determinate formalism of Schoenberg's serial technique for its destruction of the organic possibilities of Music, a feature which Adorno identifies with social pathology.⁴⁵ This criticism is leveled despite Adorno's narration of Schoenberg and Webern (as well as Mahler, who was not a serial composer) as proposals that 'consciously resist regressive listening'.⁴⁶ 18

Ultimately, Adorno's conception of Music arrives at place that is bereft of hope. 19

Music divides between music that accepts commodity status and commodification and submits to the manipulative power of collective forces, and self-reflective music which resists those forces. In reality, both are impotent, the former because it is a lackey of the culture industry; the latter because it is an exile with no appreciable impact on anything.⁴⁷

Through its situation in the social plane of late twentieth-century capitalism, then, music arrives at the double-bind that characterizes late twentieth-century capitalism itself. It is worth noting, though, that while Adorno's musical thinking is performed on the plane of the socio-political, it by no means exhausts the possibilities of that realm. Foucault's philosophy, for example, is also distinctly social, but would oppose Adorno's thought on many accounts. Take, for example, Adorno's critique of jazz that rests in the opinion that what is important for jazz is 'the show' rather than 'the thing itself'.⁴⁸ Where Adorno presents a critique of musical form in relation to ethico-socio-political power, Foucault would likely have identified musical form as *produced* by these powers. That is, jazz's form for Foucault is *created* as 'limited' so as to establish the coherence and superiority of other forms.⁴⁹ The ramifications of this difference become clearer when one considers that Adorno extended his (philosophically) negative conception of 'the show as limiting the potential of the thing itself' to the culture industry in general, arguing that the culture industry serves to repress 'humanity and true feeling'.⁵⁰ This understanding of power is replaced in Foucault with a positive conception of power where the culture industry could be seen to produce a contingent truth on the power/knowledge axis – here 'the show' might produce (along with other forces) the concept of 'the thing itself', which itself contributes support for a particular dominant paradigm, all of which occurs on a discursive continuum that is always formed prior to any individual entity's entry into it. This second analytical mode has the advantage of permitting a consideration of how, and from where, power is manifested in this new 'thing', whereas Adorno's thought is forced into a melancholic return to a static power that acts in the terms in which it is already understood (whence his account of jazz's relation to a predetermined notion of capitalism).

Whether one supports the modality of Adorno or Foucault, though, one remains 20
on the plane of social analysis, and it is the limitation of these analyses that they cannot be transferred from that plane. Take again, for example, Adorno's analysis of the fetishization of 'serious music', where the 'performance sounds like its own phonograph record'.⁵¹ Stated as a musical cosmology, this mode of argument is seen as an inversion of Baudrillard's 'precession of the simulacra' such that it must eventually be grounded on a fixed, predetermined, and transcendent conception of Music. Considered outside of the confines of musical discourse, this transcendental Music is seen as subject to the critiques leveled by poststructuralists (including Foucault) against all transcendentals, which critiques are also structurally homologous to the critique of Enlightenment that represents the general theoretical project of Adorno himself.

Adorno recognized the difficulty of mounting an effective critique of Enlightenment thinking while using a language shaped by such thinking.⁵² However, one resistance that Adorno does offer to the paradoxical cosmology that extends from his reasoning can be extrapolated from his (above-mentioned) identification with the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition. While this identification by no means eliminates the necessity of a philosophical transcendental, it does shift the plane of the paradox back to the social by positing the Real as an impossible traumatic element *at the (non)centre of the subject herself* that cannot be integrated into the symbolic order.⁵³ What is recuperated from this perspective is the *possibility* of agency, albeit heavily contingent agency. Further, where Baudrillard's cosmology can be read as a theory of inertia in its embodiment of completed nihilism, Adorno's psychoanalytic perspective can be read as fundamentally generative, in that our actions and words are always (dishonestly) recovering the 'radical heteronomy [...] gaping within (us)'.⁵⁴ 21

