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# Becoming-Music, Becoming-Intimate, Becoming-Imperceptible: Toward a Pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian Musicology

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# « Becoming-Music, Becoming-Intimate, Becoming-Imperceptible »

## Brad Osborn

Abstract

Musicologists have recently begun applying the diverse philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari to music. Most contributors strive for rigorous adherence to early Deleuzian principles-a position I refer to as "orthodox"-and are therefore hesitant to posit any sort of musical objecthood or listener subjectivity. By contrast, this article espouses an approach I deem "pragmatic," which takes as points of departure pragmatist theories found in the work of Richard Rorty, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Though one may initially point to the irreconcilable differences in their approaches, both Rorty and Deleuze were more interested in creative readings of canonical philosophers than in representing them objectively. My article, in turn, takes the same approach with the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, particularly their pragmatic theories of linguistics. After identifying this element as the driving force behind the "becoming" so central to their philosophy, the article closes with a pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian listening experiment involving Sigur Rós's piece "Untitled One."

Recently, musicologists have begun applying the diverse philosophies of Deleuze (and Guattari) to music [(1)]. Most contributors strive for rigorous adherence to early Deleuzian principles-a position I refer to as "orthodox"-and are therefore hesitant to posit any sort of musical objecthood or listener subjectivity. But how is this position possible when speaking of musical experience? Perception, even in a collective assemblage [(2)], still necessitates a listening subject, while aesthetics, with or without an ontologically-stable musical object, still references an object *qua* the noun described. Thus, many orthodox Deleuzo-Guattarian analyses fall short of the subverted subject/object positions they promise, supplanting an analytical method (music *a* shares attribute *x* with Deleuzian philosophy *b*, thus *a*=*b*?) as a metaphoric sleight of hand.

By contrast, this essay espouses an approach to Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology I deem "pragmatic." A pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology acknowledges the subject and object positions inherited from Enlightenment practices as a first step toward deterritorializing them, toward proliferating them in all directions [(3)]. In accordance with the postmodern sobriety of *A Thousand Plateaus* (contra the modernist excess of *Difference and Repetition*, a point to which I will return [(4)]), I suggest that to avoid completely evacuating music-analytical thought of its referents a pragmatic stratification of subject and object must be preserved. This thesis is corroborated by passages of *A Thousand Plateaus*warning us of "emptied" and "cancerous" bodies, which, by failing to hold onto any fragment of subjectivity, become lost in a sea of schizophrenia [(5)].

The essay proceeds in three plateaus as follows. First, a précis of key points from Rorty's theory of

pragmatism, as well as those from *A Thousand Plateaus*, provides the philosophical underpinnings. Second, I review some of the secondary musicological literature involving Deleuze and Guattari, focusing particularly on problems associated with orthodox approaches, and suggest how a pragmatic approach to Deleuze and Guattari might liberate more vivid musical insight. Third, as an illustration of what a pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology might look like, I provide an account of a listening experiment emphasizes the pragmatic "schizoanalysis" and "nomad thought" found throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. I demonstrate that many of the unimaginative fallouts found in the "orthodox" readings I discuss in the second plateau can be avoided, ironically, through a closer reading of Deleuze and Guattari's own theory of pragmatism.

# First Plateau: Pragmatism in Rorty and Deleuze and Guattari

My ideas on pragmatism are influenced by readings of both the late neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's writings on pragmatism found throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*. For Deleuze and Guattari, pragmatics is simply another name for the mode of thought they espouse throughout the rest of the book: "rhizomatics, stratoanalysis, schizoanalysis, nomadology, micropolitics, pragmatics, the science of multiplicities". (6) Rather than recapitulate oft-cited quotes from *A Thousand Plateaus* regarding this central tenet of the book, the following discussion will center on Rorty's philosophy, highlighting some of the many analogues in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of pragmatism, especially its most sustained exposition in "Postulates of Linguistics" (7).

One resounding characteristic of Rorty's pragmatism is his lack of patience with the analytic philosophical style in which he was trained. He urges that many of the great problems posed by philosophers like Russell and Wittgenstein were nothing more than "language games" (8). Though, to be clear, Rorty is very sympathetic to the importance of language-Rorty often speaks to the *primacy* and *contingency* of language. Much of his work can be read not only as a critique of the analytical style, but as a critique of metaphysics: "A postmetaphysical culture seems to me no more impossible than a postreligious one, and equally desirable" (9). By postmetaphysical, Rorty desires a society that accepts the contingency of its own language-its inability to describe the "real" world-thus accepting that language is only capable of describing other language (10). He concludes that philosophy, like empirical science (as much as a scientist might dispute this), is merely another literary genre, no more capable of unveiling truth than Orwell or Shakespeare.

As an anti-metaphysicist, it should be clear that Rorty aims to align his mode of thought with Hegelian (11), rather than Kantian traditions. What this means for analysis, musical or otherwise should be clear from the following quotation:

*"To say that we should drop the idea of truth as out there waiting to be discovered is not to say that we have discovered that, out there, there is no truth. It is to say that our purposes would be served best by ceasing to see truth as a deep matter, as a topic of philosophical interest, or 'true' as a term which repays 'analysis'. 'The nature of truth' is an unprofitable topic, resembling in this respect 'the nature of man' and 'the nature of God'"* (12).

