

# The degradation of music's object: Deleuze and Guattari's diagrammatics and musical semiotics

Iain Campbell<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** This article explores what the music theorist Raymond Monelle called a “certain degradation of the object” in the semiotic analysis of music, that is, the notion that an object or reference seems to be ultimately absent from musical semiotics. Monelle takes his brief and undeveloped theorization of this idea to be a departure from some of the Peircean perspectives prominent in musical semiotics and in his own work, and turns to the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari as a means to deal with this feature of the semiotic study of music. This article pursues Monelle's suggestion further. It begins by outlining the adoption and adaptation of the thought of Charles S. Peirce in musical semiotics, before turning to Deleuze and Guattari's engagement with and departure from Peirce in the development of their own diagrammatic theory. It then considers applications of this theory to musical semiotics, suggesting that Deleuze and Guattari's diagrammatics shows that the object of music is not something to be found, but something to be created.

**Keywords:** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; Charles Sanders Peirce; diagram; musical semiotics; experimental music

In some of his final work before his death in 2010, the music theorist Raymond Monelle suggested that the semiotic analysis of music presents us with a puzzle.<sup>2</sup> Semiotics has traditionally concerned itself with how signs refer to objects, or with identifying the meaning of a sign. However, in engaging with music it seems, Monelle (2008: 77) suggests, that we often find, in place of an object or identifiable meaning, an absence. For the music semiotician, this might be a troubling prospect. What is semiotics when the signs we are dealing with seem to signify only vaguely or not at all? In some brief, evocative, and unfortunately undeveloped remarks Monelle (2008: 86) identifies the puzzle of a “certain degradation of

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<sup>1</sup> Independent researcher; e-mail: iain.campbell.om@gmail.com.

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the object” in musical semiotics, which he sees as already implied by the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce. Monelle suggests that the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari may offer a route into dealing with this puzzle.<sup>3</sup> This article pursues Monelle’s suggestion further.

Staying with Monelle’s notion of the ‘degradation of the object’, here I examine Deleuze and Guattari’s engagement with Peirce’s semiotics in the development of their own diagrammatic theory. Deleuze and Guattari’s approach to art has often been taken as a revaluation of the “merely” sensory, raising notions like ‘sensation’ and the ‘percept’ associated with aesthetic experience to a more profound ontological and epistemological status than philosophy has traditionally allowed (see for example Deleuze 2003; Deleuze, Guattari 1994).<sup>4</sup> Most pointedly, recent materialist and realist theory in musical research and sound studies has taken Deleuze and Guattari’s work as a basis for surmounting the limits of semiotics, seeing their thought as overcoming a semiotic reliance on the representational and the linguistic (Cox 2018: 15; Herzogenrath 2017: 3). Here I follow this perspective to a degree, but wish to give more weight to the status of the semiotic in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought, with consequences for the reading of Deleuze and Guattari as materialists or realists. By contrast but not negation, I take an analysis of their approach to semiotics as an opportunity to rethink the ‘object’ of music. Diverging from approaches that might take material reality as a given, I argue for what I term a ‘diagrammatic experimental constructivism’, treating the “real” as something music not only explores, but also creates.

<sup>3</sup> While touching on some relevant topics, here I do not take a strong position as to the accuracy and force of the critical remarks aimed at Peirce from Monelle and from Deleuze, in particular. I rather emphasize following some developments from the engagement with Peirce’s thought. I note, nevertheless, that a re-reading of the version of Peirce adopted in musical semiotics could be a fruitful exercise, particularly around the complexities of his division of objects and its relation to experimental inquiry.

<sup>4</sup> There is a long tradition of a philosophical denigration of music, with sound proving elusive to attempts to intellectualize and systematize. Much as the artist and theorist David Batchelor (2000) speaks of a ‘chromophobia’ by which colour has seemed to act as the irrational surplus of any attempt to order the world rationally, so we might speak of a ‘phonophobia’ by which sound and music have always presented at least an analytical puzzle. For Immanuel Kant (2000: §53) music is the lowest art, insofar as it “merely plays with the sensations”, with its purported lack of formal qualities meaning that it is not apt to engaging the higher faculties. While sensation has a higher status for Peirce, such as in a notable passage stressing the necessity of the artist’s “observational power” (CP 5.42), he nevertheless makes a similar point when he suggests that musical ideas “usually consist merely in a series of feelings” (CP 5.475). For Peirce, what music conveys is immediate, requiring further intellectual work to move from this ‘emotional’ level to the ‘energetic’ and then ‘logical’. In the comprehension of musical signs, then, “the foundation of truth [...] is frequently very slight” (CP 5.475).

I proceed in three steps. In the first section, I will provide some context for Monelle's claims concerning the 'degradation of the object'. Outlining some of the terms of debate within musical semiotics, I will show why some scholars have turned to Peirce as an alternative to Saussurean semiotic approaches, and why this turn to Peirce leads to the 'degradation' Monelle identifies. In the second section, I will turn to the notion of the 'diagram', outlining Deleuze and Guattari's seemingly unfaithful adaptation of Peirce's notion and showing some of the consequences for their thought, namely in emphasizing tendencies that can be described as experimental and constructivist. I will also briefly consider Deleuze and Guattari's own reflections on music. While I do not intend for my elaboration on musical semiotics through Deleuze and Guattari to be limited to any particular musical repertoire, we will nevertheless see that approaches under the broad umbrella term of 'experimental music' may seem an especially apt fit. I would nevertheless like to suggest, in passing for now, that appropriately experimental tendencies can and do exist in any field. Following this, in the third and final section I sketch some instances of how experimental music might function semiotically and diagrammatically, before turning my focus to a case study of some notational practices by the twentieth-century composer John Cage. The philosopher of art Nelson Goodman (1968) argued that Cage's 'indeterminate' notation failed to function as notation due to a lack of semantic and syntactic detail. Here I shift the terms of analysis, and argue that Cage's notation and performances of his works should not be understood as aiming to refer to particular objects, but as enacting a diagrammatic bringing into existence of new entities.

### **Musical semiotics and the 'degradation of the object'**

Histories of musical semiotics have tended to identify two key strands of inquiry in the field since the 1970s. On the one hand there is a "structural-analytic" approach that draws on the work of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and that work's development into approaches widely termed as 'structuralist', and on the other there is a "semantic-interpretative" approach drawing from Peirce (Hooper 2012: 162; Dougherty, Sheinberg 2023: 187). In the case of the "structural-analytic" approach, musical semiologists have taken from Saussure most substantially the stance that the value of particular identified musical signs can only be determined in terms of that sign's place within a structural whole. Structures are the ground of analysis, and analysis is thus synchronic, which is not to say that structuralist approaches necessarily diminish change and other temporal characteristics, but only that these are seen as immanent to the structure itself. This supposes that the structure can be meaningfully considered to be closed, and such a closed notion of structure

has provided a rich analytical tool in musical semiotics, but it has also introduced constraints.

