

# Music semiotics in a minor key: Deleuze and Guattari's refrain and the musical topic

Karl Joosep Pihel<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Music semiotics spends considerable effort on establishing musical signification through relatively stable – if non-logocentric – concepts such as the musical ‘topic’. Like any signs, these concepts entail a stable generalized type which are instantiated in particular tokens. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari praise music as an artform particularly suitable for deterritorialization, for becoming or events which do not proceed by the logic of the general opposed to the particular. This article probes the clash of these two perspectives on the contested battleground of musical meaning and proposes their mutual entwinement by comparing closely the concept of the ‘refrain’ from *A Thousand Plateaus* with the concept of musical ‘topic’ from semiotics, and the respective dynamics of these concepts. The clash results in a proposed re-orientation in the gaze of Deleuzian musicology to practices of signification as suggested by Iain Campbell and even to classical and traditional forms of music, but also to an internal distinction in music semiotics between mutually intertwined minor and major modes of practice, that is, practices oriented towards deterritorialization and territorialization, respectively. It is then demonstrated that a minor mode of interpretation is already present in musicologists’ writings on musical topics of the classical period.

**Keywords:** Deleuze and Guattari; refrain; musical topic; minor science; deterritorialization

## 1. Introduction

Semioticians and others who study musical signification often frame this study using an ethical lens: for them, to study sociocultural and meaningful elements of music is to affirm music’s human dimension, its capacity to affect us, its connections to our life and milieu, and to increase awareness of the ideological and social norms that govern its reception. To make music speak once again and to *speak of* what it communicates, to return a voice to what Susan McClary (1985: 149)

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Semiotics, University of Tartu, Jakobi 2, Tartu 51005, Estonia; e-mail: kjoosepp@ut.ee.

describes as a “silence in the midst of sounds”. This ethical imperative is contrasted to formalist-absolutist views which regard music as autonomous and endeavour to study the purely musical – depths which go beyond the surface of signification. These are seen at times as rational structures amenable for scientific study in the case of traditional musicology, or as ineffable depths which are the source of creativity beyond mere culturally significant forms in the case of the many 19th-century romantic conceptions (McClary 2000: 3). For semioticians the very act of attempting to posit music outside of ideology and cultural norms is itself an ideological move borne out of a particular historical context.<sup>2</sup>

Yet there is also an ethical dimension for those who might emphasize music’s ineffability. For many, music’s autonomy and non-representational character is potentially liberating from conventions. To subject music to a full explication of its meaning is to deprive music of a limitless potential to engender new meanings. Semantic vagueness and indeterminacy constitute the freedom of music and the freedom it provides to the listener or enables it to communicate on a “deeper level”, beneath representations. Semiotically-minded authors are quick to accuse those who defend music in this manner of mysticism, obfuscation and transcendent metaphysics (Monelle 1992: 6–7). Some authors, such as Vladimir Jankélévitch, indeed call for a “silence” with regard to music – a “doing” instead of speaking, participation and not interpretation, while others find this view to be *silencing* and doubt the possibility of an unmediated experience of music (Hepokoski 2012). Yet ineffability and semiotic conventions need not be considered as completely contradictory. To theorize this notion, I turn to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s work, particularly *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze, Guattari 1987, hereafter *ATP*) and the concept of the ‘refrain’. Contrary to a simple view of Deleuze and Guattari as anti-representational, I argue that their work is instead concerned with the *genesis* of representation from underlying non-representational becomings (or deterritorializations) and a continuing tension which arises from an interrelationship between significations and the forces which they both rely on and modify, yet which can also sweep them away or renew them.

The first of the following sections thus attempts to articulate an argument for a validity of a Deleuzean approach to classical music and to the study of interplay between stabilizing and de-stabilizing, signifying and non-signifying elements through this frame. The section after that provides a more in-depth introduction of the concept of ‘the refrain’ and juxtaposes it with the musical ‘topic’, or a conventional musical signifier as theorized in music semiotics, considering the resonances between the two. The final section introduces the concepts of a major and

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on this see Tagg 2013, Ch. 3.

a minor science and asks what a Deleuzo-Guattarian ‘minor semiotics’ might look like and what it might contribute to the study of topics and musical signification.

## 2. Deleuze, Guattari and ‘perceptual semiotics’

At first glance, Deleuze and Guattari might be seen as supporting the ineffability of music as well. Typically, Deleuzian musicology tends to focus on modernist and avant-garde music, musical experimentation, on innovations in performance practices or the interplay of music and technology: in short, on a view of music as a sociocultural-technological assemblage and artistic *process* rather than as a study of *texts* or *products* (Hulse 2010: 50), a study of *doing* and not *interpreting* in resonance with the comment by Jankélévitch referred to above.<sup>3</sup> As Edward Campbell (2013: 148) notes, the composers whose ideas work best within a Deleuzian context are those who deconstruct musical material, create new connotations or meanings, use unusual material, integrate previously unmusical sounds or hybridize independently existing sounds. He further opines that the semiotics that emerges from Deleuze and Guattari’s works is particularly suitable for the “singular nature of the modernist art work” which does not seek to establish a common idiolect or shared signs (E. Campbell 2013: 161). It is this view which, tacitly at least (though not always), appears in Deleuzian musicology as an assumption about what types of music or musical activity are appropriate to its theoretical framework, that I wish to challenge in what follows by showing that privileging one type of music over others leads to a problem in Deleuze’s non-hierarchical, univocal metaphysic.

One first has to note that an orientation to modern music does seem to be in line with Deleuze and Guattari’s own remarks in *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly in plateau eleven, “1837: On the refrain” and elsewhere. Sound and music are, for them, particularly pertinent in order to demonstrate the dynamics of becoming, ‘territorialization’ and ‘deterritorialization’ – concepts which most broadly can be understood as tendencies toward stasis or change, respectively (Adkins 2013: 48–49). Sound in particular has a greater “coefficient of deterritorialization” when

<sup>3</sup> Assis (2018) does observe the ontology of the musical work from a Deleuzian perspective, while also addressing in depth its realization (or actualization) in performance; Bogue (2013, 2019) discusses classical music and Deleuze, though with an emphasis on 20th-century works. For further approaches on modernist classical music see Assis, Giudici 2021; E. Campbell 2013: 149; I. Campbell 2021: 35; Hulse, Nesbitt 2010 and Klein 2015: 154; for connections with cultural studies, ethnomusicology and performance studies see Moisala *et al.* 2017; for music’s interaction with film and film theory see Redner 2010; and for a composer’s point of view on improvisation and composition see Tromans 2023.

compared to other mediums: sounds can become more detached from their physical or territorial milieus and in so doing become more refined and autonomous. This power or coefficient is not due to sound's communicational or representational qualities. Instead, sound tends towards a-signification, abstraction and pure affectation without content. Due to this it is involved in a non-representational becoming which does not follow already established models, but uses sounds and sensations, both signifying and a-signifying elements and then "sweeps everything away", linking them with molecularized matter and abstract forces (*ATP*: 347–350). Sound is also inherently temporal, emphasizing a purely rhythmic or durational dimension for actualization, thereby reflecting Deleuze's general attitude which Deleuze takes from Bergson to analyse phenomena more in terms of time than space. The particularity of musical temporality and affect, as well as its autonomy from representation, thus links it closely with Deleuze and Guattari's metaphysics of becoming with which it forms a direct analogy.<sup>4</sup>

Yet this does not mean that all music is necessarily a-signifying or deterritorialized. Indeed, due to its sheer power it also produces equivalently strong reterritorializations in clichés, propagandistic hymns or mind-numbing and redundant ditties, to name Deleuze and Guattari's examples – these constitute the threat of *fascism* in music (*ATP*: 348). Further, various social, institutional and dogmatic assemblages limit or hamper music's inherent de-territorializing force.<sup>5</sup> From an ethical and practical perspective the question arises: how to compose music that does not fall into pre-established forms and takes deterritorialization to its end, opening music to a cosmic force (*ATP*: 350)? Or – from the point of view of the researcher or philosopher – how to identify such moments in music; how to approach music in this manner? Here, a progressive typology seems to come into play as Deleuze and Guattari find that it is in modernist aesthetics and music that the continuous development of form and matter becomes so deterritorialized that it now relates only to molecularized sound matter which *captures* forces that are not thinkable or sensible in themselves and *makes them audible* – which also reflects the goal Deleuze and Guattari have in mind for philosophy (*ATP*: 342–343; Deleuze 2003: 57).