This speaks to a consistent problem in recent adaptations of Deleuzo-Guattarian thought to music. By straining to keep consistent with these often-inconsistent philosophies, many commentators find themselves straining to say anything meaningful about music (13). In other words, musicological writings of this nature often sacrifice musicality in favor of rigid specificity. As Rorty warns: "Chances are that we will judge rigor more exactingly than any other parameter of value such as interest, involvement, or contribution to the culture" (14).While he draws significant inspiration from a diverse field of philosophical traditions, Rorty's application of those texts is not a faithful rendering of the philosophies contained within them (15). Instead, Rorty is interested in re-interpretation, or, what we can *do* with those philosophies. And it is here that we may observe his shared interest with Deleuze-esoteric readings of canonical philosophers-or what Zizek has called philosophical "buggery" (16). Paradoxically, the most faithful application of Deleuzian philosophy may be that which is most reverently *unfaithful*. In his creative readings of such diverse thinkers as Spinoza, Nietzsche, Proust, Kafka, and others, Deleuze rarely strived to portray an accurate representation of that philosopher's works. Rather, on par with his consistent focus on creation (17), Deleuze was more interested in deterritorializing those philosophies into something new (18).

This action-the creative application of a philosophy-is precisely what my essay does with the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari. Though, as I will show, these creative applications, if built around Deleuze and Guattari's pragmatic theories of linguistics, are simultaneously the most faithful as well [(19)]. Ultimately, like Rorty and Deleuze and Guattari, I am more interested in what we *do* with these philosophies than how stoically we represent the philosopher. Thus, the question I would ask of such an analysis is: how does this application allow us to think differently about music, or about Deleuze and Guattari? Not: how faithfully does this application reproduce the central tenets of Deleuze and Guattari? [(20)]

# Second Plateau: Orthodoxy and Pragmatism in Deleuzo-Guattarian Musicology-Four Approaches

| Orthodox | Pragmatic |
|---|---|
| (Analytical) Musical object *a* shares Deleuzian attribute *x* thus music *a* is *x*, thus music *a* is Deleuzian | (Creative) App tenets of Dele |
| (Metaphysical) Careful not to interpret Deleuze and Guattari, steadfast to their principles, reverent. | (Becoming) A |

**Example 1.** Four Approaches to Deleuzo-Guattarian Musicology

**Example 1** represents the two positions I have identified in Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology: orthodox and pragmatic. Each of these two positions can then be subdivided into two distinct approaches. Within the orthodox position, there are two distinct approaches to which I will take objection. The first approach, which I have labeled as "analytical," a title which imparts a relationship to analytical philosophy, focuses on labeling musical elements with Deleuzian attributes. Another orthodox approach, which I call "metaphysical," focuses more on remaining true to early Deleuzian rhetoric and methodology, and thus must avoid talk of two important elements of musicology-subject and object positions-since it is largely believed that those two elements lie outside the bounds of Deleuze and Guattari's metaphysics, even though these positions, destabilized as they may be, are completely in accordance with the pragmatist philosophy of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

In the right hand column of **Example 1** are the two approaches I have labeled as pragmatic, though I am not claiming that writers in this genre take any direct inspiration from any pragmatist philosopher other than Deleuze and Guattari-merely, that these approaches may be fruitfully aligned. The "creative" approach (which I will align with Hallward's theory of "creation" in Deleuze) focuses not on remaining true to Deleuzo-Guattarian rhetoric, as in the metaphysical approach, but rather on how we can apply this philosophy to musical thought. Within the "becoming" approach, instead of denying the subject and object positions, authors admit these positions as necessary components of musical description. I will later show that it is only by acknowledging these positions that we can begin to deterritorialize them.

In his 2008 article, Michael Gallope's primary focus is on the Deleuzian concept of the virtual versus the actual [(21)]. The overarching problem I find in Gallope's argument is that he cannot talk about a musical work in any conventional sense, since that would entail acknowledging an objecthood he finds not *a propos* for Deleuzian metaphysics-a problem characteristic of the "metaphysical" approach I have defined. Such approaches often misinterpret passages such as the following:

*"In what sense is the statement always collective even when it seems to be emitted by a solitary singularity like that of the artist? The answer is that the statement never refers back to the subject. Nor does it refer back to a double-that is, to two subjects, one of which would act as the cause or the subject of enunciation and the other as a function of the subject of the statement. There isn't a subject who emits the statement or a subject about which the statement would be emitted"* [(22)].

But this passage in no way *denies* our ability to talk of subjects and objects. It only provides a Barthesian rebuttal to the linearity of interpretation often attributed to structuralism. Since Gallope refuses to speak of objects or subjects, he instead chooses to speak of a "transcendental empiricism," which he takes from Deleuze's essay "Immanence, a Life" [(23)]. He claims that, if we are going to find a "Deleuzian musical work," it will be one that lets us tune in to the virtual, one that helps us escape our sedimented existence

in actual, worldly relations. But how can one begin to think about a "work," or any noun for that matter, without acknowledging an object? Gallope claims that Deleuze would have us liquidate any sort of objectivity (whether that object be a musical work, performer, composer, history, structure, score, notation, culture, etc.) in favor of pure sensation.