Robert Hatten's 1992 critique of the broadly structuralist musical semiotics of Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Kofi Agawu is informative here. The issue that Hatten identifies with both of these quite different theorists concerns the relation between what the linguist Roman Jakobson called the 'introversive' and 'extroversive' levels of semiosis (Hatten 1992: 89; Nattiez 1990: 111; Agawu 1991: 23). In the case of Nattiez, the introversive is found in what he calls the 'neutral level', that is, the immanent, formal structures of a piece of music (Nattiez 1990: x). This is then distinguished from the extroversive poietic and aesthetic levels, which are "neutralized" in the analysis of the neutral level (Nattiez 1990: 12 n12). Even if Nattiez's emphasis on the introversive ostensibly does not preclude analysis of both levels, it does render the points of articulation between the levels difficult to discern, with poietic and aesthetic concerns often appearing as supplementary rather than integral. For instance, for Nattiez (1990: 95), the "only proper sphere for esthetics" is in the description of how it is that a musical work itself is heard, while, at the poietic level, we might note his rejection of approaches aligned to the social sciences, with his discussion of formal stylistic evolution from the Renaissance to Boulez (Nattiez 1990: 145) labelling theories of musical style that incorporate social and cultural frameworks as "reductionist".

Such a distinction between introversive and extroversive semiosis can also be found in Agawu's musical semiotics, with the introversive concerning the internal structure of a musical syntax and the extroversive the piece's referentiality (Agawu 1991: 23). Hatten notes that Agawu's concern with topics – conventionalized musical signs that carry specific, literal, usually referential meanings pertaining to things in the world outside of the piece – allows him to work between the introversive and extroversive levels more subtly than Nattiez can (Hatten 1992: 89). Agawu, indeed, characterizes the relation between introversive and extroversive as a continuum rather than a strict distinction (Agawu 1991: 24). Still, Agawu (1991: 25), in a phrasing that for Hatten is telling, conceives of that relation between extroversive semiosis and introversive semiosis as being one between "manifest surface" and "structural background". Ultimately, Hatten argues, there is an ongoing closure at the level of immanent musical structure, with the internal relations of the musical work remaining primary. This belies the claim of a continuum, leading to a failure to account for the co-implication of the introversive and extroversive levels (Hatten 1992: 97). Here, what Agawu took from Jakobson to nuance the issues that a strictly Saussurean approach produces seems to be lost.

Monelle's adoption of Peirce is motivated in part by a rejection of any such split between the introversive and extroversive. For Monelle, the abstract and

nonrepresentational “metarationalism” of Nattiez’s neutral level fails to accommodate the intrinsic meaningfulness of what constitutes “the musical” in any given culture (Monelle 2000: 9–10), with Monelle (2000: 11) insisting that the appropriate figure of analysis is the “musical text”, a notion “which is a great deal more than merely the score”. There is an important role here for Peirce’s insistence on tripartite distinctions and relations, standing in contrast to the binary oppositions we find across structuralist accounts: for Peirce semiosis is “an action, an influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs” (CP 5.484). Likewise, Peirce’s minimal account of the sign as “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (CP 2.228), and furthermore his minimal definition of semiosis as “the action of practicing on any sort of sign” (EP2: 411), implies an open-endedness quite distinct from the closure that structuralism requires. The third variable of the sign, the “in some respect or capacity”, complicates any *a priori* delimitation of the work of signs. On Hatten’s account, a neglect or bracketing of this aspect, relating to what Peirce calls the ‘interpretant’, is one of Nattiez’s key shortcomings (Hatten 1992: 94).

Yet Monelle’s musical semiotics are not straightforwardly Peircean, and he also adopts ideas from the departures from structuralism that can broadly be called poststructuralist or postmodernist, through this highlighting an often concealed undercurrent of Peirce’s influence on that work (see Girel 2014). (This is while, nevertheless, situating himself between a structuralist rigour and poststructuralist and postmodernist openness and pliability.<sup>5</sup>) One of the most important contributions of poststructuralism and postmodernism to Monelle’s thought centres on the distinctive theories of temporality that this work provided, as is evident in the chapter of his *The Sense of Music* entitled “The temporal image”. Esti Sheinberg (2012: 10) suggests, for example, that Monelle’s interest in the thought of Jacques Derrida was likely related to Derrida introducing the element of time into the structuralist concepts of ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’, an introduction that serves to disrupt the consistency and stability of structure. Where structural linguistics needs to defend itself against the concern that any speech act could potentially

<sup>5</sup> As Christine Eslapez (2012: 19) put it, “[t]here is a conciliation [in Monelle’s work] looking for a balance between the teachings of structuralism, which see the description of the text as essential but which neglect its sense effects, and the post-structuralist initiative of ‘deconstructing’ a text which has become transparent to itself.” Hatten too conceived of the contribution of Peircean semiotics as offering not a semantics-focused alternative to the structural-analytical approach, but rather an approach that intrinsically includes both perspectives.

change the structure of language, poststructuralism posits that indeed speech acts (or other events) can have such an effect. Every signifying act becomes motivated in ways yet to be determined, which a particular structural account may, retroactively, account for, but on the other hand may not.

The engagement with Peirce here thus goes beyond the most common use of his voluminous writings in both musical and cultural research, namely the application of his sign categorizations. As the musicologist Ben Curry has highlighted, beyond such a straightforward application we can take from Peirce a distinct temporal thinking, with the consistent triad of icon, index, and symbol being mapped onto present, past, and future (Curry 2012: 149), developments in logic and epistemology (Curry 2017: 402), and a pragmatism (or, later, ‘pragmatism’) that insists on viewing “the world in practice” (Curry 2017: 406). On Curry’s account, the extraction of theoretical tools from Peirce without due concern for his wider philosophical project has tended to lead to an ultimate foreclosure of the dynamism for which these scholars had turned to Peirce. Curry, on the contrary, stresses that what Peirce fundamentally offers is a semiotics not of closed structures and fixed determinations, but of a thoroughgoing practical experimentalism.