<sup>4</sup> Michael Gallope (2017: 218–219) finds that this parallelism between music and metaphysics is not dissimilar from Arthur Schopenhauer's view of music being a non-representational direct copy or expression of the ineffable metaphysical Will that individuates sensible reality, nor from an ancient Pythagorean doctrine of music expressing a coextensive structure with the cosmos, albeit in this case not a harmonious eternal structure, but that of a disjunct and differential flux and ceaseless production of new affects, sensations and articulations (see also Gallope 2017: 34–42).

<sup>5</sup> In his correspondence with Deleuze Guattari contrasts "the abstract machines" of music with these institutional and social forces that inhibit it (quoted in Gallope 2017: 298).

It is here that Michael Gallope (2010: 85–90) finds a tension in Deleuze and Guattari's thought: (1) firstly, in the refrain as a metaphysical concept, through which they seek to describe repeating, self-differentiating and interconnected systems in various interrelated strata. In this view, all strata, be they physical, chemical, biological or social, evolve through a rhythmic process of auto-creation – we have a univocal metaphysics that is always affirmative and musico-temporal; (2) secondly, in an aesthetic and practical dimension, which notes on exemplary compositions that achieve a deterritorialization, a re-orientation (or counter-actualization) towards creative forces, distinct from mere repetition of established forms.

The latter aspect acquires a normative dimension – it is based around criteria that are articulable, at least in principle, requiring something like an “austere modernist poetics” (Gallope 2010: 90). This austerity comes to the fore when Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the gesture of deterritorialization will be all the stronger if one possesses intricate technique and a sober mind which prodigiously selects, limits and simplifies matters, synthesizes heterogeneous elements and disparate parameters without merely “fuzzifying” by proceeding in a manner of ‘becoming-child’ or ‘becoming-mad’ (*ATP*: 344–345). Not all types of music thus seem to fit these sober criteria. Yet the necessity for criteria runs into a contradiction: *specific* practices and specific types of music enable us to counter-actualize, yet Deleuze and Guattari cannot specify them completely or they run afoul of their own principles by providing a prefigured model for deterritorialization or define a particular type of music as properly deterritorializing – thereby committing themselves to an aesthetic or even ontological hierarchy, a “good/bad” distinction which they otherwise always caution against in *ATP*.<sup>6</sup> If there are no criteria, however, then what is stopping us from univocally declaring even the most repetitive cliché as an example of a deterritorialization, to affirm “the whole musical cosmos” as an example of becoming (Gallope 2010: 89)? Affirmation of all or univocal being, which characterizes Deleuze's metaphysics, and practical selection seem to clash as maxims, the latter being “haunted by the dialectical problem of criteria” (Gallope 2017: 232).

In my view, Gallope has identified a reading which seems plausible and does end up in a contradiction in the broader scope of Deleuze's metaphysics. We can find authors who take up this reading and see the problems therein, such as Christoph Cox in his book *Sonic Flux* (2018). Cox aligns his approach with Manuel DeLanda's (1997, 2002) interpretation of Deleuzian metaphysics as materialist and realist. He posits the concept of a ‘sonic flux’ as a material and real substrate, described as a sonorous flow to which “human expressions contribute

<sup>6</sup> See *ATP*: 9, 20, 390 or Adkins 2013: 138; Massumi 1992: 112.

but that precedes and exceeds those expressions” (Cox 2018: 2, 30). This flow is “below” the level of lived bodies and qualified objects, characterized instead by intensive becomings and potentials, analogous to the concepts of the ‘body without organs’ or the ‘plane of immanence’ (Cox 2018: 39–40). Echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s comments, he thinks that a sound manifests particularly elegantly and forcefully the nature of various processes since it, firstly, tends to bypass imaginary and symbolic dimensions (it is affective and not representational); and, secondly, due to sound’s resistance to representation and due to its temporal (evental) nature, sound and music *coalesce* with natural becoming (Cox 2018: 29–30). In contrast, musical formations and conventions of culture work by capturing and coding this natural sonic flux, limiting and necessarily also *disavowing* it (Cox 2018: 87); they remain epiphenomenal effects, particular manifestations of a field which remains an outside to them. Art, insofar as it truly reflects its “privileged domain”, however, dissolves culture, subject and object, and actuality, enabling us to glimpse a primal being, a material becoming of forces, sensations and affects that ground them. It is modernist music and sound art that is particularly important for Cox in revealing this sub-representative, sub-cultural flux by turning subject and signification into noise and by submitting any particular instance to a universal cacophony (Cox 2018: 40–44, 93). In this, Cox suggests that *particular* practices and styles which are especially amenable to a Deleuzian approach thereby create an aesthetic hierarchy which appears at first glance commensurate with Deleuze and Guattari’s own comments on musical modernism.

In his critical articles which inform my own reading of Deleuze, Iain Campbell (2020, 2021) argues that this interpretation is at risk of recreating traditional dualisms in the context of an avowedly anti-dualist immanent metaphysics by positing an independent Real substrate or nature, sound-in-itself, in opposition to subjects, culture and cultural epistemologies. The opposition then not only includes the dualism of essence and appearance, essential being and epiphenomena, but also one between conventional-signifying-communicative and modernist-experimental-a-signifying art.<sup>7</sup> Campbell’s main philosophical objection to Cox is that an opposition between the particular and the universal or the finite and the infinite is untenable for Deleuze (Campbell 2020: 628) for whom a central principle is an inversion of the relation between Spinoza’s modes and substance. The problem Deleuze identifies in Spinoza is precisely that for Spinoza substance seems independent of the modes, while the latter depend on the former. This is analogous

<sup>7</sup> Another dualism that is bundled with the others by Cox is an opposition between a realist ontology which would see sonic flux as primary, and what Cox describes as an antirealist consensus in cultural studies, semiotics and psychoanalysis, which reject extradiscursive reality, consigning us, in his view, to relativism and anthropocentrism (Cox 2018: 15–16).

to Cox's statements on the sonic flux. Instead, for Deleuze "substance must itself be said *of* the modes and only *of* the modes" (Deleuze 1995: 40). The issue is then not abandoning finite (cultural, representational) practices to pursue the universal and the ineffable as such, but in "accepting our finitude, our contingency, and our mutability, and [...] facing up to the problems this poses" (Campbell 2020: 632).

This also acts as the guiding principle for the argument in this article: immanence does not allow for a strict dualism between 'essence–appearance' to be simply substituted for 'deterritorialization–territorialization' or other dualisms found in *ATP*, such as 'rhizome–tree' or 'smooth–striated'. Deleuze and Guattari propose neither new ontological dualisms, nor an axiomatics of good/bad. Instead, rhizomatics or deterritorializations can be present in arborescent models or territorializations and *vice versa* – knots in rhizomes or anarchic offshoots in arborescent models, two tendencies which are not "objective" (*ATP*: 482) and are instead always implicated within each other (*ATP*: 255). All these dualities are erected to undermine dualistic thinking and, as such, they state that a "mental corrective" is necessary each time to pass through each of them (*ATP*: 20). Territorial formations (in this case: cultural, representative, symbolic) are therefore not epiphenomenal, but part of a more general process of becoming, which can proceed through and *by means* of them: "[...] we can realize that even an impasse is good if it forms part of the rhizome" (Deleuze, Guattari 1986: 4).

Deleuze and Guattari always distinguish between *relative* and *absolute* deterritorializations – the former occurring between or in relation to established categories or strata, while always constituting a reterritorialization, and the latter as an absolute limit of becoming, change or drift which ultimately relates to completely unformed matter, constituting the plane of consistency or immanence, or the non-limitative body without organs.<sup>8</sup> Yet the complexity in this distinction is precisely that absolute deterritorialization always inheres in all relative deterritorializations, it is absolutely immanent to the strata and proceeds by them "precisely because it is not transcendent" (*ATP*: 55–57, 510). A completely unformed plane of immanence therefore must not be thought of as an original nothingness<sup>9</sup> nor a governing principle, an overdetermining reference point (Deleuze, Guattari 1983: 8); rather, Deleuze and Guattari invert this image and speak of *constructing* or

<sup>8</sup> Brian Massumi (1992: 185) also concisely sums up the view advanced here by stating: "Nonlimitative BwOs include the limitations of becoming-the-same in the pool of potentials they draw upon and counteractualize."