It should be noted that, although the psychoanalytic tradition offers a different site of the transcendental than Baudrillard, this resituation does not in any way refute Baudrillard's cosmology. However, it is the premise of this essay that these plateaux may be considered as connected rhizomatically, rather than dialectically or hierarchically. In this way, the aporia of paradox inherent to social analysis is accepted as a necessary replacement for the absence of ethics and politics from Baudrillard's cosmology.⁵⁵ As such, Adorno is able to form an ethics of music, opposing or promoting various types of music. For example, Adorno's analyses of Beethoven, Mahler, and Schoenberg identify the musical subject with the element (the individual note or motive) and society or collectivity with the musical form. In focusing critically on the relationship between the two, Adorno expresses opposition to works where 'form imposes its authoritarian order upon the elements which are subsumed by it'.⁵⁶ Similarly, Adorno's social framework, the possibility of agency, allows him to endorse the 'coldness or restraint of Schoenberg [as] an attitude equal to the threat and terror of modernity. Remoteness is, for Adorno, a condition of resistance in the modern world.'⁵⁷ 22

Derrida – Writing and Ecology

Music as I conceive it is ecological. You could go further and say that it *is* ecology.⁵⁸

Ecology has to do with a complexity that is not a system because it is not regulated by a system/environment difference of its own.⁵⁹

As a thinker of complexity, Derrida's writing can be seen as constantly performing the planar shifts that describe the relationship between Adorno and Baudrillard. Derrida's writing is neither cosmological nor social, although paradoxically it is also both,⁶⁰ and it is in this sense that it is here termed ecological.⁶¹ If Derrida himself can be seen as a 'pivot point' between these planes, the *pivoting* that is found within Derrida is his conception of 'presence' as structured 'by difference and differment'.⁶² The 'differential structure of our hold on 'presence' [a term itself under erasure]'⁶³ is produced by 'différance', a 'structure never quite there, never 23

by us perceived, itself deferred and different.⁶⁴ As a means of elucidating the nature and implications of *différance*, Derrida uses Rousseau's writing on Music and its origins found in his *Essay on The Origin of Languages*, as a site of critique.⁶⁵ The consideration of Derrida's relationship with Music in this article, then, will begin by outlining this critique.

Derrida's Reading of Music in Rousseau's *Essay*

In exploring the relationship between speech and song, Rousseau argues that language, dictated by 'need', preceded music, which emerged from language born out of 'passion'.⁶⁶ Derrida shows that Rousseau uses the ambiguous notion of 'imitation' in service of this claim to mark the difference between speech and song.⁶⁷ 'Imitation' is ambiguous because it reconciles the necessity of marking the 'difference between the systems of vocal intervals and musical intervals'⁶⁸ with a conception of the song as emerging exclusively from the original voice. Thus, Rousseau's nature must be 'exceeded, but also rejoined. We must return to it, but without annulling the difference.'⁶⁹ In this way, nature is paradoxically defined as both the unity of the imitation and that which is imitated, so that the 'modification [of becoming song] becomes one with the substance that it modifies.'⁷⁰

Having identified this fundamental paradox, Derrida explores its ramifications. If the origins of speaking and music are inseparable, then what Rousseau identifies as Music's 'degeneration' (its cultural development away from the 'natural') is simply a description of its provisional separation from language, a separation that has always already begun. This separation (necessitated by discourse) 'operates at once as opening and menace, principle of life and death'⁷¹ so that the 'growth of music, the desolating separation of song and speech, has the form of writing as a 'dangerous supplement'.⁷² The history of music, then, is parallel to the history of language and its 'evil' is essentially graphic.⁷³

In order to recognize the impact of this parallelism with language, one must understand that Derrida's philosophy functions as primarily in rhetorical terms. In this philosophy-as-writing, writing is something that 'carries within itself the trace of a perennial alterity: the structure of the psyche, the structure of the sign. [...] Writing is the name of the structure always already inhabited by the trace.'⁷⁴ The fissure within the origin that necessitates the appearance of the dangerous supplement (imitation), then, is the necessity of interval, the harsh law of spacing. Spacing is the fall and supplement of song, the accidental consequence (leading to its ruin) and the condition of its coming into being.⁷⁵ 'Spacing insinuates into presence an interval which not only separates the different times of speech and of song but also the represented from the representer.'⁷⁶

