

Hypostition

Sonic Spectrality, Affective Engineering, Temporal Paradox

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Latter

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein)

Q. I wonder if you could elaborate on what exactly is concealed ... what will be revealed by apocalypse?

R. What is concealed (the Occult) is an *alien order of time, which betrays itself through 'coincidences', 'synchronicities' and similar indications* of an intelligent arrangement of fate. An example is the cabbalistic pattern occulted in ordinary languages – a pattern that cannot emerge without eroding itself, since the generalized (human) understanding and deliberated usage of letter-clusters as numerical

units would shutdown the channel of 'coincidence' (*alien information*). It is only because people use words without numerizing them, that they remain open as conduits for something else. To dissolve the screen that hides such things (and by hiding them, enables them to continue), is to fuse with the source of the signal and liquidate the world.

(Delphi Carstens & Nick Land – *Hyperstition – an Introduction*)

There is an uneasy standoff between Wittgenstein and Land. One appeals to clarity in the face of perceived casuistry or periphrasis, of which the delirial rhetoric of the other could very easily be said to belong. The latter, however, employs the bewitchment of language very specifically to close down 'intelligence' if, that is, intelligence is perceived in some way to interrupt what the respondent describes as hyperstition, which is treated here as:

a positive feedback circuit including culture as a component. It can be defined as the experimental (techno-) science of self-fulfilling prophecies. Superstitions are merely false beliefs, but hyperstitions – by their very existence as ideas – function causally to bring about their own reality.

For Land, of course, this provides a setting for his well known celebration of the absolute derritorialization of anything that gets in the way of the pure flow of capital - understood in a general sense as a libidinal flexing of ideation as desire and then as the pure light of information in a moment techno-gnostic dematerialization. Death, in other words. In simpler words. The death of the human and its progeny.

Redux

Focussing on sound, affect and technology, the observation on the 'alien order of time' is interesting in that it raises the question of dissonant temporalities and temporal paradox central to the investigations of the SMASL Research Unit.

The Man-Machine

The Man-Machine

Half Creature and Half Thing

The Man-Machine

Half Creature and Half Überthing

(Kraftwerk)

The entity dreamed up by Kraftwerk is far more complex and disturbing than the cyborg of popular culture, in that, like Hamlet's ghost, it seems to suggest that time is no longer linear or progressive, but decidedly 'out of joint'. In spite of its apparently temporal progression and linearity, and arguably unlike biological life, music is a manifestation of a decidedly *atemporal* metastasis, of a prolific and pre-ontological process of virtualised affect glimpsed through the plane or grid of spatio-temporality in the moment of sonic actualisation. Glimpsed, that is, in the event of music as a somatic, nostalgic, projective and aesthetic intensity. Music is inherently and subjectively spectral in the sense that we intend here, both as medium and message, and this connects it in a number of ways with what Deleuze has described as the second synthesis of time, albeit with important qualifications. Music is a very potent, forceful, spectral agent in this understanding of everyday experience: we cannot *not* be subjected to its power over our affects and memories, we are almost willingly enslaved by it. Not only can it awaken the spectres of long-forgotten thoughts and affects, it also can make us act upon them, even if they are entirely

imagined. They may have direct reference to subjective or collective experience, but this is by no means a requirement, as they can implant or be implanted at any point via the power of refrain, rhythm, melody, chorus, beat, timbre, tonality and so on. These spectres, therefore, can be mere fragments of musical experience as well as unified entities of inscribed musical meaning: the sound of music may stir hints of memories or emotions, but it can also move us back, forward or sideways in time and space, and – in theory at least – beyond time and space altogether.

To what extent do we need to involve ourselves in occult or cultic discourse here? We are, after all, all, dealing with immanent causalities that transect the arrow of time in mid flight. Notions in which causality is seemingly reversed so that we as listeners in an earlier technological moment might place the needle on the groove of JS Bach's *Art of Fugue* or flip play on a cassette or CD of the Belleville Three's first encounter with what was to become techno or Schoenberg's Faustian mapping of the twelve tone system in Vienna or Robert Johnson's meeting with the devil outside Clarksdale - and through the act of engaging - through technology - with the music and sound and silence these moments engendered - cause that music to be composed, to be played for the first time, to come into being.

