



HISTORICISATION AND RUPTURE: ÉLIANE RADIGUE'S *OCCAM Océan*

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Abstract: The practice surrounding Éliane Radigue's *Occam Océan* works may be read as a new form of work concept, one which poses a productive contradiction against the work concept as it has been (and in some cases has been forgotten) and the work concept as we experience it today. *Occam Océan* poses a challenge to conventional conceptual understandings on many fronts, namely the practice's lack of notation; its collaborative creation; its particular structural criteria; its contingent, iterative and combinatorial manifestations; and, perhaps most significantly, its social reinscription within bodies. By historicising her work against the established work concept structures and identifying how its qualities create friction against them, Radigue's music is shown to create a small rupture at the heart of the concept itself, demonstrating the possibility of establishing radically alternative practices of music exchange and discourse.

*This does not constitute, therefore, a new form of popular music, but rather a new practice of music among the people. Music becomes the superfluous, the unfinished, the relational. It even ceases to be a product separable from its author. It is inscribed within a new practice of value.*¹

There is an historical tension latent in the *Occam Océan* works of Éliane Radigue, a music which might be understood as superfluous in its exteriority to the hegemonic institutions of contemporary Western music, unfinished in its contingent and embodied transmission, forsaking any form of notation that might fix it in place,² relational at its locus of conception. Yet her works remain 'works' (or, work concepts), whole in and of themselves, meticulously conceived. There is nothing superfluous or unfinished about them. It is through this contradictory tension – of the celebrated composer whose practice

¹ Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, tr. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 141.

² As Radigue states, 'Initially, *Occam Océan* was comprised of solos, which then expanded into combinations of ensemble pieces... Hence, the overall construction of the *Occams* that constitute *Occam Océan* implies, by nature, the impossibility of completing the oeuvre.' Éliane Radigue and Julia Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces* (Brussels: Umland Editions, 2019), p. 158. 'It would be deadening wanting to annotate [the sounds] once and for all. That would cut the music off from its ongoing process of maturation.' *Ibid.*, p. 177.

is uncanny in relation to its relatives in the Western tradition – that the history of Western classical music becomes animated against itself.

How does *Occam Océan* possess this power? Some clues can be inferred through William Dougherty's conception of the 'normative classical music commissioning model' (NCMCM), a useful framework for characterising the inherited orthodoxy of music composition. The tendencies of this model include creation for posterity, compositions as aesthetic capital, commissioners facilitating a conception of greatness, composers serving the interests of those with the means to commission and performers essentially engaging in transactions of labour.³ These concerns are better typified as pertaining to monetary rather than aesthetic value (though works emerging from this economy can certainly be found to be aesthetically valuable). This model has produced a structure of the work concept that has informed musical objectivity for roughly two centuries, yielding a parallel listening subjectivity to accompany it.

The working method of Radigue and her tight-knit community of 'chevaliers d'Occam' cuts across almost all facets of the NCMCM. It is the performers who seek out Radigue, visiting her to establish a collaboration. There is no commissioning in an economic sense, no expectation that a satisfactory work will emerge from the process and no conclusive singular piece of music. Each work is contingent on innumerable environmental specificities – for example, the acoustics, the instrument, the mood, the other performers involved – which makes plasticity integral to the Radiguean work concept. Nor is there a physical artefact such as a score to mediate the work: all *Occam Océan* pieces are transmitted aurally and orally. So we are confronted by a familiar but alien object, meriting careful evaluation as it challenges our assumptions about what a work of music is and how we listen to it. More significantly, Radigue's practice may represent a form of return to a path-not-taken in the history of the work concept and the ears that evolved with it. To follow this path it is first worth examining how it is that Radigue's music brings us back to this crossroads, as well as why such a return may be advantageous in finding a modern path forwards.