The 'supplement' that emerges from Rousseau's positioning of art as mimesis is the redoubled presence that results from imitation. While on one hand Rousseau praises mimesis as a supplement, this praise could just as easily turn to criticism since the supplement adds nothing and is therefore useless. In fact, the supplement is actually *dangerous* because it threatens the integrity of what is

represented, thereby also threatening the original purity of nature.⁷⁷

Derrida traces the effects of these observations through the rest of Rousseau's writing on music in the *Essay*. For example, Rousseau posits the melodic line as the element of Music which permits its imitation, as well being the element 'of formal difference which permits the contents [...] to appear.'⁷⁸ By the same logic identified above, then, imitation is 'at the same time the life and the death of art.'⁷⁹ The melodic line cannot

give rise to (literally provide space for) art [...] as *mimesis* without constituting it forthwith as a *technique of imitation*. [...] Art and its death are comprised in the space of the *alteration* of the originary *iteration* [...]. In space as the possibility of iteration and the exit from life placed outside of itself. For the outline [melody] is spacing itself.⁸⁰

Further, the hierarchical distinction that Rousseau makes between melody and harmony (privileging the former) is itself flawed, for the 'song melody is originally corrupted by harmony. Harmony is the originary supplement of melody,'⁸¹ which functions to fill the lack made by the differences that 'always already shape melody.'⁸²

One sees a clear example of this reasoning in the commonly told/taught history of tonality in 'western art music'. In this history, so the story goes, Music, beginning in the Medieval period, was originally composed around the 'naturally consonant' musical intervals of the perfect octave (P8), fifth (P5), and fourth (P4).⁸³ During the Renaissance, this series was extended to include the slightly dissonant major and minor thirds (M3 and m3, respectively), with additional intervals continually added over the ensuing years culminating in the present-day trend of 'spectral music'.⁸⁴ The major shift in this progression (it is said) is the development in the Baroque period of 'equally-tempered' instruments, such as the harpsichord, which permit a piece to migrate through a number of musical keys by 'fudging' the math such that all keys on an instrument are very slightly out of tune (but none are completely out of tune, as before). From this perspective, spectral music is not only seen as the final stage in the linear development of tonality, it is also a return to tonality's original consonance, known as 'just intonation'. That is, spectral music continues the process of adding increasingly dissonant intervals (through the use of microtones) to the series of 'acceptable' tones, but does so in a way that makes explicit reference to the 'actual' sonic composition of sounds such that this increased dissonance becomes, in a sense, more consonant than the consonance of equal temperament.

From Derrida, though, it is clear that this history paradoxically treats dissonance as simultaneously the 'outside' disease of consonance and the internal composition of sound itself. No sound is ever completely consonant, even with itself, so that every consonance carries dissonance within it. Without this internal dissonance, sounds would be indistinguishable from one another. The archeo-teleologic history described above, then, stems from covering this aporia of internal dissonance (which deconstructs the consonance/dissonance binary) with

a paradoxical originary consonance. Instead of concluding that tonality broached itself in dissonance, this history believes that tonality must have been comprised in consonance.

Similarly, rather than heeding the logic of supplementarity and concluding that 31
'the song broached itself in grammar, [Rousseau] conforms to the logic of identity and to the principle of classical ontology'⁸⁵ by believing that grammar must have been comprised in melody. Ultimately, Derrida's analysis of Rousseau's conception of Music shows that 'substitution is always already begun'⁸⁶ and that imitation, as the principle of art, has 'always already broached presence in *différance*.'⁸⁷