Developments in music technology have intensified and complicated the inherently spectral dimension of musical production and consumption. Recorded sound has evolved a dual signification, in the sense that technologically produced, manipulated, or reproduced music simultaneously evokes connotations of system and structure (as *technè*), as well as genesis and structure as implied action or parole, and accordingly, because of its inaccessible causality and fractured mnemonics, of the supernatural and the spectral. Any recorded music is a copy of a copy, a simulacrum of an imaginary origin and cosmetically engineered 'uniqueness' - a perpetual remix or mash-up without an originary model. However, the actual experience of music on the level of subject and affect indicates otherwise, for the simple reason that the sonic simulacrum is the product of a dream of infinite exchangeability, whereas every direct reception

of musical experience is necessarily unique, and hence phantasmatic, and hence, by virtue of an origin without origin, spectral.

This tension between the sensual or intellectual immediacy of music and the distancing and simulative or reproductive power of technology, on the one hand, and the economics of the phantasm and the simulacrum, on the other, this four-way relationship does, in fact, generate a certain balance and stability, via what Graham Harman calls 'tool being'. The imaginal energies that enable creativity and its affective reception in the listener require the order of instrument and instrumentation to emerge at all. The power of music requires, demands even, the machinery of expression as the medium of its transmission, from imagination to imagination, from body to body.

This is audiation as a form of séance, in a fashion, as a kind of possession, but one in which the agency of the listener appears to equal that of the creator of a particular set of sounds in temporal space, even though that putative 'origin' is ostensibly buried in history. Lost to presence in any meaningful sense. And what of music or sound or noise or even silence from the distant future? Can we access this via technologies to come and if so how would causation work *from* that future to *our* present? Or can those agencies from the future access *us* in the moment of creation or composition or collaging, for example? As we arrange our fingers to make that first chord change or set our machines in motion above a dance floor or in the broader sonic emporium of our emergent neural webworld?

There is a perpetual ambiguity in the way in which messages, sounds or musical notes, rhythms or refrains from the past are seemingly conveyed through recording technologies – from analogue scratchings on manuscripts to digital codings on MP3s– - and their consumption by listeners. So, and in a manner parallel to the time out of joint' of Hamlet's father's ghost, we are caught in a temporal and auditive loop in which the moment of composition or performance and

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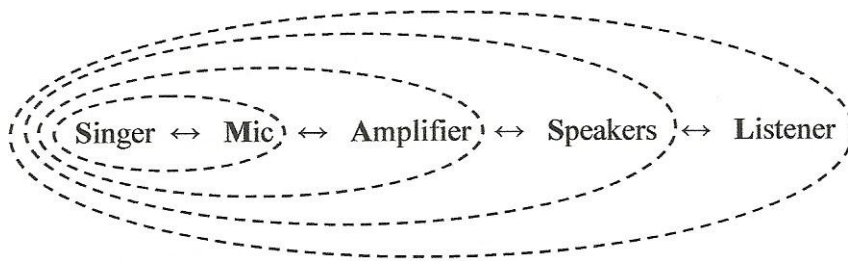
the moment of reception or absorption both have and do not have an origin, and exist, or rather *subsist*, in a spectral space distinct from that attached to linear temporalities. The moment in which Bach raises his quill to ink the first few notes of 'The Art of Fugue' is before us, ahead of us and co-determinous with us, at the same time as it persists as a virtuality to be actualised through the event of listening. And, we are arguing here, it is delivered to us by spectres who are and simultaneously both vehicles of transition and memory – and indeed, of remembrance – and agents as well as agencies of sonic events themselves.

SMASL evolved - at least in one incarnation – between Utrecht and London in 2008 - to investigate precisely these issues. Presentations were given and papers written – and rather unfortunately delayed (publication) – but since then the socio-cultural web has changed enormously and roving into nearby future spaces and those dislocated from conventional temporal or territorial coordinates has catalysed our return to the original SMASL diagram and its associated daemonotechnics.