<sup>9</sup> This seems to be the image we receive from interpretations such as Cox's. As Iain Campbell (2020: 629) notes, this type of reading also spurs several critics like Badiou (2000) or Hallward (2020) who think that Deleuze posits a unified Being which takes precedence over finite phenomena and acts as a unidirectional generative principle.

*producing* the body without organs or the plane of consistency as a *limit* which can never be attained by practices of experimentation (ATP: 150, 157). As a result I can state that the Deleuzian absolute always appears as relative: as a *modulation between milieus*, strata and assemblages which Deleuze identifies with a diagrammatic experiment in *Logic of Sensation* (Deleuze 2003: 121–122; Campbell 2023: 319).<sup>10</sup> In a rhizome we always “start from the middle” (ATP: 25), from a *local* change and drift. This is why Deleuze and Guattari say that the absolute is a “*local absolute*” (ATP: 387), or put another way, we can emphasize the absoluteness of locality.

The result of this argument for a Deleuzian study of music is that a strict opposition between signifying or cultural and non-signifying musical processes, between signs and the materiality of sound, is similarly untenable and, by extension, that a Deleuzian musical semiotics need not only be concerned with high-modernist and experimental music which consciously eschews any and all signifying elements (cf. Campbell 2021). Instead, an approach of “perceptual semiotics” (Adkins 2013: 13) in a Deleuzo-Guattarian vein would examine the relative tendencies of territorialization and deterritorialization within any given semiotic formation. Below, I try to articulate how this would be informative for semiotic analyses and accounts of even highly “striated” and organized music, such as music of the classical period. First, however, I need to introduce the concept of ‘the refrain’ which will enable me to re-articulate the above interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari through a musical concept, while also pairing well with the type of musical signifier theorized in music semiotics – the musical ‘topic’.

### 3. The refrain and the musical topic

#### 3.1. The refrain

The original impetus for this article was a perceived parallelism between the dynamics of the refrain as described in ATP and the musical topic in semiotics. How, then, do Deleuze and Guattari describe the refrain? They start by outlining three vignettes: (1) first, a tentative comforting tune is sung in confrontation with chaos, setting up a centre; 2) secondly, this fragile tune is surrounded by a circle, a territory which makes use of a diversity of component parts, selects, extracts and eliminates in order to create a stable and organized space; (3) thirdly, the

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, in *Logic of Sensation* Deleuze does not part from the figurative (or representational) at all: diagram or non-signifying processes in painting are “catastrophes” with regard to this figurative, yet there is an equally important move out from chaos and catastrophe back to new figures, as per Francis Bacon’s procedures – the diagram has to be a local and contained experiment, rather than total as in the case of abstract expressionism (Deleuze 2003: 109–110).



circle cracks, letting something in or enabling an exit, thereby finding not chaos, but a new relation with an outside engendered by the circle itself, a new centrifugal force which joins the refrain with the future, World and cosmic forces (*ATP*: 311–312). As noted, this concept has wider philosophical implications than simply describing music as a cultural activity which becomes clear as Deleuze and Guattari immediately move on to discuss ethology. The initial fragile tune can be conceived as a *milieu* – a block of spacetime constituted by periodic pulsations which is in a constant state of communication, coordination or passing into other milieus in reciprocal networks which Deleuze and Guattari describe forming *rhythm* – a non-metered differentiating repetition of difference.<sup>11</sup> The “circle”, or the refrain proper, describes the formation of a *territorial assemblage* – a central term in *ATP* – a “home” for a human or an animal. Territories are built from milieus or portions of milieus by capturing and borrowing from them, territorializing them, forming an inside and an outside in a process of decoding. Territorial refrains provide *consistency* to these various appropriated elements and further establish this relationship between an inside and an outside, between internal and external milieus, as well as intermediaries. In this process components of the milieu undergo a change – from directional to *dimensional*, functional components of milieus become *expressive*, now appearing as *qualities* or *properties* and constitute a new autonomous plane of relationships (*ATP*: 315, 503–504).

In relation to milieus, Deleuze and Guattari describe this process of territorialization in terms of capture, seizing or borrowing and consolidation. Territorialization is a ‘becoming-same’ – an arborescent stopping point. Yet territory is defined by an appearance of *expressive qualities* which now make a distinction between content and expression, between incorporeal transformations and bodies to which these are attributed. Along with territories, signs and semiotic systems appear: no longer are qualities (such as a colour or a scent) simply symptoms of internal states, but they acquire temporal consistency and spatial range by marking a territory and establishing a critical distance. *Expressive* properties and qualities which constitute territories enter new and autonomous shifting relationships which can be described as intra- or interterritorial. *Territorial motifs* express internal impulses and group them together or cause passage between them. *Territorial counterpoints* express relationships between the interior and

<sup>11</sup> As noted by some commentators (e.g. Ingala 2018: 200–201) this seems to follow the logic of the titular terms in *Difference and Repetition*. A refrain has the etymology of a *return* and can be thought of simply as a repetition of difference. Milieus can be seen as an analogue to *larval subjects* or formation of *habits* which draw a difference from repetition and engender time (as overlapping, nested and complex configurations living presents) through a vibration – there termed a ‘contraction’ of spacetime (Deleuze 1995: 74–76).

external circumstances. *Motifs* can be thought of as signs which relate and organize relationships within an organism's internal states – grouping them together, causing passage between them or with external circumstances, while *counterpoint* refers to external milieus – for instance interactions with predators or weather. While a territory is characterized by establishment of a consolidation, it also engenders new relationships within intra-assemblage components and between milieu-components of different territories. These relationships are crucially not necessarily metered (a repetition of the same or constant) but properly *rhythmic* – differentiating and creative, a becoming on a new plane created by the territories. To describe these relationships becoming autonomous Deleuze and Guattari use the terms 'rhythmic characters' and 'melodic landscapes'. The former refers to a certain autonomy that territorial motifs attain, such that the *rhythm* of the sign expressing internal states becomes itself amenable to change: augmentation, diminishing, subtraction or addition – it becomes a character in its own right; the latter refers to a complex "virtual landscape" which appears as an autonomous interrelationship between the internal and external, between different expressive territories and external factors – a "geomorphism" (ATP: 315–320).<sup>12</sup> The drawing of a circle around a "home", establishing an interior and exterior, also means establishing a new deterritorializing edge for infra- and interassemblage elements; consistency is commensurate with the creation of the new (Adkins 2015: 183, 185).

By capturing milieus and their components, territories thus transform and recontextualize them, unleashing "a reorganization of functions and a regrouping of forces" (ATP: 320). They bind and consolidate heterogeneous milieus that were previously merely coexisting or appeared in succession. In relation to other assemblages a "very rich and complex" inter-assemblage is formed, which relates various component parts from respective infra-assemblages (internal milieus) in novel ways through truly diagonal or transversal lines – these assembled functions can thereby become deterritorialized and constitute new assemblages (ATP: 330–334). It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari say that the territorial

<sup>12</sup> The musical terminology in relation to ethology (motifs, counterpoint, melodic landscape, rhythm) – no doubt owes much to Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Jakob von Uexküll who described the interrelationship between different animal umwelten through musical metaphor as counterpoints forming a harmony between different organisms (Uexküll 2010: 172). As Stjernfelt (2007: 236) notes, umwelten have a temporal character – they impose a certain space-time which enables interrelationships, which corresponds well to Deleuze and Guattari's temporal view on the generation of interrelationships in nature through the refrain. The important *caveat* here is that we must consider this "harmony" as ever-changing, rather than holistic. Recently the term 'umweb' has been proposed to describe the interrelated diachronic network of umwelten (Kull 2023).

assemblage or refrain has a *catalytic* function: it selects, transforms, decomposes or projects elements from its surroundings in order to “not only to increase the speed of the exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it, but also to assure indirect interactions between elements devoid of so-called natural affinity, and thereby to form organized masses” (ATP: 349). This catalytic function extends beyond the territory proper; it “unleashes something that will surpass [the territory]” (ATP: 322).

Deleuze and Guattari also describe a parallel between periods of music history and the dynamics of the refrain which is relevant to our discussion (ATP: 338–344):

(1) The classical period is related with coded milieus, dealing with a form-matter relation, where matter is shaped into successive forms while these pass into one another in a transcoding. The classical artist or composer is in contact with the forces of chaos upon which forms and codes must be used to produce a formed substance by means of binary divisions (major–minor, masculine–feminine, primary–secondary, etc).