Through Derrida's analysis of Rousseau, one can begin to understand the subtler 32
features of the musico-theoretical project of American composer John Cage. Although a thorough consideration of Cage's work is beyond the scope of this paper, the parallels between his thought and Derrida's are worth noting.⁸⁸ Like Derrida, Cage too was emphatic about the ontological consequences of dividing origins. Much of his work explored the presence of silence within music (and vice versa), allowing him to arrive at the conclusion that silence is always already music, a belief that he stated musically in his 'silent' piece for piano, '4'33'. Similarly, Cage's numerous aleatoric works (such as the *Imaginary Landscape* series) function by deconstructing the distinctions between intention and chance and between composer and listener, so that one understands that the origins of each of these categories contain the seeds of their opposites. For the purposes of this paper, though, the most striking connection between Cage and Derrida is found in the former's description of his work as ecological *and* as ecology itself. This description makes sense in the context of Derrida's notion of 'writing', which allows for the provisional distinction between music and ecology to coexist alongside their originary (non)unity (in the concept of writing).

Although Derrida refrains from making overt political statements such as are 33
found in the writing of Adorno, his writing does prepare the ground for certain politic arguments, as well as for ethical considerations. For example, when Derrida critiques Rousseau for wishing 'to think of space as a simple outside by way of which disease and death [...] make their entry',⁸⁹ he is situating Otherness as always constitutive of the subject to which it is the Other. However, rather than this radical alterity originating in the self, as with Žižek and Lacan, Derrida's alterity is socially constructed through the *action* of writing. In this social construction lies the possibility of action that positions Derrida's ontology as socially generative and permissive of ethics. In the realm of Music, for example, Derrida's analysis of Rousseau suggests an approach to composition that resembles that taken by John Cage. Even if one disagrees with this assertion (which Derrida never made, despite almost certainly being familiar with Cage's work), what remains clear from Derrida's analysis is that there are certain approaches which are unacceptable, and thus there must be others that are, if not acceptable, then at least less unacceptable.

However, Derrida's ethics can only ever be provisional. For example, in 34

discussing how the 'centre' of a structure simultaneously articulates the ground for and limits 'freeplay', Derrida is directed by the acknowledgement that 'the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself.'⁹⁰ Thus 'thinkability' simultaneously acts as the limit that Derrida is transgressing and the impossibility of actually transgressing it - it is simultaneously the condition and annulment of Derrida's thought. In addition, the possibility for agency/action described above always takes place within the structure of presence, *différance*, which is never perceived and 'always already'. *Différance*, then, details the cosmology of Derrida's philosophy by positing 'meaning' as always provisional. For example, even as *différance* is rigorously thought over the ground of close textual analysis, it constantly spirals outward towards an infinite indeterminacy, simultaneously spiraling inward toward an original aporia. The sum possibility of agency in Derrida's ambiguous ethics, then, is perhaps best captured in Cage's famous statement: "I have nothing to say and I am saying it."⁹¹

Concluding Thoughts

It may be argued that the social/ecological/cosmological distinction that we have made here is dubious for at least two reasons: firstly, for the reasons articulated by Derrida in his critique of Lévi-Strauss' nature/culture distinction with respect to the incest prohibition⁹² - objections which were similarly articulated by Hardt and Negri in response to a local/global political distinction.⁹³ These arguments demonstrate, alongside the entire project of poststructuralism, that binary divisions and totalized categories are no longer sustainable, except as the surface produced by the 'ideological subtext which determines the conditions of the very possibility of meaning.'⁹⁴ Secondly, the philosophy invoked by these terms is historically inconsistent and ever-changing, over-simplified in its representation here, and qualitatively changed when it is translated to the abstract realm of Music. These are accurate criticisms, in defense against which it can only be emphasized that the terms and categories are used provisionally – they are not conclusions in themselves but instead act as conceptual 'placeholders' that allow for the consideration of three disparate constructions of Music in non-oppositional terms, allowing the constructions to supplement rather than oppose one another. The conclusions of this essay, then, are self-reflexive, being simply that the thinkers intersected here on the site of Music *can* be intersected on the site of Music, and doing so under provisional terms produces results that are themselves provisional. As such, what this paper suggests about Music can only be stated provisionally: one is no closer to understanding what Music *is*, 'objectively', through this paper, which has only articulated a selection of modes through which Music may be thought. To that end, this paper has particularly attempted to emphasize Music's malleability with respect to philosophical categories and concepts, such that future explorations of Music from the perspective of those concepts may be facilitated. The flight between cosmology, ecology, and the social, then, as the act of musicology *par excellence*?