Such a Peircean position has many effects on musical semiotics. Some of these can come into focus through the theme of subjectivity, such as the predominant form of musical subjectivity that is the ideal listener. Here Peircean semiotics, with its key third term of the interpretant, can serve to undermine this form. While, for example, Nattiez’s neutral level brings with it an implied neutrality of interpretation and a form of engagement with a musical work that at least tends towards a comprehensive understanding of the work’s constitution, with any Peircean account the analyst or listener must be inserted directly into the processes of semiosis. If music takes part in, as Monelle says with reference to Julia Kristeva, a “transformation of the real” (Esclapez 2012: 17),<sup>6</sup> it also takes part in a transformation of the listener.

The most extensive account of a musical subjectivity informed by Peirce’s semiotics is that put forward by Naomi Cumming in *The Sonic Self* (2000). Cumming does much to suggest the richness of this proposition: she speaks of a plurality of modes of awareness which overlap into a “texture of experience”, and of the importance of the experience of music being not an experience of ready comprehension but, at least in the first instance, of being struck by an otherness. The subject, for Cumming (2000: 208), is in essence the product of its encounters: an “effect of the combination of other semiotic elements in time”. Yet there may be

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<sup>6</sup> Although tracking divergences between Peirce’s sense of the ‘real’ or ‘reality’ and that of later theoretical positions could complicate this; see Lane 2024.

limits to Cumming's approach. In Jairo Moreno's (2005) review essay on *The Sonic Self* he identifies a number of ways in which Cumming departs from a primacy of the encounter depicted in Peircean terms towards a more stable and foundational form of musical responsivity. For instance, Moreno (2005: 298–29) notes that Cumming's thought is widely informed by the ready-given terms of music analysis ('style', 'work', 'structure', 'genre', 'ornament'), risking reifying a split between text and context, or, again, introversive and extroversive. For Moreno (2005: 299), it is crucial that notions such as 'context' or 'culture' are not grounds on which semiotic relations rest, but are themselves "mediated by other interpretants, as is the richly intricate constellation we call music (work, internal relations, notation and performance technologies, etc.)". These terms themselves are Peircean 'semiotic elements' that could have been more thoroughly accounted for in Peircean terms.

What is ultimately at issue for Moreno relates to the status of the body in musical experience. While in Cumming's account of listening the authority usually afforded to the mind is diminished, this authority is perhaps only passed onto the body, presented with "the sort of transparent intimacy for which the mind is often scorned" (Moreno: 2005: 287). While Cumming provides a profound insight into the constitutive making and re-making of self by music and music by self, "folding esthesis into poiesis" (Moreno 2005: 301), for Moreno the 'sonic self' of Cumming's title is a self in which self and music are ultimately synthesized. Moreno's position is that such a synthesis may, in actual musical experience, never be forthcoming, and he feels the need to remain within what may be a negative dialectic, where the self remains non-identical to itself and where "the mirror of musical subjectivity may offer the sonic self a distorted or at the very least incomplete image of itself" (Moreno 2005: 301).

Cumming's Peircean musical semiotics is not the only one that does not seem to follow through on its premise. A challenge akin to Moreno's also underpins Ben Curry's critique of Robert Hatten. For Curry (2012: 156), Hatten's limited concern with indexicality leads to an identification of qualitative presence with something "in" the music rather than being itself the result of semiotic processes (Curry 2012: 156). Curry (2012: 157) counterposes to this the insights of the "new musicology" that belatedly brought feminist and other cultural concerns into musical research, work which makes clear that the indexicalities associated with listening are points of contestation. As Curry (2012: 158) argues, there is "a habit that dominates Western listening practices whereby music's unsaturated bonds are filled by the listener's subjectivity or conception of self", through which practices of musical meaning-making are posited as involving not a dynamic chain of interpretation but a grounded relation of subject to object. Curry stresses, against the substantiality of the listening subject, a certain anti-Cartesianism that Peirce affirms, by

which, quoting Peirce, “[w]e have no power of Introspection, but all knowledge of the external world is derived by hypothetical reasoning from our knowledge of external facts” (EP1: 30 quoted in Curry 2017: 414). For Curry and Moreno alike, subjectivity itself must be seen to be constantly negotiated in and between contested practices of listening.

It seems a persisting risk of adoptions of Peirce in the theorization of music, then, is that certain third terms – notably well-defined kinds of listener, but also terms such as ‘context’ and ‘culture’ – serve to nullify the triadic dynamism that characterizes Peirce’s thought, and to reintroduce a modestly modified form of the signifier–signified relation that grounds structural approaches. What perhaps remains to be fully realized is a Peircean musical semiotics that does not ultimately alight on a substantial term on which to ground its semiotic relations.

Following through on this perspective, Curry differentiates his position from Monelle’s insofar as for Curry (2017: 414 n35), following Peirce, “all thought is ultimately derived from experience of the material world”, while Monelle (2006: 13) remarks that we should not assume that the “signified [of the musical topic] was ever part of the social and material world”.<sup>7</sup> Curry may well be capturing a certain tension that results from Monelle’s attempts to straddle structuralism and post-structuralism, as well as pointing towards those aspects of Monelle’s thought that would seem to take distance from new and cultural musicology. We hear this when Monelle (2000: 11) argues for a kind of “neutral” analysis that “will be nonnormative, nonevaluative, and not dependent on marginal accounts drawn from psychology, sociology, political ideology, or elsewhere”.<sup>8</sup> For Monelle (2000: 100) such a position means that he can be “concerned with inherent signification, which, though it implies a listening subject, is not dependent on individual listeners”, a position that seems to deviate from the image of Peircean semiotics we have seen thus far.

However, Monelle’s late work suggests a more compelling interpretation of his comment regarding the “social and material world”. This relates to the “certain degradation of the object” (Monelle 2008: 86) that he takes as a focus in some of his final writings. Opening his essay “The absent meaning of music”, Monelle (2008: 69) reiterates his position regarding a neutrality to semiotics, drawing

<sup>7</sup> This distinction may be undercut by what Peirce calls his ‘synechism’, or “the doctrine that all that exists is continuous” (CP 1.172). This includes continuity within such traditional philosophical dualisms as that of mind and matter.