(2) Romanticism would correspond to the creation of a territory. There occurs a deterritorialization of the musical forms (milieus) and a re-organizing and regrouping in a “close embrace” of the earth or the natal. Milieu parts now relate to a whole according to variable relations and are submitted to a “continuous variation”.

(3) Modernism is where the assemblage opens up to the forces of the Cosmos and a direct relationship between material and forces. No longer a form and substance or variation thereof, but molecularized matter which renders sonorous forces which in themselves are non-sonorous or non-thinkable. We enter an age of the Machine which synthesizes these molecular matters, unites disparate elements and transfers formulas, opening music to all events, constituting an absolute deterritorialization.

An unfortunate echo of teleology is found in this illustration by successive “ages”. Deleuze and Guattari themselves remark that it seems somewhat Hegelian (ATP: 342). Edward Campbell (2013: 79) also notes that Deleuze’s implicit modernist musical narrative constitutes a “fault line” in his thought, incongruent with his avowed anti-historicist and anti-teleological philosophy. Certainly, one can see here the passages that are grist for the mill in Gallope’s and Cox’s readings. Yet Deleuze and Guattari qualify this impression of a historical progression by noting that each successive dynamic is already present in the previous era: cosmic forces are already present in the formation of milieus and territories and are themselves in turn constituted by them.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, each of the three – milieu, refrain

<sup>13</sup> Reflecting again the statements discussed above with regard to absolute deterritorialization always proceeding by relative deterritorializations (ATP: 510). Elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari

and cosmos – constitute their own refrain, each with its two poles, one towards closure and the other towards previously unattainable conjugations and centrifugal forces (Adkins 2015: 188–189). These tendencies are thus not in opposition but interdependent and in constantly shifting relationships, depending on which milieus, refrains or experiments are in question. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the importance of “technique” (*ATP*: 342) in creating deterritorializations that would form new assemblages, conjugating heterogeneous materials without fuzzifying them. The obverse is a constant threat of absolute deterritorialization which would produce nothing, but would only destroy both creator and creation (*ATP*: 311).

What the dynamics of the refrain reveals again is the insufficiency of a dualism between semiotic/cultural and real or an oppositional choice between territorialization and deterritorialization in practice or analysis. Emma Ingala (2018: 191) sees the refrain as a regulating concept or space between familiar and unfamiliar – from a practical standpoint it speaks to an art of caution or dosages in approaching both which is a running theme in *ATP*. In my reading, the catalytic function of territorial assemblages and refrains demonstrates an even more intimate entwinement between the two dynamics: instead of territories being mere “disavowals of the real”, they rather contribute to the real by establishing a new deterritorializing edge. From an epistemological side, analysis inspired by Deleuze and Guattari cannot ignore the role of conventional practices and use of signifying elements in engendering the possibilities for new spaces for experimentation. It is this I wish to demonstrate now by turning to a musical style that is primarily representational to some researchers.

### 3.2. Musical topics in the classical period

When Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP*: 299) introduce the refrain, they state that it is the “properly musical content of music”. Music for them takes up birdsong, children’s songs, lullabies, etc. as content (milieus) for its expression: all of music is an “adventure” or “labour” of this refrain. Yet the properly musical moment emerges when it takes these refrains somewhere else in a diagonal or transversal treatment (*ATP*: 300–302). Defining musical content in this manner has resonances with the concept of the musical topic or *topos*, as understood in contemporary music semiotics. Leonard Ratner (1980: 9) first defined topics as a thesaurus of

---

state: “*It is not a question of this or that place on earth, or of a given moment in history, still less of this or that category of thought. It is a question of a model that is perpetually in construction or collapsing, and of a process that is perpetually prolonging itself, breaking off and starting up again*” (*ATP*: 20; my emphasis, K. J. P.).

characteristic figures that were used in 18th-century music and were derived from music's contacts with various sociocultural activities: worship, military parades, ceremonies, hunting, dances, music of lower classes or music from other cultures (such as the 'Turkish style' found in many works of the Viennese classics). Similarly to the relationship between refrain and music, topics are intramusical, intertextual phenomena – "music made out of music" (Allanbrook 2014: 114) or, alternatively, "musical styles and genres taken out of their proper context and used in another one" (Mirka 2014: 2).<sup>14</sup>

A topic, then, requires a reterritorialization of a musical element which works akin to how a territorial refrain is formed by making use of various functions of a milieu-refrain. Of course, the sociomusical assemblage from which topics borrow already constitutes a territory, yet music can be seen there as a milieu component: it serves some function, rather than being completely autonomous, it is *directional* as Deleuze and Guattari would say. Examples include the organizing of time and ceremony in liturgy, co-ordinating the motion of masses in a military parade or social relations in dance, the use of horns as signals in aristocratic hunting practices and so on. When this (at least partly) functional music is deterritorialized, it becomes a purely *expressive* element, signifying a particular characteristic, and is re-territorialized as *sense* in concert music (Deleuze, Guattari 1986: 21) and within an interpretative matrix which tends to form binary divisions (low vs high class, old or modern, sacred or profane, heroic or tragic, etc.) between *cultural units* (Monelle 2006; Hatten 1994; Eco 1976). A topic (or the whole paradigm of topics) is thus a territorial signifying assemblage – it proceeds by decoded and deterritorialized segments borrowed from milieus and distinguishes between a *semiotic* system of signs and a pragmatic *content* system of actions and passions (ATP: 504).

The semiotic mechanism for topics is sometimes described as an iconic-indexical one, where an element in a musical work bears an iconic relationships with music from another context which in turn indexically links with its "proper" sociocultural milieu such as a space, activity, social class or type of character which is then carried along as content for the music in which it is invoked (Mirka 2014: 31): it acts as *mimesis* of sociocultural types by means of a *mimesis* between musics. The deterritorialization of music from its milieu is particularly strong in instrumental genres or concert music (the sonata, the symphony, the concerto), which began to rise to prominence throughout the 18th century. While in other forms of art music, music is entangled with stage action and spoken words and often logically corresponds to or is grounded in expressive situations or character

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed discussions on topics in music semiotics, see Allanbrook 1983, 2014; Agawu 1991, 2009; Hatten 1994, 2004; Monelle 2000, 2006; Panos *et al.* 2013; Mirka 2014.

types,<sup>15</sup> in comparison, instrumental music is relatively autonomous and deterritorializes with greater force.<sup>16</sup> What further enables this use of milieu components during the 18th century is a relative reterritorialization into the forms and structures of the *galant* style which gained prominence via the comic *opera buffa* and bequeathed to instrumental forms of music a simpler harmonic vocabulary, a “dance architecture” of  $2+2=4$ ,  $4+4=8$  module-like phrasing, and also, characteristically of a comic opera, frequently contrasting topics corresponding to various types of characters and expression. Beyond rhythm, this modular and even phrasing is supported by frequent cadences which complete a 4- or 8-bar idea tonally and harmonically as well.<sup>17</sup> This new syntax is based on dance, replacing the earlier baroque dominant on voice and rhetoric with bodily movement and kinesis. The balanced period accommodates various signs, gestures and styles which can circulate freely within it (Rumph 2012: 36).

To illustrate this ubiquity of shifts in expressive and oft-cited example after Wye Jameson Allanbrook is Mozart’s piano sonata K. 332, 1st movement (Fig. 1). This, to her, is a particularly mimetically excessive work, comprised of “bits and snatches of the public music Mozart heard daily – dances, fanfares, even composition exercises”. She finds at least ten shifts of topic or expressive style in the 86 bars of the exposition (Allanbrook 2014: 111–114), while tonality and binary metrical structure provide consistency. Deterritorialized components of milieu-music become expressive qualities in variable relations on this new stage. Variable semantic counterpoint is particularly characteristic of the classical style. In contrast with the baroque era, where a composition tends to exemplify one type of affect and musical genre, classical style tends towards topical heterogeneity and thematic multiplicity – this, rather than thematic expansion, constitutes the development of the classical period in terms of baroque (Allanbrook 2014: 90). Yet in this territorialization a reorganizing of functions and regrouping of forces occurs – expressive and syntactic conjunctions in a catalytic fashion which “unleashes something that will surpass it” (*ATP*: 322).