Gallope is pushing Deleuze down an anti-humanist path that renders listening subjects void, even generalizing what we might call musical perception to "percepts," which are indifferent to listening subjects [24]. However, this mode of analysis does not escape subjectivity, it merely relocates the listening subject from the realm of the individual to a sort of Jungian listening collective. This idealistic collective is, anthropologically speaking, irresponsible, since it ignores our unique musical dispositions and prior experiences-in other words, our personal musical histories.

After laying his theoretical groundwork, Gallope conducts an analysis of a supposedly Deleuzian musical work, and in this reflects the second, "analytical" approach I will describe shortly. His musical object (though he would not call it that) is not a score, composer, or piece, but a *performance* by Whitney Houston of "One Moment in Time." Here, Gallope takes too literal a cue from the Deleuzian concept of "absolute vibration," crafting an ill-conceived analogy to purely musical vibration, and in this we can even sense an extreme Hanslickian formalism.

Ian Buchanon's article on Deleuzian approaches to pop music articulates the other orthodox approach: "analytical" [25]. The refrain is one of the most complex and multi-faceted aspects of *A Thousand Plateaus*-demanding the constant negotiation of territory, re-territory, and de-territory-yet Buchanon pays little homage to the complexity of the concept [26]. His entire argument reduces to "pop music is a refrain," exemplified clearly in the following passage:

*"A housewife might sing to herself as she washes the dishes, or else have the radio playing in the background, and by so doing build a wall of sound around her to shelter a precious interiority, her self-created reserve of inner strength. [...]. The refrain [...] is essentially territorial, territorializing, or reterritorializing, and it quickly reclaims music for itself"* [27].

Clearly, Buchanon envisions the refrain as a subject-*creating* position. But this is surely not the point of music. Deleuze and Guattari describe music as powerful in its ability to *deterritorialize* the refrain [28], to create a line of flight away from the subjective. This misreading leads Buchanon to an irreconcilable contradiction. If pop music is, indeed, a Deleuzo-Guattarian refrain (and, if so, why can only *pop* music do this?) then it should draw us ever inward, as subjects [29]. But what we see happening instead with pop music consumption is that it incites *pack formation* [30]. Buchanon's contradiction is set in motion later on this same page, as he asserts:

*"A tune that sticks in your head and can be easily whistled or hummed is a refrain; a tune that requires more than one set of lips to whistle or hum is, by virtue of this inherent polyvocality, becoming-musical [...]. What popular music does is set in motion a becoming-minor, or, what amounts to the same thing, a becoming-public of the otherwise private individual which as Deleuze and Guattari have said, is the initiation of a line of flight that is an escape"* [31].

Buchanon's analytical methodology (music *a* is a Deleuzo-Guattarian *x*) is responsible for this confusion. Had he not set out to make this analytical claim, the article could have proceeded by discussing the spectrum of ways we appraise popular music, from the individual to the collective. Popular music could serve not only as a refrain, but also as a mode of pack formation, and these need not be mutually exclusive.

A more pragmatic approach to Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology takes as its point of departure not only Rorty and Nietzsche, but *A Thousand Plateaus* itself. Much of this tradition can be described as *creation*, of creativity. This point is articulated thoroughly in Peter Hallward's recent book. Like Rorty and Deleuze and Guattari, Hallward's focus is on what we *do* with the philosophies of Deleuze (and Guattari, to a lesser extent). Hallward synthesizes many fundamental tenets of Deleuzian philosophy by showing that its multi-faceted plateaus can fruitfully be read as different articulations of the same general point: "if all being is creativity, it can only fully *become* so through the tendential evacuation of all actual or creaturely mediation" [32].

As an example of this pragmatic approach, consider Michael Klein's article "Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* as Territorial Assemblage," which addresses the problem of the Deleuzian subject [33]. Klein starts with a

working definition of a Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage: "Put more succinctly than Deleuze and Guattari might have found comfortable, an assemblage is a multiplicity that refuses to stand still long enough for us to unify it in the branches of a single structure" (34). Within this sentence alone, we can read an opposition to both orthodox approaches exemplified by Buchanon and Gallope. Klein is pragmatically reshaping an applicable model of the territorial assemblage for the purposes of analyzing a piece of music. His interest is clearly in a subjective account of this music ("for us to unify it"), a becoming-oriented attitude that bespeaks a pragmatic interpretation of the Deleuzian subject.

While Buchanon's binary analytical method leads him to confusion (does the refrain equal territorialization or deterritorialization?), Klein's pragmatic approach highlights the relationship between territorialization and deterritorialization:

*"Deleuzian narratives follow the model of the bird's song, beginning with chaos, within a milieu of milieus [...]. within chaos, the bird's song marks a milieu, a safe place that is the first act of order. From the safety of its milieu, the bird finds objectives that extend into other milieus and create a territory [...]. At the conclusion of a Deleuzian narrative, the expressive territory releases joyous energy into the cosmos"* (35).

The initial birdsong clearly marks out a territory. By extending its song into other milieus, the bird deterritorializes, becoming part of a collective assemblage; yet this act reterritorializes into a larger territory. The final act of releasing joyous (musical) energy into the cosmos represents a grand synthesis of birdsong, something Deleuze and Guattari might herald as one step closer to the Body without Organs (though relative deterritorializations are different in kind from their unattainable absolute-the BwO).