Postlude

We now see a fourth perspective that has emerged. Beyond the cosmological, 36

the ecological, and the social, there is the position of this essay itself (which may be the position proper of musicology itself), even the *writing* of this essay itself, as a Deleuzian assemblage of Music - a rhizomatic multiplicity where (by definition) 'any point of the rhizome can be connected to any other.'⁹⁵ Since 'determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions (...) cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature,'⁹⁶ it is understood that the conclusions of this paper represent tracings that must be 'put back on the map.'⁹⁷ That is, the alliances traced here occupy a 'plateau' (a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culmination point or external end [Ibid., 22]) of the multiplicity Music. They do not constitute an evolutionary gesture towards a meta-theory of Music, but *are* directly allied in the construction of Music that is presented here.

What does this mean? That we can shift and reverse the order of everything that has been presented here, without negating what has been said. We see in the *Prelude* the material of the *Postlude*, and neither is either inside or outside of the text proper. Further, although this paper has argued that, for example, a cosmology emerges from within Adorno's social Music, extrapolated from the logic of the social, is this *exclusively* true? Could it not be shown that Adorno's dominant social is constructed from his cosmology, from a 'trickling-down', and that this does not appear to be emphasized in his philosophy only because it is so obvious? Or, more radically, that the social and cosmological planes (or plateaus) exist *simultaneously* within Adorno, just as they have been shown here to exist *simultaneously* within Music. Of course, it is also true they also do not exist at all (as was stated in the *Concluding Thoughts*). Is Adorno any less 'conceptually malleable' than Music itself? Emphatically, then, this paper has not described a structural 'Russian doll', with the 'social' nested inside the 'cosmological', and 'ecology' describing the process of masking or unmasking the dolls. Instead, this paper has used a narrow selection of thinkers to examine an indeterminate concept within provisional categories. If what has resulted is a 'multiplicity', as is claimed, then it must be emphasized that this multiplicity itself does not serve as a transcendental metaphor. Multiplicity, as it is used here, can never encapsulate the entire philosophical landscape because each time a single plateau comes into focus the rhizomatic structure that defines it is eclipsed. What is offered here in this paper, then, fails to be Multiplicity as it becomes a multiplicity, and nothing more. As Derrida has said, 'it is *between* different things that one can think difference. But this difference-between may be understood in two ways: as another difference or as access to nondifference.'⁹⁸ While each of the two essays simultaneously presented here has, in a sense, chosen the latter understanding, this *paper* has chosen the former.

Notes

¹ This *Prelude* functions to simultaneously present and elaborate the ideas of the essay in a way that is less narrative than that of the 'text' proper. The *Prelude* is both inside and outside of the text proper, contributing to its content and form without 'developing' either. As such, the stylized presentation serves to contextualize the forthcoming text while also marking the *Prelude* as an independent entity in its own right. In turn, the presence of the text which follows the *Prelude* relieves the *Prelude* of its responsibility for formal development, permitting it a degree of whimsy that would otherwise be unacceptable. In this sense, this particular prelude functions in the same manner as most preludes found in 'western art music' (see Bach's Cello Suite No.1, for example).

² These terms are used provisionally, as 'conceptual placeholders', rather than definitively or categorically. Broadly, then, ecology is used to suggest a global, non-systemic complexity (rather than to connote a biological/environmental relation); Sociality is used to refer to the philosophical plane where agency may refer to individual or collective action, and interaction between people is of primary importance; Cosmology refers to the study of the origin and structure of the universe. Finally, the body of this paper, containing these two essays, is ultimately seen to perform a fourth plateau, beyond sociality, cosmology, and ecology. This plateau is that of the Deleuzian 'multiplicity', which is considered in the *Postlude* (since such a consideration must necessarily come from a position that is simultaneously internal and external to the text proper).

³ For an interpretation of Lacan's 'Thing' that in the sense that it is presented here, see Žižek's discussion of the 'place between two deaths' in Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso), 131-149.