<sup>15</sup> Although of course here also music enters into relatively autonomous composites and can comment on or shift the meaning in stage action or spoken word, rather than be always subjugated to them (Hunter 2014).

<sup>16</sup> Juha Ojala (2009: 372, 385) uses the term ‘acousmatic’ to refer to sound detached from its origin in perception and meaning, and refers to a process in the history of Western concert music towards more acousmatic use of sound.

<sup>17</sup> The modular-mosaic nature of the style is exemplified by the possibility of musical dice games or an *ars combinatoria* for music, which were published during the era and enabled the algorithmic generation of compositions by choosing from prefabricated musical phrases via chance number generation (such as a dice rolls) (Hedges 1978: 180, 185).

Allegro, "Singing style" "Learned style" Cadential phrase

"Hunting horns"

iambic "fading effect" "Mannheim rocket" - tragic style

Minuet

Figure 1. W. A. Mozart piano sonata in F-major, K. 332, I, measures 1–45.

Thus, it is identifying both the tendencies for the territorialization of topics while simultaneously regarding their catalytic function that becomes the issue. After Deleuze and Guattari, we can identify this opening occurring in two (non-oppositional) dimensions: the internal (*territorial motifs form rhythmic characters* as topics are manipulated on a syntactic level from within) and external (*territorial counterpoints* between topics which form a *melodic virtual landscape*) ones (ATP: 317–318). In either case the metered pulse of a topic once again becomes a properly rhythmic return of difference. Both of these dimensions will be discussed more in depth below.

## 4. Musical semiotics as a minor science

The main argument has so far been that musicology based around Deleuze and Guattari should not neglect territorial assemblages, signification and even the “mediocre refrains” (ATP: 349). A parallel and implicit argument would be that a Deleuzian approach is useful for musical semiotics. Beyond a study of topics as more-or-less stable types, this approach would compel us to consider a becoming of topics as assemblages as per the dynamics of the refrain: to describe the relationships between topics and their internal milieus, as well as how they might open to new potential expressive relationships that only appear along with them. In order to conceptualize the two dimensions or tendencies for study (either the establishing of a territory or opening it), I turn first to the distinction between a minor (or nomad) and major (or royal) science and attempt to identify moments where music semiotics could benefit from a perspective of a minor science. I also intend to show, mainly by example of a couple of authors (Stephen Rumph and Nicholas Cook) that a minor view is already present in some semiotic accounts.

### 4.1. Minor and major musical semiotics

Semioticians such as Robert Hatten (1994: 27–30) often begin with an attempt to define and delimit topics, to see them as general “style types” with particular semantic correlations which are instantiated as specific tokens – these two are different ontological categories. While tokens can contribute to the general meaning of the type in a dialectical relationship, analysis should proceed from the general to the particular. As noted above, types form a well-ordered network of oppositional pairs, sometimes in a relationship of the marked with the unmarked. Signs which form the paradigm of topics, like linguistic signs, form an ordered oppositional network of meanings (Hatten 1994: 81) which comprise of abstract and conventional categories – cultural units (Monelle 2006: 23). To be able to distinguish topical correlations in a system of differences by recognizing them from tokens is to have stylistic competency (Hatten 1994: 166). For Hatten, then, the goal is a *reconstruction* of the stylistic competency in late classical music – to hear as a (competent) interpreter of that period would have heard and to ground interpretation in a coherent and consistent framework (Hatten 2004: 34). For Monelle, similarly, semiotics is a study of the sign and its *logical* properties, rather than its manifestation and its specific effects (Monelle 2006: 31).

The above broadly describes the *modus operandi* of what Deleuze and Guattari variously call a ‘major’, ‘royal’ or ‘state’ science. Major science proceeds by stratification, binary distribution and necessitates stable categories governing particular instantiations: a deductive motion from essences to properties and accidents. In



this view, only if sign is taken as a stable ideal category which is *identically repeatable*, can it be studied, because particular interpretations are too chaotic to grasp.<sup>18</sup> It is clear that this type of platonic schema and a hierarchical ontology is Deleuze's main subject of criticism ever since *Difference and Repetition* (1995[1968]). A minor or nomad science is the answer to the territorial royal science or the pole of deterritorialization inherent in epistemological and scientific practice. Similarly to the poles of the refrain, a minor science is always present as a deterritorializing tendency within epistemologies. Instead of proceeding by categories and models, it is characterized by a study of fluxes and change and by a paradox of making becoming itself a model. According to Deleuze and Guattari, it studies vortices and curves of motion in a vectorial "smooth" space, instead of a closed or striated space of objects and linear distinctions; and instead of *theorematic* reasoning which deduces particular properties from a stable essence, a smooth science would proceed by a *problematic* reasoning, tracing the solution of problems via accidents and conditions that instantiate it immanently within the becomings of science (ATP: 361–362). Finally a nomad science would deal with *vague* rather than fixed essences: for instance, while a major science would define a 'circle' as a fixed and ideal type, nomad science would instead be interested in 'roundness' as necessary intermediary between rounded sensible phenomena and the essential concept – in this sense akin to a Kantian *schema*, appearing as a "threshold-affect (neither flat nor pointed) and as a limit-process (becoming rounded), through sensible things and technical agents" (ATP: 408). Yet this intermediary becoming, processes of deformations and passages, changes of intensities and affects, turn out to be autonomous and ground the relationship between things and concepts.

Deleuze and Guattari see that, like the poles of a territorial refrain, the minor sciences are always at work with and between the demands of state science which both appropriates and limits becomings and heterogeneities found therein (ATP: 363). A general programme for a nomad music semiotics is of course an oxymoron, given that this type of epistemology proceeds without a prefigured model (ATP: 361). For proponents of a royal science, this can only be an admission of defeat in advance. Yet the criteria of replicability and generalization already commit us to a royal paradigm. Further, at issue here is not replacing one model

<sup>18</sup> This has to do with the notion of anti-psychologism (signs are not reducible to psychological phenomena) general to semiotics (Stjernfelt 2013: 2). Cf. Eero Tarasti's (2012: 21) comment that music semiotics cannot consider *random* meanings from "casual" listeners. "Competency" here guarantees the identity and ideality of a sign as a logical type which retains an essence over accidental associations. Yet one cannot but notice a circularity between an account of sign and competency.

with another but rather identifying tendencies within a field of study. In the case of complete deterritorialization from categories, we would indeed be left with an ineffable silence – an emptying of all interiority in epistemology. Instead, a minor science always lodges itself between and among the royal sciences, creating a smooth space in the context of a striated one. In practice we find the dynamics of the refrain again: mixes which produce “complications, alterations, and superpositions” and passages between the two (*ATP*: 481, 499). The goal might then be to identify minor forms of thinking as they appear in already existing literature on music semiotics and consider their role in relation to hylomorphic conceptions in the context of this constantly shifting borderline. It appears to me that these tendencies can be observed in already existing discussions on topic theory. In lieu of a roadmap for a minor science of music semiotics, I will instead describe these instances from two directions: from “below” topic or from within its boundaries as a category, and from “above” in the intermingling of topics – the two types of possible deterritorializations distinguished by Deleuze and Guattari in relation to territorial assemblages: infra- and inter-assemblage (Adkins 2015: 183).

#### 4.2. Infra-assemblage and the syntax of topics

A characteristic of major sciences for Deleuze and Guattari is a hylomorphism between form and matter: all matter is homogeneous or inert and can be assigned to a form, turned into a substance, guaranteeing the domination of a form or concept over all instances and distinguishing between matter as content and form as expression (*ATP*: 409). For a minor science, by contrast, matter is not homogeneous and already has a form of its own, characterized by its own becomings and singularities which escape complete subsumption under a formal category or threaten it with deterritorialization. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari say that a nomad science is more in tune with the matter–form distinction in both content and expression – content appearing as flows of molecularized matter, and expression as a cluster of pertinent traits (*ATP*: 369). Considering the matter of expression in topics, we need to pay attention to the non-topical syntax and musical differences that are subsumed underneath the category – to what remains sub-representational in terms of topics as such. We might also dub it the “unconscious” of topics as categories if we take the unconscious as a sub-representational, *differential* unconscious of perception itself, such as Deleuze finds in Leibniz (Kerslake 2007: 138; Deleuze 1980<sup>19</sup>), consisting of minute changes in sensation which

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, Gilles 1980. *Leibniz: Philosophy and the Creation of Concepts*. Seminar, transcript: <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/lecture/lecture-03-7/> was accessed on 20 Jan. 2024.

remain unavailable to conscious apperception, yet must form the conditions for it.