'Art must turn against itself, in opposition to its own concept, and thus become uncertain of itself right into its innermost fiber.'⁴ If the Western classical historical trajectory may be broadly summarised as, first, the establishment of an objective order for the qualification of music apart from noise, followed by the gradual emancipation of intervals, harmonic relations and timbres and, finally, a release from certain structural fixities through the incorporation of improvisation and indeterminacy (understanding that these were protracted rather than instantaneous developments throughout Western music's history), each generation of Western music does as all art must: '[acquire] its specificity by separating itself from what it developed out of; its law of movement is its law of form'.⁵ In liquidating the old order new orders must materialise. But if Attali's argument is accepted – that ours is a society of repetition, in which power silences through the reproduction and normalisation of music – then the liquidation of the old order becomes trapped in repetition and can be proceeded

³ William Dougherty, 'Imagining Together: Éliane Radigue's Collaborative Creative Process' (DMA dissertation, Columbia University, 2021), pp. 27–36.

⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

only by silence. A vacuum is formed in the absence of new modes of authoring meaning and so modes which might resist or subvert such sublimation become necessary.

It is not difficult to historicise Radigue into this developmental succession, one which is commonly characterised through a progressive historical lens. Radigue clearly shows us a new compositional mode in *Occam Océan* but, in putting her music into this historical context, it is not the traditions which this music breaks that reveal the tension of her work, but rather the ones it tenuously maintains, identifying the contradiction within the continuity. When and why did a certain understanding of the work concept gain the authority to dictate the terms of musical production, exchange and discourse, and what of it persists, albeit transfigured, in the music of Radigue? Lydia Goehr has investigated the first questions extensively in her attempt to clarify the murky ontological subject that is the work concept. Her insights, along with Peter Szendy's historicisation of listening, will be used to address the second question of how Radigue's music challenges some of Western music's foundational epistemes from within.

By positioning the work concept as it has been against the work concept as it is in Radigue's music, historical frictions are foregrounded in the mode of the sublime, one's perception of an ineffable exterior to an established logic which has been exasperated. It is through a sublime lens that the radical propensity of this music may be assessed as a consequential rupture both of the historicised conception of the musical work articulated by Attali and the political (or, rather, non-political) conception of musical praxis in committed art as argued by Adorno. If the temptation to ground Radigue's music in the historically continuous ontological understanding of the work concept is resisted in favour of identifying a rupture at the heart of the work concept itself, an expansive new terrain may unfold upon which to construct future orders of sound.

Historicisation

*Henceforth, there would be composers of works, commissions of works, scores of works, performances of works, experiences of works, reviews of works, copyright laws introduced to protect the works, and halls built to house the concerts of works.*⁶

Lydia Goehr has pointed out the historical significance of the work concept's emergence in establishing a general set of criteria for the creation and exchange of music and also the difficulty of assigning a fixed understanding to its exact character. She has convincingly determined that many of our a priori assumptions about what constitutes a work are informed by Enlightenment ideals that position art alongside science, both seeking to 'articulate the terms of meaning or experience by confronting the breach [taken] to have emerged between human beings and nature'.⁷ Analytic inquiry is applied to art, particularly art that is considered experimental, to dispel ambiguity: the analysis must reveal answers to questions which are not given by the practice.⁸ By historicising the emergence of the work concept through the listening subjectivity that situates it, as well as the regimes of creation and

⁶ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. xvii.

⁷ Lydia Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 109.

⁸ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, pp. 73–74.

exchange that it produces, the Radiguean work concept is thrown into relief against its Enlightenment-born historical counterpart.

'A work is not generally thought of to be just any group of sounds, but a complex structure of sounds related in some important way to a composer, a score, and a given class of performances.'⁹ Goehr finds that it was in the eighteenth century that composers centred notation. Previously some performance elements were assumed to be intrinsic to dominant performance practices,¹⁰ leaving a great deal of interpretation in the hands of performers, an authority which allowed the music to be dictated more as a performance than as a composition or work concept. When – by notating all components deemed integral, as opposed to leaving some to interpretation – authority over the work fell more into the hands of composers, the modern work concept crystallised: the musical object as inherent in compositional intention. Composers exerted their musical conception as wholly rational, informed by a desire to reach the Idea behind the work, and they exerted this authority through notation.