⁴ This section explores the possibilities of transferring Baudrillard's discussion of 'simulation' and the (impossible) 'real' to a consideration of 'musical performance' and Music. To this end, Baudrillard's syntax is occasionally appropriated into the text unannounced. This move gestures towards the importance of Baudrillard's 'style' in his philosophy, although a comprehensive move of that type is beyond the scope of this paper. Further justification for this appropriation, if it is needed, can be found in Baudrillard's own use of false quotation at the beginning of the essay, where he announces his own thoughts as Ecclesiastes'. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, tr. Sheila Glazer (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994).

⁵ This correlation is found in the two concepts' positions in their respective universal/particular problematics.

⁶ *Simulacra*, 3.

⁷ That is, the constitutive musicality of music is intensified to such an extent that music ceases to be musical. As a simple illustration of this, consider a composer who continually utilizes various compositional techniques, each of which demonstrates a mastery of her craft: if applied in a single work, these various techniques eventually work against the quality of the composition (as a musical work), though they may still be properly understood as musical techniques. I am here considering this (Baudrillardian) logic in the *field* of music itself, then, rather than in the context of a single musical work.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ 'Formal analysis' here denotes study of the musical score within the 'western art music' analytic tradition, particularly as it has been manifested in musical modernism. That is, the score is taken as a realization of the 'pure abstract' form of the piece, which form exists independent of cultural analysis. In this mode, the meaning of a piece becomes transcendent and ahistorical, and is entirely captured in its codification (in the form of the score).

¹⁰ *Simulacra*, 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹² *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, 3.

¹³ This is, of course, a crude representation of Žižek's complex relation with dialectical materialism, which relation bears a stronger resemblance to poststructuralism than Žižek is willing to acknowledge. The point here is not to mount a sustained critique of Žižek, though, so much as to gesture towards the critical perspectives that are foreclosed by Žižek in his insistence on his status as a thinker of dialectical materialism – foreclosures that ultimately ground his thought.

¹⁴ In contrast to the psychoanalytic unconscious, Baudrillard conjectures (from the perspective of the object, rather than that of the subject) that our 'true unconscious is perhaps in [the] ironic power of nonparticipation of nondesire, [...] of *expulsion* of all powers of all wills, of all knowledge, of all meaning onto representatives surrounded by a halo of derision. Our unconscious would [...] be made of this joyful *expulsion* of all encumbering superstructures of being and will" (*Selected Writings*, 220).

¹⁵ *Selected*, 254.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 258.

¹⁷ In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities, cited in Arthur Kroker and David Cook, *The Postmodern Scene: Excremental Culture and Hyper-Aesthetics* (Montréal: New World Perspectives, 1986), 172.

¹⁸ *Forgetting Foucault*, cited in Kroker, 172.

¹⁹ Robert W. Witkin, *Adorno on Music* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 136.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 172.

²² Theodor Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music' in *The Culture Industry*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge Classics, 1982 [1991]), 38

²³ *Adorno On Music*, 172. It should be noted that Adorno's 'critique of jazz' is consistent with his general critique of both modern music and the culture industry. .

²⁴ Here Adorno is referring specifically to musical syntax. 'Surface-level complexity' should be understood in the context of formal musical analysis, and thus refers to 'internal/musical' complexity (as opposed to the way in which 'complexity' is thought in relation to 'ecology').

²⁵ *The Culture Industry*, 32

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

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- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *Adorno On Music*, 174.
- ³³ *Culture*, 35.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³⁵ *Adorno On Music*, 165.
- ³⁶ *Culture*, 45.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 48.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 45.
- ⁴³ Adorno's 'depoliticization' could more accurately be called a 'status-quo politics'. From Foucault and others it is clear that to act within a dominant ideology is to perform its politics, not to be apolitical.
- ⁴⁴ *Adorno On Music*, 168.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.
- ⁴⁶ *Culture*, 60.
- ⁴⁷ *Adorno on Music.*, 179
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ⁴⁹ This mode of argument is exemplified in Foucault's dismissal of 'the repressive hypothesis', argued throughout *A History of Sexuality*.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.
- ⁵¹ *Culture*, 44.
- ⁵² *Adorno On Music*, 170.
- ⁵³ *Sublime*, 133.
- ⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, tr. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Company. . 1966 [2002]), 163.
- ⁵⁵ In fact, it could be shown (and surely has been) that ethics (as an examination of the concepts involved in reason) cannot be contested in any cosmology, including the dominant Christian one, because cosmology is by definition totalizing.
- ⁵⁶ *Adorno On Music*, 169.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵⁸ John Cage, *For the Birds* [with Daniel Charles] (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1995), 229.