We need not subscribe to this concept of the unconscious to remark upon the analogous manner in which any representational category forms a substratum, a molecular dimension beneath a molar category, of which it cannot speak – differences which remain subsumed under the category, or external to it, meaning that they appear as contradictions once they are intensified to such a degree that one type or category is contrasted with another (Deleuze 1997: 138). Many of the sub-categorical elements of topics that we can consider in music are certainly perceivable, even nameable in syntactic terms, consisting of elements such as rhythm, meter, tonality, harmony and melodic elements – motifs, phrases or themes, of which topics are built. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari state that the molecular substratum can also consist of signs. Yet there are barely registrable finer differences such as subtle variations in intonation, timbre, micro-rhythms and *rubato*, slight variations in dynamics for which there are usually no verbal or analytic signifiers, although they certainly affect our judgements of performances, for instance. Finally, we can speak of imperceptible differences in sound events, like those revealed by computer analysis. The sub-categorical of topics then consists of both signs (mostly of the asignifying type) or molar categories, and of truly molecular matters. Each of these can have a profound effect on our experience of music while remaining difficult to describe, pinpoint in analysis or, in some cases, consciously register and represent.

Attentiveness to this type of interplay between the categorial and sub-categorial characterizes Rumph's (2012) approach in *Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics*. This remarkable book attempts to situate Mozart's music in the *Zeitgeist* of 18th-century views on signs and signification, especially those deriving from the empiricist and sensualist strain of thought exemplified by John Locke, Adam Smith and especially Étienne Bonnot de Condillac. Condillac attempted to ground the birth of the reflective mind and language in a prior embodied "language" consisting of signs of sensations and gestures with appropriate vocal cries and inflections which eventually disassociate from the body to form language. For him, reason originates from sensory signs (Rumph 2012: 32–33). From this paradigm Rumph develops a distinction between conventional (symbolic-cultural-linguistic) and natural (iconic-indexical-embodied-gestural) signs and is particularly attentive to their interplay in music. Music as sound forms an interlink between gestures, haptic sense and language.

In classical music, Rumph finds *dramatizations* of Condillac's evolutionary trajectory, proceeding for instance from a confused state of passions and physical desires to conventional signs which signals reflection and communicable

convention – a constant push and pull between two types of signs.<sup>20</sup> Yet the relationship between natural signs of the affectations and passions of the body, and conventional signs governed by rational reflection is mired in contradiction and ambiguity. Rational and conventional signs enable the formation of the rational subject and self, communication and generalization, yet they can become detached from empirical sensual reality and thereby merely simulacra. On the other hand, sensualist signs place us in our material environs, but do not enable a stable and rational self and so threaten a regression into a mute animal body. For Rumph, the enlightenment subject is torn between the Scylla and Charybdis of artificiality and animality, symbolized most clearly at the end of *Don Giovanni* when the Man of Stone, through a handshake, through *touch* or haptic sense, shatters Giovanni's world of semiotic artifice, condemning him to hell (Rumph 2012: 75–77). Musical dramatization can similarly follow a route from convention to a regression into confused embodied indexes or *vice versa*, or perhaps by combining topics as Rumph (2012: 62, 106) demonstrates in his analyses.

Rumph's approach is characterized by attention to the interrelationship between topic and sub-topic which is appropriate for a minor semiotics. Topics in Mozart's music are not stable categories for which a label or lexicon suffices: they are instead in a constant state of formation and dissolution, shot through with non-topical musical processes in meter, tonality, counterpoint, harmony, melodic figures, texture and musical form. Instead of proceeding by a clearly defined lexicon of topics, which makes interpretation "facile", he emphasizes their indexicality and stresses the importance of an interplay between topic as conventional figure and syntactical elements which both articulate and transform topics. Rumph (2012: 107) starts from "sensual particulars" and "proceeds inductively". Whereas in language syntax is a-semantic, musical *figurae* which make up topics are themselves significant as bodily icons and indexes of gesture and prosody, while remaining sub-representational to the signifying category of the topic (Rumph 2012: 84, 94–96). As Rumph attempts to make these *figurae* analysable by employing the binary logic of markedness relations (Rumph 2012: 98–106), he also remarks on the intermediary zone between syntax and semantics which affects interpretation, and on the indistinct, polysemous nature of musical figures which do not easily submit to naming or description (Rumph 2012: 19, 63, 89). It appears that in music in particular, signs are constantly threatened by dissolution, given their ambiguous

<sup>20</sup> This is for instance Rumph's (2012: 13–18) interpretation of Cherubino's aria from *Le nozze di Figaro*, "Non so più" which begins in indexical signs of embodied agitation without clear conventional signifiers, reflecting the confusion of Cherubino's own feelings, but culminates with a conventional *pianto* or sigh-figure (see Monelle 2000: 66) with a reflective text: "I speak of love with myself."

morphology [a problem of segmentation or pertinence in music (Monelle 1992: 63), considering the lack of double-articulation in the linguistic sense] and the common procedures of musical development and variation. Deleuze and Guattari have themselves remarked on this tendency within music in contrast with painting (ATP: 301–302). The latter, in a sense, *begins* with figures, silhouettes and postures, imitation and corporeality, which it submits to variation in line and colour by a catastrophic intervention of the creative diagram (Deleuze 2003: 100). Music, by contrast, begins with the refrain and voice, but deterritorializes them more easily and with greater force; it is abstract already and requires a reterritorialization to signification.

A brief example is in Rumph's discussion of the beginning of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G-minor K. 550 (Fig. 2). The primary arbitrary or topical sign is the *sigh* or *pianto* as described by Monelle (2000: 66–73), which consists of a marked "sighing" falling minor second, usually from a dissonant suspended tone in a minor key, and is associated with lament, pathos and languishing. Yet the rest of the music forces us to suspend judgement: the dissonant notes occur on an upbeat which is a marked difference from the usual sign-type, the brisk tempo and suggestion of "bravura" style create further semantic ambiguities. Rumph also considers the ambiguity of phrase structure in the beginning – the hypermetric accents of the theme seem to fall on odd-numbered bars bearing on gestural interpretation of the music (Rumph 2012: 26, 39).<sup>21</sup> Both the displaced sigh figure and the ambiguous hypermeter are then gradually worked upon during the course of the composition in order to resolve the syntactic and semantic ambiguities present from the start; differences in meter in particular form an "expressive substrate" for conventional signs with their own gestural meanings (Rumph 2012: 30). For instance, the sigh-figure tends towards a downbeat and rhythmic augmentation in bars 16–20 where the inverted *pianto* motif (C#-D) is disarticulated by the woodwinds from the anapestic upbeat rhythm in the strings and placed on a stronger beat – a process which continues as the motif is finally heard on the downbeat of the bar in bars 34–36 both in woodwinds and bass, sounding more like a conventional sigh (Rumph 2012: 26–29); the hypermeter similarly becomes "corrected". For Rumph, these gradual processes dramatize a gradual emergence of a reflective consciousness – characterized by conventionally normative use of the topic – from an initial confused affective and gestural field, a progressive clarification of signs.

<sup>21</sup> While Rumph does not emphasize this, in my hearing even the metric up-beat and down-beat become ambiguous here as I can certainly hear the main theme starting on a downbeat, resulting in a "jolt" which corresponds markedly with the ascending sixth interval and pause in bar 3 which results in a re-orientation to the meter as written.

**Molto Allegro**

The musical score shows the first five bars of the first movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G-minor, K. 550. The tempo is marked 'Molto Allegro'. The woodwinds and horns are mostly silent in the first five bars. The strings are active, with Violino I and II playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, starting with a piano (p) dynamic. Viola and Violoncello e Basso play a similar pattern, also starting with a piano (p) dynamic. The key signature is G-minor (three flats) and the time signature is common time (C).

Figure 2. Mozart. Symphony No. 40 in G-minor, K. 550, Mov. 1. bars 1–5.