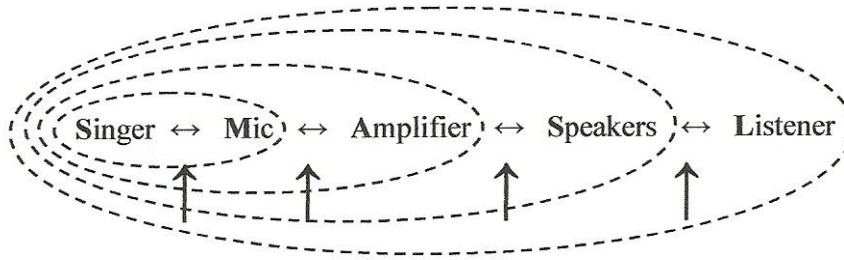
The spectrality and hauntology of recorded sound are actualised by a number of technological agents. As technological forms of ventriloquism, sound recordings thwart listeners' desultory intuitions regarding sonic embodiment. The schizophonic voices of speakers and amplifiers, record players and telephones bring forth phantom sounds whose origin is no more physical than electricity and digital sound bites. Music recording is dehumanised rewriting. Recording and replaying sound and especially voice means disconnecting 'live' sound from its origin, thereby making it *un-live* while it is also *un-dead*. SMASL theorises the networked nature of machine-made music, the spectral phenomenology of that network, and its. The human, non-human, musical and non-musical actors involved in machine-made music are represented in our model by the roles of singer, microphone, amplifier, speakers and listener (but these are mere examples, allegories, and can be replaced by any musical actor):

Singer ↔ Mic ↔ Amplifier ↔ Speakers ↔ Listener

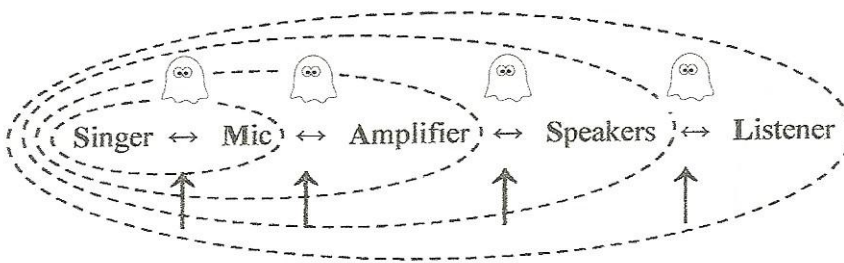
The voices of these actors may be biological or phantom voices. When they sound – that is, when the singer starts singing, or when the microphone transmits her voice, or when the speakers are switched on, et cetera – they engender a timespace that is defined by its medial phenomenology. Medial timespace is the media-induced and media-confined time and space that exists between divergent actors. Here, for instance, are the all the medial spaces in which the singing actor in the SMASL network can be involved:



As Derrida has argued, technology produces around it a darkness of non/iterability. It almost obsessively highlights the hauntological void of non-referentiality behind any attempt at reference. This void is an a-signifying abyss that is simultaneously the preface to and the undoing of signification. When media are switched on they endorse the transmission of messages ‘from’ this abyss - and thus medial timespace comes into being. Here the ghosts that are virtual in this hauntographical void resonate into actuality with every utterance. Every note or nuance, every beat or blip, is an event. Accordingly, and as a result of the process of musical mediation, all that can ever be transmitted from this source in audible sound is the inaudible revenants and precursors of musical experience. Through the spectrality that is immanent to technological reproduction the medial timespaces in between actors becomes *hauntic*:



Hauntic timespaces are virtual planes in which origin and referentiality are absent, and from which spectral voices emerge. They are planes of immanence and of composition. They are planes of immanence because they allow the aforementioned revenants of musical meaning (aesthetic experience, affective connotation, memory, and identification) to emerge; and they are planes of composition because each musical sounding leads to re-contextualisation, re-inscription, and the re-creation of old and new spectres. Hauntic timespaces are characterised by temporal paradox. They are reigned by the conflated chronologies of performative time, hauntological dislodgement, and the *durée* of lost memory time. Inevitably ghosts emerge from these skewed temporalities. Operated by the daemonotechnics of music, mnemonics, and mnemomusics, human and nonhuman spectres converge:



In hauntic timespace the medium's spectres accumulate and meet with the singer's as well as the listener's spectres. Since these spectres are immanent to the actors present in the SMASL network, they meet through cybernetics. The spectres that roam the machine meet those that are projected by the human unconscious; and as these ghosts refer mnemonically and affectively to past, present and future, the spectrality of the musical man-machine can be as old as De la Mettrie and as new as a digital avatar.