<sup>8</sup> However, Curry could be taken to agree with at least one of the motivating factors for this position, namely that social and political approaches to music risk the reification of ‘the social’, or another figure such as ‘context’ or ‘situation’, in a way that will diminish the theory’s capacity to think through the mediation of musical and social meanings (see Curry 2012: 439).

from Frege to argue that “[s]igns have inherent meaning, more or less efficiently apprehended by each observer. Meaning is inherent; it is logical, not an empirical matter. This is surely a vitally important distinction, and must hold whatever our view of sign theory.” Here Monelle again seems to deviate from a Peircean account that would emphasize the necessity of the active interpretant. But he then turns his argument to affirm that the more complex an utterance, the less useful it is to attempt to pin it to a reference, and musical utterances are, no doubt, extremely complex (Monelle 2008: 71). Indeed, for Monelle this even tends towards an infinite regress, though he claims that “we may regard the infinite referentiality of signs as merely representing the endless web of knowledge” (Monelle 2008: 73). Taken to his fullest, for Monelle Peirce can, at least in the analysis of music, lead to a perhaps terrifying groundlessness. This is a theme that Monelle implied in earlier writings when speaking of how music, like, in a deconstructive mode, signification more generally, “implodes allegorically”, with its attempts at direct referentiality becoming unmoored and entering into a fundamentally mobile conception of meaning (Monelle 2000: 13). In this instance, that mobility becomes a “certain degradation of the object” (Monelle 2008: 86).

Monelle considers his position to be a slight departure from Peirce, insofar as, according to him, Peirce generally insists that signs are “normally determined by objects” (Monelle 2008: 77). This may seem a more thorough departure from Peirce than Monelle proposes it to be, as a Peircean semiotics without a sign structure composed of object, sign or representamen, and interpretant (EP2: 410) would appear to be something else entirely.<sup>9</sup> Yet this might be nuanced. For Monelle the ‘object’ he is concerned with, and identifies as absent in music, is the reference of a sign characterized as “unitary, positive, as the end of a logical chain” (Monelle 2008: 88). In the terms of Peirce’s late semiotics Monelle seems to be referring to what Peirce calls the ‘dynamic’ or ‘dynamical’ object. This is, in one definition given by Peirce, “the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation” (CP 4.536), or, roughly speaking, and in ways that will later be complicated, the mind-independent “real” object that is the ultimate, even if not necessarily attained, epistemic target of semiotic inquiry. It is such an object that appears to be absent from music (Monelle 2008: 74), and with this Monelle (2008: 86) suggests that both Frege and Peirce, with their ultimately unitary objects, “condemn music to the abyss of non-referentiality”.

However, the dynamic object is not Peirce’s only “object”, as in introducing the notion of the dynamic object he pairs it with the ‘immediate object’. This

<sup>9</sup> I thank the anonymous reviewer for inviting clarification of this theme, which I hope to develop further in future work.

is understood as the object “as represented in the Sign” (EP2: 498), and, while broadly taken to be a provisional supposition of, or “hint” at (EP2: 480), the dynamic object of an inquiry, it has a relation to dynamic objects that has proven difficult to pin down. Artistic cases seem to present particular difficulties for giving an account of what might constitute the dynamic object and the relation between the dynamic object and the immediate object.<sup>10</sup> The notion of the immediate object and its relation to the dynamic object might complicate Monelle’s attribution of a “degradation” of the object to Peirce. Yet at the same time it helps clarify some of Monelle’s key concerns. Following the Saussurean direction of musical semiotics does not seem to present such a problem regarding a “degradation of the object”, as the musical work would refer only to itself and its internal composition. Yet Monelle wants to deny the possibility of such an isolation and finds in Peirce’s processual semiotic inquiry a means to resist this isolation. The notion of the immediate object presents a provisionality, and a potential fleetingness within the work of semiosis, that might adequately correspond to the “degradation” Monelle identifies.

Nevertheless, Monelle does sense a distinction from Peirce that is worth pursuing. Outlining that distinction, in some of his closing remarks Monelle turns to Deleuze and Guattari. He notes that Deleuze holds a “temporal and immediate” understanding of signs (Monelle 2008: 80), with Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the rhizome being considered particularly adaptable to music. Monelle (2008: 87) describes Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of the Wagnerian leitmotif in these terms:

Do not look for a musical ‘meaning’ or ‘object’, it is implied; quite apart from music, such meanings and objects are not to be found anywhere. Do not look for points of reference, unitary foci in listening to music, for all is movement and change, and music faithfully reflects this. On the other hand, since music throws out flashes of intensity, we are driven to interpret; and our interpretations will be infinite, always aiming to be true to the text, always different, never merely subjective. Peirce was right, after all, in his endless chain of interpretants, but he led us astray with his ‘object’.

This is far from a case of ready recognition of the functioning of a structure. Knowledge and experience are much more fragile and fleeting: we strive to interpret “flashes of intensity” rather than anything stable and identifiable. Such a “defined object”, Monelle (2008: 88) says, “unitary, positive, as the end of a logical chain, is absent from music”. Yet far from considering this a lack in music as

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<sup>10</sup> See Wilson 2017 on fictional objects, and, more generally on the dynamic object and immediate object, Atkin 2008.

others in the history of philosophy have, for Monelle this has significant ontological consequences: it shows music to be “an especially faithful sign of reality in its temporal and dynamic character”, “reveal[ing] the underlying truths of the process of signification, [and] in its best form showing forth the nature of things” (Monelle 2008: 88). These comments are bold, perhaps more motivated by a general sentiment regarding the character of musical experience than by argumentation. Yet their richness invites further examination.

### Peirce's diagram through Deleuze and Guattari

Deleuze and Guattari may seem a peculiar choice for a semiotician of music to turn to. Is what Monelle describes through their notion of the rhizome not a breakdown of semiotics? Are they not participating in a “post-semiotic” tendency in French thought, seeking to abolish the certainties implied in representation and signification and to uncover a more contingent, noisy, and mutable world beneath (ffrench 2023)?<sup>11</sup> They are indeed, but this does not come through an outright rejection of semiotics. Their *A Thousand Plateaus* contains a sustained engagement with semiotics, with a primary goal being not a rejection of semiotics *per se* but rather a pluralization, beyond the linguistic “signifying regime” into accounts of what they call the “presignifying”, “countersignifying”, and “postsignifying” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 119). In accounts of music the presignifying may seem to take precedence, with Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 117) speaking of this regime as

foster[ing] a pluralism or polyvocality of forms of expression that prevents any power takeover by the signifier and preserves expressive forms particular to content; thus forms of corporeality, gesturality, rhythm, dance, and rite coexist heterogeneously with the vocal form.

Yet separating out regimes and returning to something more fundamental is never what is at hand for Deleuze and Guattari: there can be no “return to the myth of a ‘natural’ semiotic” (Guattari 1984: 98).