Rumph is by no means the only semiotician to pay attention to this interplay between topical and sub-topical embodied meaning. Interest in musical gesture has accelerated in recent decades of music semiotics and discussions almost always betray a similar dynamic between molecular and molar categories. Hatten (2004: 118–125) in particular is influential and instructive. He theorizes the concept of musical gesture as implied embodied forces coded within music. In a Deleuzian vein we might say that with gesture Hatten discovers a vague semiotics, but does not follow through since he quickly re-territorializes gesture as it is for him *sublimated* into musical conventions where it appears in type-token distinctions and systematic oppositions, “thematized” in a strategic use within classical style. For Hatten (2004: 124) it is “stylistically constrained musical expressive meaning” which enables us to orient and contextualize the meaning of gesture. Molar categories, then, remain unthreatened by gestural affects. In this respect Eero Tarasti’s “Z-model” (Tarasti 2012: 138) is closer to accepting a minor semiotics in observing a “zig-zag” motion between embodied and chaotic kinetic energy or *khora*, and socially mediated signs in music, with shifts and conflicts between various levels. In contrast to Hatten, for Tarasti gestures remain unsublimated even in a highly organized style, and appear as disturbances, denials or reinforcements of conventional signs (Tarasti 2012: 143–144).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The resonance between Tarasti and Deleuze is a curious one. In his later writings Tarasti turned to continental philosophy – thinkers such as Hegel and Heidegger – yet Deleuze

Gestures as vague embodied indexes in music might constitute what Deleuze and Guattari call the heterogeneous matter of expression which has its own grain of inflection points and singularities – a “roundness” before a “circle”. Like a craftsman follows the grain of the wood, the semiotician must follow this grain of matters of expression, the “overspilling” of them in relation to the conceptual apparatus (ATP: 410). In so doing a minor semiotics forms a smooth space within and around the striated space of topics and other intra- or extramusical signifiers, forming a *diagram* of singularities, inflection points and becomings, to trace their connections with various content-planes in an experimental construction of relations (Vellodi 2014: 84). The result is a creative hermeneutics and creative listening which follows from both the “essential” concepts, as well as the various deformations, slippages and differences that remain invisible to them, from both the striated and nomad spaces within musical syntax (ATP: 415). The goal is the creation of new concepts, new semiotic objects and interpretations, to map without a model. Rumph has articulated this kind of play between the infratopical and topical from a poietic side, hypothesizing on the intellectual milieu Mozart would have worked from, but a minor semiotics could adopt an attitude of experimental *esthesis* or listening and interpreting. Thereby a minor semiotics would part ways with those who wish to reconstruct a historical competency, yet might more truthfully capture the vague, accidental haecceities of actual listening.

### 4.3. Inter-assemblage: the comic surface of topics

I have already noted on the *galant* style which made possible and common the frequent appearance of contrasting stylistic references and topics by a reterritorialization into a simple and modular form. The contrasts in topic and references that this style makes possible in turn create new deterritorializations on a semantic level. It has been noted that topics on an expressive level seem to suggest a polyphonic (in the Bakhtinian sense) tapestry of musical sense. Juxtapositions of topics create semantic explosions and obscure clear boundaries on the content-plane. Allanbrook (2014: 84) calls this tapestry a ‘comic surface’ in a serendipitous moment for readers of Deleuze, given his characterization of the surface of sense as comic in *The Logic of Sense*. The authors use the terms ‘sense’ and ‘surface’ in different ways yet reach similar conclusions. It is the notion of ‘the comic’ which really makes Deleuze resonate with Allanbrook’s conception of the classical style. The art of sense – of an evental surface between language and content – is comic

---

remains absent in his accounts. Edward Campbell (2013: 141) has also noted on this. A critical examination of Tarasti’s existential semiotics of music and a Deleuzian approach might be a future research prospect.

for Deleuze, since it opens up to nonsense, which is not opposed to sense, but an overflowing excess of it. This comic excess is open by nature, it destabilizes rigid denotations, manifestations and significations in a ceaseless affirmation of difference without neither final tragic stopping point nor ironic denial (Deleuze 1990: 9; Williams 2008: 19).

In the vein of *The Logic of Sense*, Allanbrook also challenges the usual hierarchy of surface and depth. She remarks that the comic style typical of the classical period is marked by an avoidance of the transcendent (or rather a view of the transcendent as one topic among many). The comic style is a stage for a diversity of characters and perspectives, a busy society where social cohabitation is constantly being negotiated. The comic narrative is a transformational one, without rigid oppositions (a multiplicity and not a dialectic) and usually ending in a synthesis of a new whole through a disruption – a victory of a transgression, such as the overcoming of an arbitrary limit in the social order (Liszka 1989: 130–134; Almén 2008: 187). Rigid form and focus on tonal closure necessitate that these disparate elements in classical music are usually ultimately integrated in a harmonious manner, at least as formal and tonal closure. Yet Allanbrook (2014: 174) also points toward a destructive and subversive element of the comic: the dialogic and mixed style eschews purity and points toward a lack of centre. Endless imitation and one affirmation of transgression after another (“and... and... and...”) threatens to destabilize good sense. Allanbrook contrasts the comic surface to “depths”, which are usually understood in musicology as a deep structure that guarantees formal coherence and unity, and highlights instead “disjunct pleasures” of the sensuous surface and play of expression.

Allanbrook and others have noted that contemporaneous critics considered the fractured and mixed new style suspicious, as it moves too quickly between different affects and territories in an endlessly shifting pantomime. What is especially egregious is the mixing of a comic affect and style with more serious modes, which is all the more dangerous in the context of the greater deterritorializing force of instrumental music where shifts in affect are no longer grounded in dramatic action or text (Allanbrook 2014: 22–26). To put it in Nattiez’s (1990: 128) turn of phrase, there “the responsibility for joining character-phantoms with action-shadows lies with me, the listener”. To illustrate this disquieting effect Allanbrook finds a suggestive image from Denis Diderot’s famous satirical dialogue *Le Neveu de Rameau*<sup>23</sup> – that of ‘the polyp’. This word was used for more than one species of recently discovered organisms, but particularly notable is the freshwater polyp, which could not be clearly classified as either plant or animal and showed

<sup>23</sup> First published in a translation by Goethe in 1802, written between 1761–1774.



remarkable capabilities of regrowth when cut into pieces or even when turned inside out<sup>24</sup> – a veritable body without organs, proof of an immanent process of growth without external form, a divisible “soul matter” (Allanbrook 2014: 2–6).

‘Polypus’, then, became a synonym for ‘protean’ and ‘pliable’. It is this latter quality that the Nephew in Diderot’s dialogue refers to when discussing music and likening it to a polyp: its expressions should be brief and proceed in quick succession, meaning should be fragmented and suspended, and the material malleable. Indeed, the Nephew embodies these qualities just before the discussion, imitating various musical genres and instruments with his voice in a performance which is both mad and humorous – “completely out of touch with reality”, provoking in the narrator both admiration, pity and ridicule as the Nephew imitates various national styles of music, embodies gestures and gaits of various characters and shifts radically in affects – namely by embodying the excess of a topical musical discourse (Diderot 2006: 68). This overflow of semantic categories, their quick and fragmented succession, and the malleability in musical syntax reduces the Nephew to an almost animalistic state, to a madman and a clown. He exemplifies the threat of this musical style – he is hedonistic, amoral and mixes sense with nonsense. The syntactically and semantically fragmented *buffa* style “eroded the illusion of voice, agency, and subjectivity” (Rumph 2012: 123) in its periodicity, rapid play of topics, and a dissolution of sound from its source in voice and rhetoric; it becomes difficult to perceive a sincere identity behind this play of shifting signs (Head 2017: 95).

The destabilizing element of the comic style can of course become re-territorialized. Frequent cadences and focus on tonal closure might be a strategy for this, as mentioned above. Also in semiotics, contrasts and shifts in topic can be interpreted under a higher-order unity of form – as either purely syntactical (i.e. sonata form) or semantic, such as in the case of narrative studies in music. For instance, Hatten again sees local semantic effects, juxtapositions and shifts taking part in a more general narrative structure which relates “unusual features, along with other, more local events, as motivated parts of a coherent *expressive genre* for the movement” (Hatten 1994: 11). Similarly, Byron Almén (2008) has proposed a structural-narrative methodology for narrative analysis of music, which ultimately relates the musical surface to Northrop Frye’s four *mythoi* of romance, tragedy, comedy and irony in a binary matrix of ‘order-transgression’ and ‘victory-defeat’. Nicholas Cook (2006: 111) has rightly remarked that these sorts of narrative interpretations re-introduce analytic deep structures and notions of unity

<sup>24</sup> Earlier, the term was used for types of mollusc which had amorphous bodies and the ability to change colours. The organism in question here is a soft-bodied freshwater invertebrate under the phylum *Cnidaria* (Allanbrook 2014: 179).

and underlying continuity into hermeneutic approaches in an effort to explain away seeming discontinuities, to find ‘the same’ and uniformity under surface heterogeneity.