Klein's article demonstrates Deleuzian approaches to many distinct objects: the Debussy piece in the article's title, Watteau's paintings of the island of Cythera, and Bergsonian models of time. By attenuating the academic desire for analytical rigor in favor of broad analytical strokes, he also exemplifies the "creative" approach. Klein states that this pragmatic approach is, as I have suggested, itself directly in line with Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy:

*"The alert reader will have realized that this Deleuzian interpretation with its emphasis on music as territory is at odds with the Bergsonian one, in which the static tonal center denies a sense of space. This incongruity, however, is not problematical from a Deleuzian perspective, which rejects any demand for a unitary outlook capable of synthesizing stray observations in the service of an economical, unified narrative"* (36).

This quintessentially Deleuzian task of creatively re-reading historical bodies is taken up by Marianne Kielian-Gilbert's recent chapter "Music and the Difference in Becoming" (37). Kielian-Gilbert's article analyzes the process of "becoming-music" in a range of musical works, some canonical, some less so. Among them: Bach's Cello Suite in G Major, "El Tango de Roxanne" from *Moulin Rouge*, and Stravinsky's *Tango for Piano Solo*. She describes her approach to analysis as a "shift from representation (via analogy, identity, opposition, or resemblance) to movement/composition by speeds and intensities" (38). A process of analysis that circumvents these four strata (which Deleuze originally presented in *Difference and Repetition*) guides her philosophy of becoming-music (39).

Kielian-Gilbert is also interested in using feminist theory to circumvent these strata. This comes through most clearly in her use of theories of "performance" and "performative" gestures put forth by Irigaray and others:

*"This shifting into performing is a crucial dimension of becoming. The critical move-with philosophical, theoretical, social, and experiential implications-is toward performative expressivity and away from objectifying music as a text; that is, as a passive bearer of qualities. In this performing/expressivity, encounters with the inventive and the novel align with new ways of experiencing and thinking"* (40).

What I find most fascinating about Kielian-Gilbert's article is that, though she embodies the "creative" approach to musical becoming quite well, she does so through a rather *orthodox* reading of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Both Scherzinger and Gallope have identified a distinct turn in *A Thousand Plateaus* when compared to Deleuze's solo work (e.g., *Difference and Repetition*). While Scherzinger has identified this "second moment" as a "postmodern sobriety" (41), Gallope identifies it as a shift from a predominantly metaphysical theory toward an *ethical* one in which "we move far beyond mere affirmation or repetition, using music to become one with animal and plant life" (42).

After identifying this pragmatic, creative element in *A Thousand Plateaus,* I would now like to conclude by illustrating this process of becoming through a description of a listening experiment. I hope to demonstrate Kielian-Gilbert's assertion that becoming is about "performative expressivity" rather than objectification through this creative, pragmatic experience.

# Third Plateau: A Pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian Listening Experiment-Sigur Rós, "Untitled One"

*"Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor phantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if Becoming-animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating animal, if it is clear that the human being does not 'really' become something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself [...]. What is real is the Becoming itself, the block of Becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which Becomes passes [...]. The Becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not"* [(43)].

Becoming-animal, like becoming-musical, entails movements of speed and slowness along a plane of consistency, both reflecting the smoothness that encompasses the sum total of a Deleuzo-Guattarian rhizomatic universe [(44)]. In *Francis Bacon*, Deleuze posits, "Man becomes animal, but he does not become so without the animal simultaneously becoming spirit, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man presented in the mirror as Eumenides or fate" [(45)]. I will suggest that becoming-music has much to do with this mirror metaphor (a point to which I will return through a reading of Rosolato), the mirror acting as a metaphor for the reciprocal deterritorialization of listening subject and musical object.

This approach to listening suggests the work of psychoanalyst Guy Rosolato. His research stresses the infant's developmental shift whereby the voice (of the mother) is transformed from pure sonorous material to signifying language. According to Rosolato, the voice is "at the same time emitted and heard, sent and received, and for the subject himself, it is as if, in comparison with the look, an 'acoustic' mirror were always functioning" [(46)]. This particular passage from Rosolato is powerful for pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology precisely because of this mirror metaphor-suggesting we are at once, through the magic of music, traversing a constantly deterritorialized space between listening subject and musical object, between receiver and creator.

As a process, becoming-music necessitates and begins with desire (and who among us does not desire a more intimate relationship with our musical objects?) [(47)]. I suggest that a desire for becoming-intimate provides the initial motivation (either consciously or sub-consciously) to deterritorialization. As John Rahn states:

*"Human life and music listened to by that life do not run parallel in straight lines never meeting, but rather Intertwine [capitalization in original] closely, touching each other all over, each penetrating and being penetrated by the other, so that while they touch they almost fuse into one entity, one life-music or music-life. All the complexities of human being-in-time are there for music's being-in-life and life's being-in-music"* [(48)].

The mating ritual of the green anaconda illustrates Rahn's imagery quite well [(49)]. The two large snakes entwine their bodies in such an intricate way that it is nearly impossible for an observer to tell where one begins and the other ends, to which snake any given segment belongs. Becoming-music, an action initially sparked by the listening subject's desire for intimacy with the musical object, likewise gradually approaches a becoming-imperceptible between the two, much like the anacondas' entwining.