This authorial shift was an expression of the Enlightenment, positing the product of the individual's rational mind as aesthetically superior to the ambiguous effects of unnotated performance practice. In insisting fixity and singularity are integral to the definition of what is and is not the musical work, an analytical structure can be built which rationalises this control, creating answers which could become self-evident only after the new assumptions about musical authority were accepted. Finally, in developing a rationalising system on top of assumptions about the location of the work, musical analysis and its subjects propagated a positivistic attitude of what Habermas terms 'aesthetic-expressive rationality', effectively a new institutionalisation of art that places it within the domain of logically adept specialists.¹¹

Rose Subotnik similarly expresses a concern about how aesthetic objects have come to be understood through this institutional and individualised lens. In comparing the perceived relative artistic status of two musical works, she states:

Oddly, it is this very lack of a sense of ownership, of a personal stake in Stravinsky's music, which seems to persuade my students most effectively that the Stravinsky piece ['Soldier's March'] is art where the Sousa one ['Washington Post March'] isn't... And such a definition of musical art – as the music of a repertory deemed 'classical' by its association with professional experts and a social elite – is one that my students accept readily... Very seldom does it occur to my students that 'art' could be something that they themselves had a hand, or a stake, in defining.¹²

These two works function well as a comparative illustration. Both are marches (as broadly defined), but the relative difficulty of 'Soldier's March' (from *L'Histoire du soldat*) in effect insulates it from performers who have not been acculturated into a 'musical discipline imposed by others who are considered musically educated'.¹³ It is not to be reinterpreted; rather, the demands of the piece as notated – which are the demands of the composer – are to be met. This contrasts with

⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', tr. Seyla Ben-Habib, in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), p. 8.

¹² Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Individualism in Western Art Music and Its Cultural Costs', in *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 242.

¹³ Ibid., p. 244.

performance practice around Sousa's music: Subotnik argues that the identity of the work is not bound up in exacting replication and is instead both more open to interpretation by a larger musically inclined public and also less diminished by mistakes. This raises the question 'To whom does the work concept belong?' In this example, Subotnik circumscribes the perceived 'ownership' of Stravinsky's 'Soldier's March' to the cloistered institutions of the Western classical tradition and of Sousa's *Washington Post March* to a public principally operating with functional social concerns.

Given these poles as ownership domains of any given work concept, I suggest that Radigue's works may be understood as opening a third space, as they contradict that of the individual and that of the public on different terms. This strange public-individual object may be assessed within the *Occam Océan* project, in which any given work concept is understood as a shared and non-fixed conceptual articulation. The works are individual in the sense that they may still be attributed to Radigue and to the collaborators involved; although there is no fixed artefact or set of instructions to represent or mediate the work, sufficient intention on the part of the authors to crystallise the pieces as work concepts may still be assumed. But they are public in the sense that these works are allowed to live. As Radigue explains,

An affinity grows between the musicians, and in the end they don't need me anymore. These modes of working and listening are now in you all. What's wonderful is that the more you allow the music to go forth from inside yourself, the more it spreads.¹⁴

Or, as Julia Eckhardt says, 'Direct and personal collaboration is a crucial part of her acoustic compositions. Oral transmission is also a means more apt to give the music enough flexibility to mature, change, flourish, and adapt through time and different spaces.'¹⁵ Although Radigue's works still attract a class of specialists, any institutional acculturation is marginalised, since proficiency in this music cannot be characterised under familiar terms of ideal reproduction. Nor, however, can they be solely expressed through the performer's intention: there is still a concept or compositional intention to which one is indebted, but it is essentially a contingent structure. Tension abounds in the Radiguean work concept.

We can begin to stabilise this tension with a deepened historical understanding of listening subjectivity. To do so, I will take a detour, deconstructing the binary of the passive listener and the active performer in order to assert the nature of the listener's activity. Artistic spectatorship (by extension, listening) is an action equal to the action of performing:

The spectator also acts... She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way.¹⁶

Listeners are not only active in constructing the work; they no longer merely exist as an audience to whom works are delivered. The listener, by refracting their experience of the work through all their

¹⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 169.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, tr. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2021), p. 13.

experiences of works and of life, helps to realise the originality of the incommunicable intention of the work by acting as translator and arranger.