Yet alongside this pluralization of regimes of signs there is also what seems like a deeper move towards the ‘asignifying’. Guattari earlier spoke of a seemingly paradoxical “a-signifying semiotics” (Guattari 1984: 75), but in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) the concern shifts somewhat. It is usually signs themselves that are asignifying, part of an “asemiological regime of signs” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 68).

<sup>11</sup> On some musical and musicological consequences of this tendency see Ridout 2023.

What could this mean? Another term used provides a route into this question, and it is a term taken from Peirce's semiotics: that of the 'diagram'.<sup>12</sup>

For Peirce the diagram, in the first instance, is a particular type of icon, that is, a sign that resembles that which it represents. It functions as a sign through a kind of simplification, suppressing certain features of the object to which it refers in order to allow the mind "more easily to think of the important features" (EP2: 13). This can be to the extent that the resemblance between diagram and object is "not at all in looks" but only with regards to the relation of parts. This notion of the diagram and its substantial elaborations by Peirce has a significant legacy, as with the art theorist W. J. T. Mitchell's sense of 'diagrammatology' as "a systematic study of the way relationships among elements are represented and interpreted by graphic constructions" (Mitchell 1981: 622–23). The contemporary semiotician Frederik Stjernfelt has developed this notion in a way that will be clarificatory for us here.

Stjernfelt (2007: ix) is explicit that his diagrammatology treats the sign in a non-Saussurean manner, that is, not as "an arbitrary coding relation connecting pre-established expression and content". Stjernfelt (2007: ix) is not concerned with the linguistic form of this conception of signs, but rather with signs being based on "a structural similarity between signifier, signified, and the sign's object", a conception that considers the prototypical sign to be "an argument mirroring part of the structure of the states-of-affairs to which it refers". For Stjernfelt this distinctly implies a form of semiotic realism, with the work of signs having a more-or-less direct relation to the world rather than the operations of conventionality or arbitrariness with which more linguistically-oriented semiotic theories may be concerned.

For Stjernfelt, the diagram names a fundamental kind of reasoning. This kind of reasoning involves "representing generality by continuous shapes" (Stjernfelt 2007: xiii) in a manner that allows us to attain direct knowledge of different subjects "by the construction and manipulation of diagrams charting those subjects". He quotes Peirce to elaborate this idea:

By diagrammatic reasoning, I mean reasoning which constructs a diagram according to a precept expressed in general terms, performs experiments upon this diagram, notes their results, assures itself that similar experiments performed upon any diagram constructed according to the same precept would have the same results, and expresses this in general terms. This was a discovery of no little importance, showing, as it does, that all knowledge without exception comes from observation. (MS L75 C, 91–92, quoted in Stjernfelt 2007: xiii)

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<sup>12</sup> I examine Deleuze and Guattari's semiotics, and the relation to Peirce, further in Campbell 2019.

Stjernfelt (2007: xxi) stresses the “experimental” element of diagrammatic reasoning, highlighting this kind of reasoning as a creative and strategic practice. The quote’s final sentence, stating that “all knowledge without exception comes from observation”, also makes clear why Curry (2017: 414 n35) thinks it is apt to deviate from Monelle when he affirms “follow[ing] Peirce in conceiving all thought as ultimately derived from experience of the material world”. However, in pursuing Monelle’s concern with a “certain degradation of the object” (Monelle 2008: 86) to be found in Peirce’s thought I wish to suggest a counterpoint of sorts to the realist semiotics of Stjernfelt’s diagrammatology, which Stjernfelt (2007: xxi) poses in polemical opposition to “‘grammatology’ as a headline for all sorts of deconstructivist, vitalist, social-constructivist skepticisms against the possible reliability of iconically represented information”. By following through on precisely the amplification of the experimental and constructive elements of diagrammatic reasoning, or diagrammatic practice, that the ‘degradation of the object’ implies, I will suggest an alternative to Stjernfelt’s diagrammatology that perhaps cannot be said to be ‘realist’ in the terms he suggests, but which is certainly not anti-realist or sceptical.

Stjernfelt’s interpretation of Peirce makes clear a legitimate distinction between Peirce and his poststructuralist adopters, a distinction concerning the status of that ‘object’ which for Monelle (2008: 87) “led us astray”. Yet this distinction is more complex than it has been taken to be. Deleuze himself suggests such a distinction in his discussion of Peirce in his *Cinema 2*.<sup>13</sup> This discussion is dense and somewhat obscure, but one point Deleuze (1980: 30–31) makes is that Peircean semiotics tends to involve the gradual accumulation of knowledge about known objects, which tends towards another emphasis on the linguistic in semiotics.<sup>14</sup> (Here we will again recall the distinction between dynamic object and immediate object, with this “known” object being the dynamic object.) This then serves to diminish Peirce’s original strength of not being limited to a linguistic sense of semiotics (Deleuze 1980: 30). The media theorist Roger Dawkins examines this moment in Deleuze’s thought closely, highlighting the status of Peirce in Deleuze’s distinction between the “organic” semiotic process, which takes as its basis a pre-existing reality to be described, and a “crystalline” semiotic process, which “stands

<sup>13</sup> Deleuze’s *Cinema* books feature his most direct engagement with Peirce and some of his more evidently semiotic thought. While this discussion has resonances elsewhere in Deleuze’s work that I consider to be helpful here, I am nevertheless reluctant to overinvest in the wider applicability of Deleuze’s work on cinema, which I take to be a project somewhat distinct from most of his other writings.

<sup>14</sup> Here I do not take a stance on the validity of Deleuze’s criticisms, and rather only want to follow their consequences and effects. A Peirce-influenced critique of Deleuze’s *Cinema* books is developed by the media theorist Mark B. N. Hansen (2016).

for its object, replaces it, both creates and erases it [...] and constantly gives way to other descriptions which contradict, displace or modify the preceding ones” (Deleuze 1980: 126, quoted in Dawkins 2020: 4–5). Peirce is aligned with the ‘organic process’, and, as on Monelle’s reading, Peirce’s insistence on the object diminishes his ability to accommodate this more unstable second category.