*"Such an experience is not possible with your subjectivity in the foreground, for this will yield frustration at the uncentered authorship of the compositional object [...] you can use the music and its processes to clear the mind so that it can lead to a state of communion, of release from subjectivity [...]. We must then allow ourselves to be passive receptacles for sensual resonances"* [(50)].

But what practical listening strategies can a listener undertake in order to facilitate such a transformation? Deleuze and Guattari provide no strict guidelines for this, leaving it up to the listener to play a sort of pragmatic jazz:

*"Schizoanalysis, or pragmatics has no other meaning: Make a rhizome. But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment"* (51).

My experimental map of the path toward becoming-imperceptible entails deterritorialization of three strata: subjectification, objectification, and signification (52). With this Deleuzo-Guattarian framework in place, I conclude by reproducing my first-person (though, since each of us is several, there is hopefully "quite a crowd") account with this listening experiment (53).

Sigur Rós's sound evolves glacially, and is marked by two characterestic textures: lead vocalist Jón Þór "Jónsi" Birgisson's characteristic falsetto, and a distorted guitar played legato with a violin bow. Their second full-length album, simply titled *( )*, consists of eight untitled tracks. The vocal text is sung in gibberish, with blank pages provided for the listener to pen individual interpretations of the phonemes. "Untitled One" is the six-and-a-half minute opening track. Devoid of percussion, the texture is filled with string quartet and several different keyboard timbres. The first half of the song's form repeats a five-measure ground bass [D-?B-m?Fm?E-?A-] as the voice gradually ascends into a falsetto tessitura for a climax that features thicker textures and normative four-measure phrasing.

# Desubjectification

In attempting to desubjectify myself, I was constantly drawn to the sight of my physical body. In order to open the flows of becoming-intimate, I simply turned out the lights (54). Other environmental distractions were neutralized by pulling the shades, turning off phones, and by having the studio monitors loud enough to block any ambient noise. The experiment was undertaken under different states of hunger, exhaustion, stress, happiness, and exercise. I found that my body was most conducive to musical intimacy after exercising, eating, and when I was in a relatively stress-free state of mind.

The greatest stratum to overcome was self-reflectivity: "I am listening to this music in order to conduct an experiment ([...] this is a really great project [...]. I think it's working [...] except I'm thinking about myself again)." Ecofeminist author Starhawk experiences similar self-conscious moments in her experiments with becoming-wilderness:

*"Few of us can walk into a forest and simply be in the forest. Instead, by adulthood we are inside a story we're telling ourselves. Sometimes it's a story about our own weakness and inadequacy. Sometimes it's a story about how wonderful we are: 'I'm so spiritual. I'm attuned to the trees so much more sensitively than anyone else' [...]. Whatever inner dialogue we're running, it's interference. We end up walking around inside our own heads, not in the woods"* (55).

But what does it mean to desubjectify into a state of musical intimacy? Certainly, this entails different activities for different listening subjects. Perhaps performing music, looking at or visualizing familiar scores, or involving one's self kinesthetically (through yoga or dance) with a musical object may aid in this process. In my initial preparations for the Sigur Rós experiment, I began by playing the piece at the piano, then stood barefoot on the studio floor, letting the rhythms of the piece move through me as I responded kinesthetically through dance.

# Deobjectification

Through an analysis of Bacon's *Sweeney Agonistes* triptych, Deleuze addresses the role of the mouth in differentiating the head and the face. For Deleuze, while the head represents the perfect deterritorializable site for becoming-animal, the face is always a black hole of signification. He writes, "the mouth acquires that power of de-localization which turns all of the meat into a head without a face [...]. it is no longer a specific organ, but the hole through which the entire body escapes, and through which the flesh drops" (56). Deleuze's conception of the mouth as a resonance for meat suggests to me a strategy for becoming-music whereby the voice, in a pre-signifying function very similar to that described by Rosolato, acts as a sonorous bridge between listening subject and musical object.

Jónsi's voice is very different than my own. While his raspy tenor slips effortlessly into a falsetto,

reaching focused and projected pitches as high as many altos, I am a baritone, full and round in the lower registers, getting pinched and nasally around E4/F4. I had hypothesized that singing along might allow me to deobjectify and entwine with the musical object, but the difference in our vocal timbres only served to highlight the disconnect between my own voice and the disembodied musical object recorded by another subject-cum-musical object. Feeling the sympathetic muscular reactions in my own mouth (the meat)-tensing as Jónsi climbs into ever higher tessituras-proved to be more effective. I also noticed my body involuntarily pulsing with the slow but steady rhythm of the piano accompaniment. Both of these kinesthetic involvements were unconscious, and reflect a corporeal intimacy similar to the sympathetic and rhythmic bodily entwining two human beings (or anacondas) may experience during expressions of sexual intimacy.

Another unfortunate stumbling block to deobjectification came when I realized that I was sympathizing and gyrating with a digital audio file, played through a computer, run through a mixer, reproduced by studio monitors. Everything suddenly seemed so Marxian-my beloved companion in musical intimacy was no more than a blow-up doll of commodity fetishism, and all of the electronics reproducing it a materialistic substitute for the activity of music.