Peter Szendy follows Walter Benjamin in understanding translation as essential for the maturation of the work.¹⁷ The work's meaning or intention cannot be solely communicated on its own, just as language is only able to construct meaning relationally. Therefore, translation does not exist to preserve the original but rather to make it alien and, in so doing, brings nearer the incommunicable intention of the original. But this bringing nearer is simultaneously a deferral:

It is this translation that lets the original be desired as 'pure language', that is to say, as *pure literality*. Translation is not the restoration of the original; it expresses on the contrary its *literal pending nature* [la souffrance à la lettre], by tearing it away from its fastening or mooring, from the weightiness of its meaning.¹⁸

It is the act of opening a horizon for the work, a reversal of its hermetic enclosure, which is in fact its incompleteness.

Szendy continues from his point on translation to the example of Franz Liszt's arrangement of Beethoven's *Pastoral* symphony. In arranging this orchestral work for piano Liszt offers us his listening of Beethoven, or rather a plurality of listenings, as implied by his use of ossia staves:

faced with an orchestral complexity that is materially *irreducible* to the piano and to two hands, faced with a physical or surgical limit, Liszt has in a way *compensated for the impossible by multiplying the possibilities*. The symphonic original here more distant or more absent than ever, Liszt tries to let it be heard (or let it be desired) *between the lines of his versions*.¹⁹

Not just an act of translation, this arrangement is a 'reinscription of the music in another body'.²⁰ Going further, Szendy reveals Robert Schumann's perspective on arrangement as creating a 'critical space'. When Schumann's publisher insisted that he give his *Six Concert Etudes after Paganini Caprices* an opus number, Schumann opted for X, the Roman numeral ten, which Szendy expertly reads as a 'Romantic concept of arrangement'.²¹ Schumann was dreaming of X as representing a post-Beethoven-Ninth-Symphony condition, an unknown futurity of Romanticism that must be deferred. By labelling his *Six Etudes* Opus X he designates them as an unknown that comes 'to rest in the space between the work [the actual Paganini caprices] and the Work [the idea behind the actual Paganini caprices]: an essentially *critical space*',²² heightening the tension between the two and again both bringing nearer and also deferring the Work.

The function of arrangement as both a transductive and critical process was, argues Szendy, a particular Romantic conception of the work concept that was signalled by the arrangements (listenings), and writings on arrangement, of composers such as Liszt and Schumann. These qualities of arrangement were lost when Ferruccio Busoni argued instead that the Idea precedes the work in its timelessness: both composition and arrangement are imperfect

¹⁷ Peter Szendy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears*, tr. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 50–56.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 63–64.

and temporary embodiments of the Idea²³ and there can no longer be a productive tension between the composition and its arrangement because the Idea is timeless. Tension between the two is only possible when the Idea is desired, eternally deferred, ever imminent.

In the listener, an active participant through their acts of translation and arrangement as they listen to a work, reinscribing the music in their body, we now find the path-not-taken to which Radigue leads us back. Her *Occam Océan* collaborators are her translators and arrangers and, in working with her to compose a piece, Radigue gives them her ears: her way of listening is reinscribed in them. They take her listening, as heard through their own listening, into new spaces and new instrumental combinations and arrange her work for these new times and places. With her permission already granted, her collaborators may also begin to find yet more listeners and arrangers, to pass on their listening of Radigue. With every new translation and context, every new set of ears, the horizon of the work concept expands, its details magnified; it matures. The work concept is also deferred, in that its ideal, its singular true or correct realisation, becomes increasingly inadequate; the Enlightenment drive to dispel ambiguity by grasping the Idea is inverted. What is substituted is perhaps something else that can be called a work concept, one which dictates subtly yet radically different terms for the construction of the work as well as its regimes of listening.