Deleuze and Guattari’s apparently unfaithful adaptation of Peirce’s notion of the diagram seems to develop from a similar position. Guattari (2006: 77) suggests a distinction between his use of the diagram and that of Peirce’s when he speaks of “a passage from iconization to diagrammatization”, a distinction that could make little sense for Peirce. The topic of realism may be of some help here. Guattari also seems to affirm a kind of realism, or at least an opposition to the anti-realism he finds in the representational forms of signification: in the signifying regime “the sign never refers directly to reality” (Guattari 1984: 92). Still, he stresses that even the most minimal discursive rendering of the natural realm involves a particular translation into signs (Guattari 1984: 167), a different notion than the structural isomorphism Stjernfelt suggests. As for Peirce, on Stjernfelt’s reading, the diagram has, for Guattari, a particular closeness to reality, but this reality may be conceived differently. Reality here, as Monelle briefly highlights, is less a reality of stable objects to be subjected to inquiry than it is a reality of contingency and change that human processes such as art or science can allow us to tap into.<sup>15</sup>

How Guattari differentiates himself from Peirce is reflected in how Stjernfelt’s conception of the diagram does not seem to be an entirely satisfying description of one of Peirce’s examples of an icon. Peirce notes as an example of an icon “the design an artist draws of a statue, pictorial composition, architectural elevation, or piece of decoration, by the contemplation of which he can ascertain whether what he proposes will be beautiful and satisfactory” (EP2: 6). This can be understood as a diagram, as such a sketch is likely to be a simplified and formal representation of this object. Yet the object of this sign has a peculiar status: it does not yet exist. A sketch can be said to be of a painting, yet precede the painting coming into existence. It suggests an object, but insofar as it represents the object, it represents something that will only come to exist in the future. The sign itself might seem to serve to bring the object into being. Is an object that does not yet exist really “real”? What status does it have as an object?

When Guattari conceives of diagrams he does not understand them to be presenting a likeness of an existing object that we might at the end of our inquiry fully

<sup>15</sup> However, reading Guattari through Peirce’s distinction between ‘reality’, understood as that which is independent of any representation of it, and ‘existence’, as “a mode of being that characterizes individual things” (Lane 2024: 414), could complicate this further.

comprehend. He rather understands the diagram to bring about a process that has no necessary direction or goal, taking as its premise only to make “signs work flush to material flows” (Guattari 1984: 88, translation modified; Guattari 2012: 419). The relational detail and refinement of the diagram is taken to set into motion sign-behaviours that evade signification and modulate material flows themselves. The role of the diagram, then, is not to “denote” a fully constituted referent, but to produce it (Guattari 2011: 216). In this respect Guattari can be seen to participate in, and drastically intensify, the ‘degradation of the object’ that Monelle finds in Peirce’s thought. While for Monelle the “object” slows the movement of Peircean semiotics, for Deleuze and Guattari (as for Deleuze in his *Cinema* books), Peirce ultimately alights again on signifier–signified relations rather than the tri-relative movement he promises (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 531 n41), and that his semiotics pertains to actually existing objects in the world seems to be one motivating factor for this critique. As with the earlier examples of Peircean musical semiotics cut short by the imposition of stable third terms, here a certain conception of the object and reality cuts short the constructive and experimental procedure that Peircean semiotics could be.

There is certainly something significant in this distinction from Peirce that Deleuze and Guattari suggest. For example, Peirce insists that the work of signs elaborates the “very growth into truth”, with semiotic inquiry staging a telos towards “true interpretation” or “final opinion” (EP2: 496). ‘Truth’ pertains not merely to psychological effects, but to “the satisfaction which *would* ultimately be found if the inquiry were pushed to its ultimate and indefeasible issue” (CP 6.485). As Dawkins (2020: 6–7) highlights, with this telos of truth the existence of the object of inquiry must be supposed, and indeed it must be supposed that we are already acquainted with the object before we set out to learn more about it. Yet, in the same breath as making this kind of claim, Peirce makes another in apparent contrast. A sign can determine a cognizing mind only insofar as it itself is determined by an object (CP 8.177), but equally “[t]he object of a Sign may be something to be created by the sign” (CP 8.178). A writer of fiction can bring into being a “Universe of things” with its particular objects to be referred to.

Here we again do not feel so far from Deleuze and Guattari, or Monelle. Where Monelle (2008: 88) supposed the Peircean object to be “unitary, positive, as the end of a logical chain”, even the dynamic object seems to be a more complex and strange entity than this suggests, as in Peirce’s acknowledgement, in a letter to William James, that the term ‘real object’ may not be apt as “perhaps the Object is altogether fictive” (EP2: 498). The status of such a fictive object is still a matter of debate (see Wilson 2017), but what we can see is an object that is not only supposed to exist within a certain way of speaking about or acting concerning

objects, but is directly fabulated within that way of speaking or acting. This suggests a much more open-ended, constructive, and creative sense of the object and of realism than has been attributed to Peirce by Monelle and, indeed, by Deleuze and Guattari.

This closeness between Peirce and Deleuze and Guattari is highlighted by Guillaume Collett and Chryssa Sdrolia, whose analysis will gradually guide us back to the initial terms of musical semiotics. They begin from Guattari's method of 'metamodelization', understood as an inhabitation of models and an examination of how these models are articulated in relation to the "singular, historical, practical, and institutional (in short, 'transversal') contexts of their production" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 47). Taking the diagram to be a framework that is more apt to tie models to their singular conditions than methods based around structure, they link this to Peirce's reflections on method, and the singularity of methods he seems to endorse:<sup>16</sup> "The method itself will have to be experimented with while the problems are being constructed – while thought experiences itself as contingent to the world it taps into and whose vital relations make it mutable, plural, and potentially fallible" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 49). Following the pragmatic maxim by which "every conception is a conception of conceivable practical effects" (EP2: 235), Collett and Sdrolia (2020: 49) take this to imply a call for a "pragmatism of *creation*" that acknowledges that the semiotic behaviours of the world itself will not be fully captured by any given explanatory system.

What the tri-relative structure of semiosis entails is a distinct indeterminacy, bringing to semiosis the necessity of an evolutionism that means semiotics "will evolve as a pragmatic experimentation with semiosis" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 51). Contrary to binary signification, where signifier and signified are locked in a self-referential circuit, in the work of a tri-relative semiosis components necessarily become other than themselves. The intrinsic dynamism in the movement of signs means that "the Diagram remains ambiguous and open, its potential explanatory circularity being disrupted at every junction" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 52). What thinking through the diagram then reveals, according to Collett and Sdrolia, is how the model of dualistic correspondence leaves a gap where an explanatory third term needs to be situated, as we saw earlier in a musical context, with the musical object and the listening subject situated as sites of contestation rather than uninterrogated grounds for analysis.