# Designification

"Untitled One" is a fitting musical object for this experiment due to its replacement of lexical text with gibberish [(57)]. By eliminating all lexical signs, the urge to wrap music into text-music metaphors was eliminated [(58)], allowing me to become intimate with the piece in the same way that I often listen to instrumental music. One might recall Rosolato once again here, who suggests that this intimacy, which originates from the mother's voice, may create for us a deterritorialized space in which the listener begins to feel "oceanic," carried away in currents of pure sonority [(59)].

However, as studies in musical hermeneutics have shown, instrumental music, especially tonal, can also exhibit signifying traits without text [(60)]. When we hear a tonal progression, we wrap the music within hierarchical, extra-musical functions through tonality. Even if one might argue that tonality is not an *extra*-musical concept, it is certainly not embedded in a specific musical object [(61)]. In order to limit the signification of functional tonality, I chose "Untitled One" for its less-hierarchical modal harmonic language.

Even in this cyclical progression I still found myself keying into arrivals of the A-flat and D-flat major triads as more structurally significant that the weaker F minor, B-flat minor, and inverted E-flat major. In fact, my lack of intimacy was bound with a longing for analysis, a sort of signification in which we assign orderly labels to parts of a musical object. At times, this intimacy experiment derailed into a glorified ear-training exercise.

Instead of *being*-analyst when I should be becoming-intimate, I took a break to perform some basic transcription and analysis of the piece. Whereas wrapping the counterpoint, hypermeter, and form had previously distracted me, completing this analysis facilitated greater intimacy. In fact, the analysis actually made me more entwined with the music due to my increased familiarity with the piece.

Nowhere in Deleuze and Guattari's section on the musical refrain, Rahn's essay on Repetition, or Dora Hanninen's essay on Recontextualization is the issue of previous experiences with a specific piece of music examined [(62)]. While Rahn's definition of intra-opus repetition [A=(a, then a)] does expand to include repeated listening experiences of a single piece [A=(A, then A)], it does not include an *x* or *y* variable to account for differing circumstances of those experiences [(63)]. Hanninen's model does account for this recontextualization, but only at the inter-opus level, which avoids repetitions of the same piece. Though all three avoid this concept because it seems extra-musical and signifying, those previous experiences *were* part of a listening experience; and, since becoming-music leads us to a deterritorialized space somewhere between listening subject and musical object, the distinctions between musical and "extra-musical" become attenuated.

This listening experiment suggests a theoretical framework whereby a listening subject's initial desire for becoming-intimate with a piece may potentially lead to exploring lines of flight which deterritorialize that listening subject into a state of becoming-music. In my experiments, the more I was able to

deterritorialize the three strata, the closer I reached a state of becoming-imperceptible. The aftermath of those near-imperceptible experiences left me with the array of emotions one may feel after experiencing deep sexual intimacy: exhilarated, incapacitated, fulfilled, penetrated, even vulnerable. In the more powerful deterritorializations, there was smiling, shaking, even tears. In the less successful deterritorializations, there were feelings of regret, insatiability, and frustration. Although both musical and sexual intimacy involve deterritorialization, and both may involve any combination of desubjectification, deobjectification, and designification, the question of whether temporal displacement of a specific becoming-music (e.g., recalling past intimate experiences, or repeating those experiences) constitutes a signifying gesture, somehow wrapping the present becoming-music by relating it to another becoming-music, remains unanswered. Ultimately, the desire for absolute desubjectification is not only impossible, but also not in accord with the underlying project of *A Thousand Plateaus*-subjectification is a process, not a state of nature:

*"Incorporeal transformations, incorporeal attributes [expression], apply to bodies, and only to bodies [subjects/content] [...]. The independence of the form of expression and the form of content is not the basis for a parallelism between them or a representation of one by the other, but on the contrary a parceling of the two, a manner in which expressions are inserted into contents"* [(64)].

Readers versed in the musicological literature will undoubtedly notice a spirit of the so-called "new musicology" movement in the foregoing analysis [(65)]. This is because the split between a subjective new musicology and a more empirically grounded music theory itself mirrors the split between a Rortian-cum-Deleuzian pragmatism and a more empirically grounded analytical philosophy. Rorty's "ironist" [(66)], qua *Eiron*, rescues Deleuze and Guattari from the character of *Alazôn* in which many academics have cast him. Thus, my call for a more pragmatic Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology entails the recognition that Deleuze and Guattari share more with Nietzsche and Rorty than with Wittgenstein or Russell. While I have focused on how Deleuze and Guattari can help us hear music in different ways, we must also allow for the possibility that music can provide for us the line of flight necessary to understand the diverse philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari differently.

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1. I will hereafter refer to such scholarship as "Deleuzo-Guattarian musicology", whether or not the author in question relies on the philosophies of Gilles Deleuze or the four books co-authored with Félix Guattari.

2. Andrew Dell'Antonio, "Collective Listening: Postmodern Critical Processes and MTV", in Andrew Dell' Antonio(ed.), *Beyond Structural Listening: Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004, pp. 201-232.