The hyperstitional implications of SMASL are as evident as they are destructive. Sonosophy combined with daemonotechnics – the cybernetic craft of evoking and evoking transtemporal daemons to momentarily substantiate media - multi-temporal media - exceeds temporal paradox – they disclose the fact that neither time nor reality ever existed except at the moment of sonic or solar enunciation. Hypersition is in this sense merely one form of daemonotechnics, and one that we would place second to hypo-stition. Here the prefix hypo rather than hyper indicates stealth in its beneathness. Hyper and hypo generate a new series of critical interventions in the sonic metaverse which transect vertical hierarchies of both sound and judgement and certainly of sound judgement, as they themselves are based on strictures of temporal ascension. Hyper in this sense is lost in the self-fulfilling prophecies that it relies on for justification as techne, whereas hypo strips this discourse of its defensive semantic carapace and reveals the sonic viscera beneath. Hyperstition in this sense becomes a security system to be breached via hypo-stitional tunnelling. We are as Kafka's moles burrowing beneath the surface of like and rationality:

“My forehead – that unique instrument!” (Kafka, “The Burrow”)

There is an element in hyperstitional thinking which requires possession by para- or non-temporal agencies – Lovecraft's Old Ones in the case of Land or Reza Negarestani – and such possession from the future or distant past or somewhere outside the circuit of anthropic or even geological time – somewhere closer to abysmal time. On the other hand, this may just be the ‘bewitchment’ of language operating in the negative sense implied by Wittgenstein rather than the positive way

implied by Land. Maybe SMASL can close this particular circuit or open it up to new forms of post-hyperstitional clarity. For if hyperstition is in some sense immanent to itself, hypo-stition is immanent only to its own vanishing, to its occult flight from the bewitchment of language which forms patterns on the carapace of time to the sonic viscera beneath. The writer Cameron Bain has noted that

The appeal of the occult lies not in that it ostensibly grants entry to hidden truths, but precisely in that it doesn't. ... That what is hidden must remain hidden is at the core of all occult systems and they always contain internally consistent means of refuting that their hidden 'truth' is hidden because it is, in fact, non-existent...

Elder

The recent work of Fatima Al Qadiri released on Hyperdub is an example. "I believe in Djinn," she says in a recent interview. "I believe in Evil Spirits that haunt the Earth. I don't smell them or see them, but I feel them – especially in Kuwait." She goes on to describe a moment similar to those we mention in our abstract – this time the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam's forces on the 2nd August 1990. Here is a young girl watching Japanese cartoons translated into Arabic and suddenly this decidedly 'postmodern' moment so redolent of the era splutters into another when a flickering black and white photo of Saddam appears on the screen and everything changes.

Kuwait in her eyes, becomes a Bladerunner set, but one veined with other aspects of popular culture, history, mythology, nation and identity, economics and sonics. The interest here for SMASL is not merely the electronic agency evident in her soundscapes, but its contextualisation both sonically and culturally and through the projected semiotic ghost of the artist herself, all three replayed as a hyperstitional exploration of national identities and mythologies –particularly around a notion of an imagined China.

The fact of the Weird is the fact that the worldweave is ripped and unfinished. Moth-eaten, ill-made. And that through the little tears, from behind the ragged

edges

, things are looking at us.

(China Miéville)

SMASLanalysis discloses the cracks in the texture of hyperstition. It allows the spectres, revenants, spirits and phantoms that inhabit the outside-sound – a great outdoors that can only be thought as a pre-Heideggerian Nothing, or a Lovecraftian audient void – SMASLanalysis allows these precursors of musical being to emerge from their burrows. These spectres never did bear any relation to word, to reality, or to hyperstition. Flickering in and out of audition through the echoing vaults of hypostition, they offer occult snippets of temporal paradoxes and affective engineerings that never were.

“My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them as steps to climb beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw the ladder away.) Wittgenstein, TLP 6.54

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Futurous as well as elder,

Sonic hypo-stition is the leakage of sound

both temporal and extemporaneous,

from an absolutely extimate timespace.

the Ueberthing makes itself heard.

again.