This returns us to the question of subjectivity. On Collett and Sdrolia's (2020: 53) account, with Peirce "object and subject are no longer divided [as in

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<sup>16</sup> Although we can also find from Peirce contrary claims to be seeking "simple concepts applicable to every subject" (CP 1.1).

structuralist accounts] by a structural gap between them but conjoin in experience as their shared abstract limit". Experience "becomes the place where the subject is continuously and processually determined with and by its object" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 53), and so semiosis is to be understood not as a subject comprehending an object, but as a stream of interpretations by which the subject becomes a subject through interpreting itself and its object. What is implied in the diagram is a "sheer novelty", not so much an ordering of an external world as the genesis and evolution of something new and unexpected: the experimenters "can only diagrammatize their way into a semiotic territory" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 57), not take themselves to be impassive observers of an external object.

Nicholas Cook remarked that Monelle's most significant contribution to topic theory was recognizing that pure iconicity does not exist in music: that "in all musical signs there is an element of the symbolic, and hence of historically and culturally embedded interpretation" (Cook 2012: 173; Monelle 2000: 16–17). This is reflected in the "degradation of the object", by which music's signifying processes become increasingly difficult to pin down, but it also suggests the potential scope of musical semiotics, with Monelle (2000: 228) remarking that music "signifies indexically the underlying rhythms of contemporary consciousness. In particular, cultural temporalities are perforce reflected in music." This discussion of the diagram, however, permits us to frame Cook's assessment somewhat differently. While the index has a direct relation to its object, which is thus an actually existing object, and symbols have a habitual relation to their objects, the icon, especially in its diagrammatic form, "affords no assurance that what it creates exists" (Collett, Sdrolia 2020: 59). This, nevertheless, is not the question at hand. It is rather a matter of seeing "what would be the character of such an object in case any such did exist" (CP 4.447), which, say Collett and Sdrolia (2020: 59), "allows the creation of and experimentation with new signs as *such*". Again, the status of the dynamic object here is complex, but we can see it as only one moment in a thoroughly experimental process.

Many of these points come together in some of Deleuze and Guattari's own analyses of music. Deleuze and Guattari are often considered to see music in its modernist phase, characterized by figures such as Edgard Varèse, John Cage, and Pierre Boulez, as being a practice that aims to elude the semiotic entirely, rejecting the harmonic and temporal organization of traditional music in favour of "pure modifications of speed" (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 267). Such a reading plays out in contemporary realist and materialist theories, as when Christoph Cox (2018: 2) describes sound art (which Cox understands as being continuous with experimental music) as being concerned with "explor[ing] the sonic substratum in its material flow". This is broadly accurate, but must be nuanced. For Deleuze and

Guattari music most fundamentally functions beyond what we can immediately hear. Music aims towards “harness[ing] unthinkable, invisible, nonsonorous forces” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 343), striving to “bring the imperceptible to perception” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 267). We hear not only an experimentation with sound, but a kind of “experimentation in life” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 134), an experimentation on the self, a self whose listening capacities are expanded in the encounter with musical sound, aiming beyond itself through “an extension of perception to the limits of the universe” (Deleuze 2007: 301). Modernist music deals with the problem of how to perceive the elusive objects that cannot be accommodated in traditional musical structures.

This points to a concern that threads through Deleuze’s thought, and which the diagram provides a frame for exploring. The kind of experience and the kind of thought that most interests Deleuze is not the recognition and identification of objects, but a more violent kind of encounter with that which we cannot readily identify (Deleuze 2008: 64). He is concerned with encounters with signs that do not merely tell us about what they signify, but which directly impinge on thought, forcing a creative interpretation and changing the form of thought itself. This will recall Cumming’s theorization of musical subjectivity, but Deleuze is clear that no synthesis of subjective interiority and the exterior world is forthcoming. To open ourselves to the outside is necessarily a risky procedure, at times flirting with madness (Deleuze 1990: 157–158), but the diagram facilitates working with such encounters without subjecting ourselves to an abyssal chaos. It serves a “piloting” role in the experimental contention with that which we do not yet know how to categorize (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 142). The diagram “does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new kind of reality” (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 142).

### **A diagrammatic musical semiotics**

One especially interesting use of musical semiotics is developed by Morag Grant with regards to experimental music. Where most music can be seen to work through a generally symbolic register, with agreement on certain structural foundations and the possible relations that can be enacted, for example note relations adhering to certain rules, experimental music often takes as a premise a challenge to such an assumed shared ground. For Grant, much of what takes place in experimental music can be understood in the Peircean sense of the indexical, where there is an indication of or drawing attention to “the phenomena and relationships associated with the social practice known as music” (Grant 2003: 173). As Moreno and Curry emphasize in other contexts, what is crucial here is that

terms like 'music' and its traditionally constitutive forms, institutions, and social status are not taken as given, but identified as sites of active contestation.

This can take many forms. Grant (2003: 173) notes one aspect as "the social relationships between audience, musicians and composers". We might think here of a work like Christian Wolff's *Burdocks* (1971), conceived by Wolff as an orchestra piece in ten movements, accommodating up to fifty to sixty people (Carl 2001: 61–62). *Burdocks* then is, in basic form, suggestive of the orchestral tradition (Carl 2001: 62). But in practice performers are instructed only to play a particular set of sounds, with a significant degree of freedom to choose and improvise. This, following in the spirit of Cornelius Cardew's Scratch Orchestra, also loosens any requirement for instrumental virtuosity, with amateurs as welcome as professionals. Moreover, it is by no means limited to the concert hall, with one rendition I witnessed taking place at the Tectonics festival in Glasgow in 2019 being performed in the foyer with the musicians distributed around the space. Indexically, by making the claim to be an orchestral work this brings into focus the conventionality of the orchestra as we understand it, as an aesthetic, social, and spatial phenomenon.

However, there seems to be something more here than only an indexical gesture towards conventions or norms. There is also what we can consider to be a diagrammatic function. A work like *Burdocks*, or an institution like the Scratch Orchestra, do not only bring attention to the conventionality of the traditional orchestra. At the same time we could say that they propose a diagram. They attempt to bring into being a new kind of musical communality other than that of the traditionally trained orchestra facing a passive audience. Conventional behaviours are indeed pointed out, but with this an experimentation takes place with possible new behaviours. To take another example, Grant also notes that experimental music can serve to bring attention to "psychoacoustical phenomena". Here we might think of the work of Maryanne Amacher, whose installation work brings to light curious auditory phenomena such as otoacoustic emissions, sounds that the ear itself produces (see Amacher 2020). Amacher's work too might be seen not only to bring attention to psychoacoustical phenomena, but to suggest that the experiential category of listening can be something other than we have supposed it to be. Likewise, durational work like that of Éliane Radigue does not only bring attention to listening, but prompts an extension of listening practices and capacities, with sustained attention revealing previously inaudible spaces "between the folds" (Bonnet 2024: 509). It involves, in Deleuze's terms, making the inaudible audible.