3. For perspectives on subjectivity and objectivity in modern musicology see Lawrence Kramer, "Recognizing Schubert: Musical Subjectivity, Cultural Change, and Jane Campion's The Portrait of a Lady", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 29 n°1, 2002, pp. 25-52. Though a sustained defense of subject and object positions remains outside the constraints of this essay, the necessity of subject and object positions as components of perception is well documented in both modern philosophy and contemporary psychological studies on perception. See Suzanna Siegel, "Subject and Object in the Contents of Visual Experience", *The Philosophical Review* vol. 115 n°3, 2006, p. 357. Siegel presents evidence from these two disciplines, and ultimately argues that perception constitutes a blended space between subject and object positions: "One might say that [subject] *S* is perspectivally connected to an object when *S*'s visual phenomenology depends on her perspectival relation to that object".

4. Martin Scherzinger, "Musical Modernism in the thought of *Mille Plateaux*, and its Twofold Politic", in *Perspectives o*

5. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 285.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-110. Deleuze and Guattari's primary argument is for the incorporation of pragmatics as an equal component in the abstract machine of linguistics. Though arborescent models of linguistics often

admit pragmatic variations within their strict linearity, these are often taken into consideration only at the surface, leaving the tree structures intact: "when efforts are made to make Chomsky's trees bud and to shatter linear order, as long as the pragmatic components marking the ruptures are placed above the tree or effaced from the derivation nothing has really been accomplished, one has failed to constitute a rhizome" (*Ibid.*, p. 92).

8. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 317.

9. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. xvi.

10. "Pragmatic determinations cease to be subject to the alternative: fall outside language, or answer to explicit conditions that syntacticize and semanticize pragmatic determinations." See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

11. There of course exists an irreconcilable difference between Hegel and *Deleuze*-the Hegelian dialectic-in which everything is defined according to what it is *not*. Deleuze's radical theory in *Difference and Repetition* holds that everything is defined by difference-in-itself.

12. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, *op. cit*., p. 8.

13. Though Gallope's work on Deleuzian metaphysics typically falls within the orthodox category, the conclusion to his 2010 essay reflects that this position "seems to say hardly anything specific or interesting about music." See Michael Gallope, "The Sound of Repeating Life: Ethics and Metaphysics in Deleuze's Philosophy of Music", in Brian Hulse and Nick Nesbitt (ed.), *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*, London, Ashgate, 2010, p. 102.

14. Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1998, p. 169.

15. Richard Rorty, "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres", in Richard Rorty (ed.), *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 49-76.

16. "What got me by during that period was conceiving of the history of philosophy as a kind of ass-fuck, or, what amounts to the same thing, an immaculate conception. I imagined myself approaching an author from behind and giving him a child that would indeed be his but would nonetheless be monstrous" (Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. x). See also Slavoj Zizek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, New York: Routledge University Press, 2003, 47. Zizek reads Deleuze's approach as "excessive benevolence" toward the philosopher in question, an approach that hopefully comes through in my own work on Deleuze and Guattari.

17. Peter Hallward, *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation,* New York, Verso, 2006.

18. For an example of this technique in his co-authored texts, see Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986, p. 83.

19. For example, taking as a cue Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that "the pragmatic variables of usage are internal to enunciation and constitute the implicit presuppositions of language" (Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 85), one may admit any and all "external" variables one experiences whilst listening to music as valid components of analysis-precisely what my listening experiment in the end of this essay will demonstrate.

20. "The question is not: is it true? But: does it work?" (*Ibid.*, p. xv).

21. Michael Gallope, "Is There a Deleuzian Musical Work?", *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 46 n°2, 2008, pp. 93-129.

22. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature, op. cit.,* p. 83.

23. Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, Cambridge, Zone Books, 2001.

24. Amidst discussion of a Deleuzian metaphysics, Gallope's later essay puts this anti-humanist position even stronger: "the line of flight *escapes the score*, itself indifferent to the *actually written* sonorous object, indifferent to any subject involved: musician, listener, composer-anyone." See Michael Gallope, "The Sound of Repeating Life: Ethics and Metaphysics in Deleuze's Philosophy of Music", *op. cit*., p. 98.

25. One can also sense analytical moments in both of Gallope's recent essays: the exemplification of a Deleuzian musical work in "One Moment in Time" (see Michale Gallope, "Absolute Vibration : A Deleuzian Musical Work", Society for music theory annual meeting, Baltimore); and in passages where he insinuates that Deleuzian philosophy *x* is equivalent to Nietzschean philosophy *y* (See Michael Gallope, "The Sound of Repeating Life: Ethics and Metaphysics in Deleuze's Philosophy of Music", *op. cit*., p. 82 and p. 85).

26. Indeed, the topic is far too vast for me to address in this essay, and far too complex for Buchanon to address tangentially in a short article on pop music.

27. Ian Buchanon, "Deleuze and Pop Music", *Australian Humanities Review*, 1997, p. 4, http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-1997/buchanan.html

28. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

29. "A child, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath" (*Ibid.*, p. 311).

30. Andrew Dell'Antonio, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220. One might even describe the spontaneously "organized" reaction of the crowd to Whitney Houston's unprepared modulation (See Gallope, "Absolute Vibration : A Deleuzian Musical Work", *op. cit.*) in terms of pack formation.