⁵⁹ Niklas Luhmann. *Social Systems* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 31.

⁶⁰ The paradox of this situation serves as a reminder that Derrida's philosophy does not occupy a 'middle ground' between cosmology and sociality either, despite the temptation to consider it in that way. For example, one sometimes hears reference to Derrida's thought being more radical than Foucault's but less so than that of Baudrillard, thus placing it 'between' the two.

⁶¹ There is a correlation -- brought to my attention during the publication process -- between the term 'ecology' as it is elaborated here, and the 'eco-logic' of Guattari's 'ecosophy', presented in Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, tr. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (New Jersey: The Athlone Press, 1989 [2000]). I have decided to maintain the distinction between the two terms, though, as 'ecology' here is (in a certain sense) more provisional than 'ecosophy' in that it is mobilized prior to a conclusive notion of the real, and independent of a particular political valency.

⁶² Spivak in Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967[1976]), xliii.

⁶³ Spivak in *Grammatology*, xliii.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Obviously, this is not the only place where Derrida considers this subject. This particular passage was chosen here for its construction of Music as an analytical site.

⁶⁶ *Grammatology*, 195.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 199.

⁷³ One sees an interesting addition to McLuhan's critique of 'visual space' here. While McLuhan also identified the ontological consequences of graphic spatiality, in failing to recognize the existence of Derrida's 'arché-writing' he was mistakenly led to articulate this graphic spatiality as an extension of the phonetic alphabet. Through the concept of 'arché-writing' (articulated in *Grammatology* in the critique of Lévi-Strauss), Derrida shows that this broader definition of writing comes into being with the advent of language itself, thus problematizing McLuhan's phonetic alphabet distinction.

⁷⁴ Spivak in *Grammatology*, xxxix.

⁷⁵ *Grammatology*, 200.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ These intervals are the first three pitches of the harmonic series, which is determined by successively adding the frequency of the original sound wave. For example, the first four additional harmonics extending from A440Hz are A880Hz (P8), E1320Hz (P5 [+P8]), A1760Hz (2*P8), and D2200Hz (P4 [+2*P8]). This series extends indefinitely and is present in all sounds, with the relative strength of particular harmonics in a given sound allowing us to distinguish it from others. These intervals are consonant because the 'peaks' of the sound waves coincide such that one does not perceive 'harmonic beating'.

⁸⁴ Loosely, 'spectral music' refers to music that is composed from computer-generated analysis of sound waves. While still often scored for acoustic instruments, this music characteristically features intervals of less than a semi-tone (the smallest division of the equally tempered 'western art music' scale).

⁸⁵ *Grammatology*, 215.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Cage is generally acknowledged as one of the most influential musical thinkers of the 20th Century. To connect Derrida's analysis of Rousseau with Cage, then, is to demonstrate its relevance *within* musicological discourse, in addition to describing Music philosophically, from outside of musical discourse. Of course, this inside/outside relation to musical discourse is itself subject to deconstruction.

⁸⁹ *Grammatology*, 201.

⁹⁰ Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (New York: Routledge, 1967 [1993]), pp 278 - 294. Cited from <<http://www.hydra.umn.edu/derrida/sign-play.html>>.

⁹¹ John Cage, *Silence* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 109.

⁹² Jacques Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context' in *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (New York: Routledge, 1971 [1976]), 307 - 330.

⁹³ Michael Haardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 44-45.

⁹⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), xiii.

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13

⁹⁸ *Grammatology*, 223.

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