There are clues about the new subjectivity that the listener may come to inhabit in meeting the challenge of Radigue's work concept. Roland Barthes offers one such clue in the form of the 'grain', a response to the adjective as the familiar tool of music discourse. Assigning adjectival qualifications to music is to grab what has unfolded and push it into a familiar linguistic frame, sustaining the Enlightenment idealisation of fixity and categoricity. But salvation from this musical subjugation is perhaps not found in an approach that might cut across the rational but rather within the form of the musical object, retaining a trace of the modernist contours of the Enlightenment while troubling its positivistic drive:

it is not by struggling against the adjective (diverting the adjective you find on the tip of the tongue towards some substantive or verbal periphrasis) that one stands a chance of exorcising music commentary and liberating it from the fatality of predication; rather than trying to change directly the language on music, it would be better to change the musical object itself, as it presents itself to discourse, better to alter its level of perception or intellection, to displace the fringe of contact between music and language.²⁴

If the work concept persists in some new form as a changed musical object, the 'grain' reveals a partial image of a new listening subject who will inherit it. Brian Kane develops Barthes' 'grain' by way of Jean-Luc Nancy's *renvoi* (reference), with a double meaning of 'both a sending-away (a dismissal) and a return'.²⁵ *Renvoi* breaks the closed system of musical signification by facilitating a shift away from the phenomenological subject towards the resonant subject, a subject of 'form, structure, and movement of an infinite referral, since it refers to something (itself) that is nothing outside of the referral'.²⁶

²³ Ibid., p. 66.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, Music, Text*, tr. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 180–81.

²⁵ Brian Kane, 'Jean-Luc Nancy and the Listening Subject', *Contemporary Music Review*, 31 (5–6) (2012), p. 445.

²⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, quoted by Brian Kane. Ibid., p. 445.

Nancy's attention to the difference between *entendre* [listening as intention or understanding] and *écouter* [listening as sense] is ultimately a way of reformulating the question of the subject by encouraging a shift from the *phenomenological subject* – the subject of representation who constitutes the objectivity of things by its inherent yet unrepresentable power of representation – to a subject that is listening to the infinite *renvoi* of meaning, sound, and self.²⁷

To reformulate the subject intensifies Barthes' 'interspace', where 'listening's back-and-forth movement might be made'.²⁸ A resonant subject as listener is formed to meet the newly conceived sonorous object. The object of Radigue's work demands this new subject.

The infinite deferral of the work as a product of translation and arrangement here becomes the charter of the resonant subject. The form of *Occam Océan* necessitates the inversion of the historical work concept and its phenomenological subject. Rather than dispensing with the work concept we have inherited,²⁹ I argue that Radigue's music provokes a shift beneath the surface in what we understand the work concept to be. If this dialectic tension within her form of the work concept is embraced – allowed maturation through the new listening subjectivity it demands rather than fixing it to unambiguous understandings (a process mirrored within the music itself) – a quiet rupture may materialise and establish a new musical trajectory, or possibly a recovered one.

Rupture

*The refusal by artworks to compromise becomes a critique even of the idea of their inner coherence. . . Inner coherence shatters on what is superior to it, the truth of the content, which no longer finds satisfaction in expression – for expression recompenses helpless individuality with a deceptive importance – or in construction, for coherence is more than a mere analogy for the administered world. . . The truth content of art, whose organon was integration, turns against art and in this turn art has its emphatic moments. Artists discover the compulsion toward disintegration in their own works, in the surplus of organization and regimen. . . The category of the fragmentary – which has its locus here – is not to be confused with the category of contingent particularity: The fragment is that part of the totality of the work that opposes totality.*³⁰

Adorno here suggests that the increasing mobilisation of uncompromising integration in modern works, towards either an expressive/mimetic or a constructionist pole, inevitably produces a surplus in the work that speaks to its disintegration or contradiction, the fragment which opposes the total. This also characterises the disagreement of Radigue's music with the historical work concept: a fragmentation in which the image of the Enlightenment-born work of art is simultaneously presented through and opposed by collective mediation and maturation. It is on this terrain that the aesthetic surplus proposed by Adorno may be found: the 'truth content' of the work, more clearly defined as 'that abundance which unfolds itself only by means of analysis. . . Every analysis that is of any value. . . is a squaring of the circle. It is the achievement of imagination through faith'.³¹

For Adorno Webern's music exemplifies the type of problem that analysis ought to reveal along similar contradictory lines, 'the transmutation of the traditional (i.e. thematic-motivic) categories of

²⁷ Ibid., p. 446.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 439.

²⁹ As Habermas reminds us, 'Nothing remains from a desublimated meaning or a destructured form; an emancipatory effect does not follow.' Habermas, 'Modernity', p. 10.

³⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 45.

³¹ Ibid., p. 177.

musical coherence into something quite opposed to them'.³² In another instance he characterises Schoenberg's approach: '[The twelve-tone system] is... the suppressing moment in the domination of nature, which suddenly turns against subjective autonomy and freedom itself, in the name of which this domination found its fulfillment'.³³ For Radigue I propose that the analytic conventions of aesthetic rationality still function, not to describe what is given in the music but to identify the irreconcilable within the given parts, a disorder that necessitates the delineation of a new order, an opening.

This opening may be found in the sublime experience of Radigue's music. It is in the sublime that a relation between a subject and its limit is found, or 'the subject at the limit'.³⁴ Barthes displaced 'the fringe of contact between music and language' by changing the musical object, but sublimity also changes the musical object by putting it out of reach of conventional linguistic framing: '[The concepts of beauty, the work, and philosophy] are constructed according to the logic of the self-enjoyment of Reason, the logic of the self-presentation of imagination... The feeling of the sublime... substitutes for this logic what forms... a sort of logical exasperation, a passage to the limit'.³⁵ Radigue articulates the corollary of what, in this sense, may be characterised as 'the sensibility of the fading of the sensible'.³⁶

The freedom to let yourself be overwhelmed... The freedom of a development beyond temporality in which the instant is limitless... Immersion into a space restrained, or limited by nothing. Simply there, where the absolute beginning is found.³⁷

Is the sublime the expression of the subject at its limit, or is it rather that time is experienced as derealised, our conventional temporal limits absent? 'It is a matter, Kant writes, of the "feeling of an arrest of the vital forces"... Suspended life, breath cut off – the beating heart'.³⁸ Although the sublime is the ineffable experience of subjective breakdown, the contours of its presence, of its limit, are here sensed as the inner infinite of a moment, an experience that cannot be willed but can be elicited and articulated through an offering. Chiming with Radigue's search for the 'absolute beginning', Nancy states:

What comes to pass at the limit is the offering... the possibility of engaging a totality, the possibility of involving oneself in the union of a totality, the possibility of beginning, along the edge of the unlimited, the outline of a figure.³⁹

What is being reconciled, the beginning of a trajectory being fomented at the limit, beyond the inverted historical form of the Radiguean work concept? It might be located in the folds of this new work concept and the logic it articulates, since the sublime experience substitutes an established logic with exasperation at the limit of this logic. The work concepts of *Occam Océan* propose not just a challenge to the logics of ownership, fixity and reproducibility but also an unfamiliar temporal logic. The historical work concept is an ornamentation of

³² *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, tr. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), p. 66.

³⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Sublime Offering', in *The Sublime*, ed. Simon Morley, tr. Jeffrey S. Librett (London: Whitechapel Gallery), p. 47.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Éliane Radigue, 'The Mysterious Power of the Infinitesimal', *Leonardo Music Journal*, 19 (2009), p. 49.

³⁸ Nancy, 'The Sublime Offering', p. 47.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

time bounded by an anticipatory frame: that the work of music begins, moves and ends as an inherent progression through time. Radigue's *Occam Océan* pieces may be heard in this way but, in characterising these works as essentially contingent, we may instead find that they are not articulating a temporal frame – a segment between a beginning and end predetermined by an inner constitutive logic established by the composer – but instead articulate and extrapolate a coordinate point in the time-space domain. This music is a provocation of our own physical limits, to witness, at the periphery, timescales that we cannot experience and waveforms that we cannot sense. Once again the historical work concept is inverted, through a departure from the structural criteria of musical works.