31. Ian Buchanon, *op. cit*., pp. 4-5.

32. Peter Hallward, *op. cit., p.* 2.

33. Michael Klein, "Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* as Territorial Assemblage", *19th-Century Music*, vol. 31 n°1, 2007, *pp.* 28-52.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 49. "An assemblage is first a territory. A refrain territorializes music, acting as a point of order in the ever-becoming flux. But music can also deterritorialize the refrain and, by so doing, send itself outside its first boundary" (*Ibid.,* p. 51).

36. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

37. Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, "Music and the Difference in Becoming", in Brian C. Hulse and Nick Nesbitt (ed.), *Sounding the Virtual*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, pp. 199-226. Though Kielian-Gilbert focuses primarily on texts, specifically musical scores, Christian Asplund's article deals more with historical composers. In asserting that "[John] Cage pushes off the signifiant stratum, [J.S.] Bach the

subjective, and [Olivier] Messiaen the organic" (Christian Asplund, "A Body Without Organs: Three Approaches-Bach, Cage, and Messiaen", *Perspectives of New Music*, vol.35 n°2, 1997, p. 176), he engages in the same sort of "intellectual buggery" that Deleuze himself was interested in. The approach is more creative than analytical because these are treated as *observations*, with no attempt made at defending these readings with any analytical rigor.

38. Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, *op. cit*., p. 213.

39. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, *op. cit.*, p. 29 (reprinted in Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, *op. cit*., p. 201).

40. Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, *op. cit*., p. 221.

41. Martin Scherzinger, *op. cit*.

42. Michael Gallope, "The Sound of Repeating Life: Ethics and Metaphysics in Deleuze's Philosophy of Music", *op. cit*., p. 90.

43. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-25. Though I will briefly explicate some of the terms used in this text, I do assume a great deal of familiarity with their key concepts of becoming, deterritorialization, the rhizome, and the body without organs.

45. Tracy Warr (ed.), *The Artist's Body*, translated by Liz Heron, Phaidon Press, London, 2000, p. 197. Originally published as "Le corps, la viande et l'espirit, le devenir-animal", in *Francis Bacon*, Paris, Editions de la difference, 1981, pp. 19-22.

46. Guy Rosolato, "Entre corps et langage", Revue française de psychanalyse vol. 37 n°1 1974, p. 79; quoted in John Mowitt, *Percussion: Drumming, Beating, Striking*, Raleigh, Duke University Press, 2002, p. 47.

47. "Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfills, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are closest to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which Becoming is the process of Desire." (Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 272).

48. John Rahn, "Differences", in *Music Inside Out: Going Too Far in Musical Essays,* Amsterdam, Overseas Publishers Association, 2001, pp. 21-34.

49. I am not the first to use this intertwining metaphor: See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 309; and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, *op. cit*., p. 217.

50. Christian Asplund, *op. cit*., pp. 177-178.

51. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

52. *Ibid.*, *pp.* 149-166.

53. This experiment was conducted in a small recording studio in Seattle over several winter nights in 2007.

54. To be clear, this is not a matter of transcending the body. Rather it is a quest for immanence, for the virtual, for a space conducive to lines of flight away from the listening subject.

55. Starhawk, *The Earth Path,* San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers, 2004, pp. 50-69.

56. Tracy Warr (ed.), op. cit., p. 22.

57. Elisabeth Le Guin notes how musical experiences with non-native languages may be more able to escape signifying function and remain more purely musical. See Elisabeth Le Guin, "One Bar in Eight: Debussy and the Death of Description", in Andrew Dell' Antonio (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 233-251.

58. This sort of "wrapping" is explained in John Rahn, "Differences", in *op. cit.*

59. Guy Rosolato, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

60. See for example: Victor Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991; and Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994.

61. Tonal function, if embedded anywhere, would be found somewhere in Western analytical thought, rather than in the sounding music.

62. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-350; John Rahn, "Repetition", in in *op. cit.*, pp. 7-19; Dora Hanninen, "A Theory of Recontextualization in Music: Analyzing Phenomenal Transformations of Repetition", *Music Theory Spectrum*, 25/1, 2003, pp. 59-97.

63. In relation to Rahn's repetition function, this could potentially be related by the following modification of that function. A=[(A(x), then A(y)]. Let A stand for the Becoming-Music of any moment, while x and y represent extra-musical associations for a given Becoming-Music moment (possibly of the intimate nature), though this is a highly speculative rendering of the listening experience.

64. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96 ;

65. An exemplary article that also imparts a highly personal experience with music can be found in: Marion Guck, "Music Loving, Or the Relationship with the Piece", *Music Theory Online* 2, n°2, 1996. Lawrence Kramer's recent article in this journal suggests the alternate term "critical musicology." See Lawrence Kramer, "The 'New Musicology': a Retrospect in Prospect", in Márta Grabócz & Makis Solomos (ed.), *Filigrane* n°11 :*New Musicology*. *Perspectives critiques*, Sampzon, Delatour, 2010, pp. 11-23.

66. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty conceives of the ideal thinker as an ironist-a pragmatic, post-metaphysical thinker who realizes the contingency of his or her own words and ideas. These two positions: the pragmatic and the metaphysical, map onto two archetypical characters of Greek theater: *Eiron* and *Alazôn*, respectively.

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