I will close with a well-known example that draws together many of my key themes. In his *Languages of Art* (1968) the philosopher Nelson Goodman

discusses a form of indeterminate notation developed by John Cage, first used as one form among many in Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra, Solo for Piano* (1958) and later elaborated in his *Variations* pieces, and comprised of, put simply, several dots indicating sound events scattered across a square, with the square being intersected by lines at various angles indicating sound characteristics (Goodman 1968: 187–188). For Goodman, the lack of syntactic and semantic clarity in this score means that it does not qualify, in his terms, as a piece of notation. This is because “the system in question furnishes no means of identifying a work from performance to performance or even of a character from mark to mark” (Goodman 1968: 189–190). The relation between score and particular performances is not sufficiently precise to give us a basis for judging the adequacy of the performance to the score.

Where a score might typically be seen as a stable sign to be interpreted in the performance of a work, and a performance in turn as something that can be judged in terms of its semiotic relationship with that score, Cage's scoring seems to prevent any such interpretation and judgment. To an extent we are on familiar musicological territory here, and Goodman's understanding of notation can be seen as being bound to the historically specific understanding of musical works that Lydia Goehr (1992: 20–21) subjects to scrutiny through her notion of the ‘work-concept’ (see also McKay 2021 on a semiotic of open notations). Goehr indeed, like Monelle, works on the basis that trying to think of musical works in terms of well-defined objects leads to intractable puzzles. But there is a stranger aspect of Cage's work. Asked to respond to Goodman's analysis, Cage (1976: 129) replied that “writing is one thing, performing another, and listening a third; and that there is no reason for these three operations to be linked”. What could this mean?

Cage seems here to want to pose a breakdown of the kinds of semiotic relations we tend to think inhere in music. On conventional understandings, listening would be judged in terms of an appropriate interpretation of the performance, and the performance in terms of an appropriate interpretation of the score, with the score (and perhaps, in turn, the composer) being the ultimate object of reference. Yet what if we want to follow Monelle and Deleuze and Guattari and subvert the idea of there existing a stable object grounding our semiotic inquiries? The moment of Cage's career that this form of scoring appears in is precisely a moment where he sees his work as “shifting from object to process” (Fetterman 1996: 223).

What I propose, then, is that the score analysed by Goodman, and other aspects of Cage's notational practices from the late 1950s onwards, should be understood diagrammatically. They do not provide a stable reference point to understand better through inquiry, but rather are taken as prompts to an inquiry

that constructs something new. Cage (1961: 28) himself is clear on this: this form of scoring permits of each performance that “the universe within which the action is to take place is not preconceived”. Such scoring functions semiotically, but as a sign that brings its object into being. Following Goodman's critique, Cage does not step back from the referential uncertainty identified, and indeed at times intensifies it, as in the drawings by Henry David Thoreau deployed as instructions for *Score (40 Drawings by Thoreau)* and *23 Parts* (1974) or the scribbled and often incomprehensible written instructions for *Child of Tree* (1975). In each instance there is a demand that the performer interpret something they do not recognize, and indeed cannot fully recognize.

Where does this leave us with regards to the ‘degradation of the object’? Following Monelle's suggestion may have taken us into slightly different territory than he proposed. Where Monelle's invocation of an infinite regress might imply, in a postmodern mode, a dizzying confusion and groundless proliferation, the performer of a Cage work does not simply slip into a web of knowledge. They rather take part in the creation of something that did not pre-exist the situation of performance, “piloted” by the diagram Cage proposes. Perhaps our conventional musical objects have degraded, but with Deleuze and Guattari's diagram the ‘object’ itself may be less degraded than transformed into something to be constructed.

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### **La dégradation de l'objet de la musique : la diagrammatique de Deleuze et Guattari et la sémiotique musicale**

Cet article explore ce que le théoricien de la musique Raymond Monelle a appelé une « certaine dégradation de l'objet » dans l'analyse sémiotique de la musique, c'est-à-dire l'idée qu'un objet ou une référence semble être finalement absent de la sémiotique musicale. Monelle considère sa théorisation brève et non développée de cette idée comme une rupture avec certaines des perspectives peirciennes prédominantes dans la sémiotique musicale et dans son propre travail, et se tourne vers la pensée de Gilles Deleuze et de Félix Guattari comme moyen de traiter cette caractéristique de l'étude sémiotique de la musique. Cet article poursuit plus loin la suggestion de Monelle. Il commence par décrire l'adoption et l'adaptation de la pensée de Charles S. Peirce en sémiotique musicale, avant de se tourner vers l'engagement de Deleuze et Guattari envers Peirce et leur départ de celui-ci dans le développement de leur propre théorie « diagrammatique ». Il considère ensuite les applications de cette théorie à la sémiotique musicale, suggérant que la diagrammatique de Deleuze et Guattari montre que « l'objet » de la musique n'est pas quelque chose à trouver, mais quelque chose à créer.

### **Muusikalise objekti degradeerumine: Deleuze'i ja Guattari diagrammatika ning muusikasemiootika**

Artiklis uuritakse Raymond Monelle'i sõnastatud „teatavat objekti degradeerumist“ semiootilises muusikaanalüüsis ehk arusaama, et muusikasemiootikas puudub lõppkokkuvõttes objekt või referents. See üsna skemaatiline ja väljaarendamata idee tähendab Monelle'i jaoks lahknemist mõnedest Charles S. Peirce'i arusaamadest, mis on tähtsal kohal muusikasemiootikas ja tema enda töödes, ning ta pöördub Gilles Deleuze'i ja Félix Guattari mõtlemise poole, milles leiab vahendi semiootilise muusikaanalüüsi selle omaduse mõtestamiseks. Artiklis arendatakse Monelle'i ettepanekut edasi. Alustuseks visandatakse, kuidas muusikasemiootika on Peirce'i mõtlemise omaks võtnud ja seda kohandanud. Seejärel vaadatakse, kuidas Deleuze ja Guattari suhestuvad Peirce'iga ning kaugenevad temast, kui töötavad välja omaenda diagrammatikateooria. Viimaks arutletakse võimaluste üle rakendada seda teooriat muusikasemiootikas ning pakutakse välja, et Deleuze'i ja Guattari diagrammatika mõistab objekti mitte sellena, mis tuleb üles leida, vaid sellena, mis tuleb alles luua.