The contingent nature of the music is omnipresent:

I tell musicians to tune their instrument to the threshold of the best resonance for that moment, for the best pitch according to the delicate variations established by the weather, the travels, the acoustic response of the place, each time to be measured.⁴⁰

In proposing this ideal, enmeshing the total structure of music within the granular specificities of the moment and its conditions, Radigue pushes back against the orthodoxy of the rational certainty of scientism: 'What interests me above all is what happens when we transgress these scientific laws a bit. It's their irrational side, their minute features.'⁴¹

What is actually interesting is not cutting out a little wavelength in order to analyse it. Cutting them up into little pieces is what science does, seeking to analyse in order to be able to do something else. What interests me is the life that animates it.⁴²

Radigue's *Occam Océan* pieces challenge us to articulate the location of the musical work concept in unfamiliar terms, or perhaps forgotten terms, modalities which may be reconciled with the fixations of modernity. Attali reminds us that 'before the advent of recording and modern sound tools, the jongleurs were the collective memory'.⁴³ The implications of the Radiguean work concept's inner structure is read not only as a historical reconciliation but also as generative in its highly situated register. This new form represents a rupture from the normative criteria of musical creation and exchange: the work concept, an intentional structuring of sound which may express an idea, becomes a collective memory, mediated by people and allowed a contingent manifestation as its imperative.

The New Composition

Jacques Attali proposes that this new mode be deemed composition, distinct from our familiar musical traditions. Our present condition is one of simultaneous repetition and silence: consequences of the crises of Western culture's fundamental assumptions about scientism, imperial universality and depersonalisation, expressed through deconcentration and manipulation;⁴⁴ composition ruptures this fabric. Many

⁴⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces*, p. 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴³ Attali, *Noise*, p. 141.

⁴⁴ Scientism: 'Western music theory is expressed essentially in the context of its relation to science and its crisis. . . It is linked to an abstraction of the conditions of functioning of the society taking root'. Imperial universality: 'An elite, bureaucratic music. . . desires to be universal. In order to be universal, it diminishes its specificity, reduces the syntax of its

of the ideas of composition that Attali suggests could break with assumptions of rational modernity (or rather, with Habermas' conception, save modernity from itself) are pertinent to Radigue's *Occam Océan* works. Attali's composition is inscribed in the permanent fragility of meaning,⁴⁵ is tied to the instrument⁴⁶ and, resonating with Szendy, is an exchange between bodies through work rather than objects.⁴⁷

Similarly, the Radiguean musical ideal is characterised by Adorno's thinking on committed works of art, in which a surplus or truth that is not articulated (were such a thing possible) is embodied by the total work. The project that Radigue's works instantiate is evinced only as an outcome of their inwardly committed social and discursive suppositions. The sublime phenomenon is a consequence of the primacy of the situation – with all of the situation's social, temporal, and spatial implications – over its secondary constitution in determining the work's rationale as experiential and ephemeral. This achievement is only possible in such a committed form, as any intentional provocation towards a revolutionary object 'subjugates art from the outside'.⁴⁸ 'The moment of intention is mediated through the form of the work, which crystallizes an Other which ought to exist. As pure artifacts, products, works of art... are instructions for the praxis they refrain from: the production of life lived as it ought to be.'⁴⁹ It is the form of the work, both musically and political-economically, rather than the intention of or characterisation by its creators, which produces friction against the established order. A new musical future begins to take hold.

The *Occam Océan* works of Radigue fulfil the terms of the work concept but carry within them a consequential new proposition for the creation, experience and ownership of music. With the help of institutions of scholarship and performance, they may begin to function as a Trojan horse, outwardly retaining their form as work concepts in the Western tradition while, internally, a musical and practical transience inverts the work concept and realises a transformed listening subject. *Occam Océan* is fundamentally 'superfluous, unfinished, and relational',⁵⁰ and it is these qualities which push against the frame that has defined the work concept for centuries. To end with Attali: 'any noise, when two people decide to invest their imaginary and their desire in it, becomes a potential relationship, future order'.⁵¹

codes.' Depersonalisation: 'The music of power no longer conveys information within a code. It is, like the ideology of the period, without meaning. Musical production is no longer figured.' Deconcentration and manipulation of power: 'In fact, the most formal order, the most precise and rigorous directing, are masked behind a system evocative of autonomy and chance... Managing chance, drawing lots, doing anything at all, consigns the interpreter to a powerlessness... like the administrator in a repetitive society.' *Ibid.*, pp. 113–14.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, 'Commitment', in *Notes to Literature*, tr. Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), p. 90.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵⁰ Attali, *Noise*, p. 141.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.