Against this sort of structural listening Cook proposes a different listening mode – one where cogency is not taken for granted and which would follow unique phenomena, individual moments and their juxtapositions which provide the “foundation” for more generalized structures (a ‘becoming-round’ before ‘roundness’). This mode would not proceed from a model to the particular but would follow the particular and the forces it generates (*ATP*: 364) and explore semantic potential in contextual occurrences. In lovely anachronisms Cook (2006: 115, 128; 2021: 36) describes this listening mode deriving from the collage principle of material culture, montage as theorized by Eisenstein, or from multimedia and remix culture, to theorize a ‘semiotics of juxtaposition’. These juxtapositions produce ‘uncanny moments’ and ‘blended spaces’ which are difficult to categorize. Cook is calling for a listening mode as minor science: attentive to fragments, cracks, polyvocality and an experience that is open-ended, rather than ‘structural’; a listening mode where the same material can acquire very different meanings from its immediate context and form polysemy, grounded in shifts, deformations and infections which must be considered before reducing them to the stable entities *between* which these passages seem to occur (Cook 2006: 116–117, 123). That is, to consider difference in itself and not merely the difference between concepts, to avoid the model of *recognition* (Deleuze 1995: 133). For Cook, collage and juxtapositions escape generalization. There is something very particular about them, yet this particularity eludes verbal paraphrase – it is rigorous *and* vague in terms of *ATP*: 367. Cook (2006: 129) finds that, at the point of emergent meaning, words and determinate description escape him: “I have consistently found myself running out of things to say – out of words or other determinate symbols – just when I should have had the most to say.”<sup>25</sup>

It is such moments that a category of major science can cover up and subsume. Yet they retain their presence. Even Hatten identifies a vagueness in these sorts of shifts. He dubs the juxtaposition of topics ‘tropes’ which for him work like a musical metaphor, or at other times as irony, or self-reflexive commentary within a musical discourse, perhaps signalling a “shift in musical discourse” (Hatten 1994: 202). Tropes are synthetic and specific in meaning, bringing together two signifiers in shifting relationships which has an accidental and particular, rather than

<sup>25</sup> As he further notes, this sort of admission makes a project with true sensitivity to a differential listening a failure as a major science – it is not the sort of project to earn a PhD with (Cook 2006: 129).

general, character. In this they retain a threat of “misinterpretation” (Hatten 1994: 172). Hatten also describes tropes as a “complement” to more grounded formal and hierarchical analysis. This is opposite to the approach of Cook who sees the moment-to-moment co-existing with structural determinations and not deducible from the latter. Taken seriously, vague becomings and moments in music can also destabilize the stability of general structural-narrative interpretation.

In my own analysis (Pihel 2021) of both topic and narrative in an admittedly considerably later piece, the Estonian composer Heino Eller’s *Symphonic Legend* (1924), I took up Hatten’s idea of ‘shifts in level of discourse’. The frequent juxtapositions of highly contrasting topical material in the given piece created a smooth space of narrative – it became impossible to assign a single narrative plot (Frye’s *mythoi*) to the work, since frequent shifts in discourse generated an effect of a “story within story”, while leaving it open which layer was to be taken as the “deep” structure. For instance, one can consider the shift from a jubilant cadence into a tragic style of music from section 2 to section 3 (Fig. 3).<sup>26</sup> Such shifts are often explained by the concept of romantic irony (see Hatten 1994: 173) by which music can reflexively comment upon previous musical discourse, forming a higher meta-view on the preceding. Often it is implied that the previous musical material is now being re-evaluated as having a different modality – it turns out to be illusory, insufficient or transitory. Yet in this particular piece the new extensive tragic section is similarly enframed by another shift back to the playful and jubilant material of the second section,<sup>27</sup> which is in turn framed by a new tragic section. These interlocking frames frustrate a clear distinction between the ‘apparent’ and ‘real’ modes of discourse suggested by the trope of romantic irony. The entire piece is further framed by a relatively disjunct pastoral-impressionist topic which further calls into question the interpretation of the whole text. A new vague or smooth narrative space is generated by these frequent semantic juxtapositions – one of passages without a clear narrative structure.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to timecode 6.20–6.44. on the following release: Baiba Skride, Estonian National Symphonic Orchestra and Olari Elts 2018. *Heino Eller. Violin Concerto. Fantasy. Symphonic Legend. Symphony No. 2*. Ondine.

<sup>27</sup> See timecode 13.58 on the release mentioned in Fn. 25.



Figure 3. Heino Eller *Symphonic Legend*, beginning of section 3, bars 131–134, strings.

## 5. Conclusion – toward music semiotics in a minor mode?

According to Deleuze and Guattari we always start from the middle, always finding ourselves stratified, overcoded, oedipalized, subjectivized. Yet we also keep finding mixtures of striated and smooth spaces, major and minor sciences. This article proposed that a Deleuzo-Guattarian approach to music semiotics would similarly have to contend with both signifying and structural (striated space) and a-signifying slippages, deformations and becomings (smooth space) in mutual relationships. Striated space cannot be omitted in Deleuzean studies which usually tend to study intensive and non-representative aspects, nor smooth space from the perspective of semiotics which usually tends to ground its approach in a stable signifier. Seen as a territorial assemblage (or refrain), the topic is formed for music semiotics by a system of binary differences, for Deleuze and Guattari, in contrast, by centripetal motion which also depends on centrifugal tendencies. In both instances a smooth space is discovered (or rather constructed) in relation to the striated space of topics by a 'perceptual semiotics'.

The activity of music semiotics is ultimately an *esthetic* activity<sup>28</sup> – having to do with reception, of listening. In contrast to most Deleuzean musicology which have a *poietic* bent, this article proposes a minor science of semiotics – of listening, analysis and interpretation without a prefigured model which always occurs alongside semiotics as a major science. It would take much more to articulate fully what this type of listening and conceptual creation would entail as it would correspond with Deleuze's more general problematics of an epistemology/ethics of

<sup>28</sup> This is Nattiez's (1990) term: 'poietic' has to do with the principles and processes of creating music, 'esthetic' with the principles and processes of reception, while the 'neutral level' would describe the actual musical text, written or sounding.

counter-actualization, the method of dramatization or diagrammatics.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, as noted above, providing a step-by-step method and goals for a minor science would be to recast it immediately in terms of a major one: repeatable rules and axiomatics cannot ground an approach which takes becoming and change as its model. Still, one can articulate at least some contrasts with the major sciences to provide some signposts.

Firstly, I attempted to articulate the two trajectories of creative deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari describe in relation to territorial assemblages or the refrain, proceeding through infra-assemblage or via inter-assemblages. Tendencies to take account of these deterritorializing edges are already present in the literature. In the first instance we are dealing with an interrelationship between the molar category of the topic and the molecular forces and becomings which destabilize it from within, in this case taking the shape of asignifying musical *figurae* which have gestural and affective effects – matter which is not homogenized, but laden with singularities and inflections. In the second instance I suggested that the complex semantic interrelationships found in the comic surface of classical music and its topics can constitute new effects of semantic destabilization. Taking a cue from Nicholas Cook, I suggest that a minor semiotics would here employ a different mode of listening and interpretation – one focused on passages, shifts and deformations, rather than seeing them as mere vectors between more stable categories. This type of juxtaposing listening would attend to resulting singular, unique and vague effects of meaning, avoiding the model of recognition.

It is clear from the former that a minor science would not be blind to categories (topics), but rather constructs a passage to smooth space around them. It retains enough of territories to extract from them variables and submit them to modulation (*ATP*: 70). It does not proceed deductively from stable categories, but traces closely and inductively differences, singular points in matters of expression and content. In this re-orientation a *problematic* approach replaces a theorematic one, accidental replaces the general and questions regarding the distinction between unimportant and important (singular and ordinary points) replace questions of essence, types and tokens; discovering Truth gives way to creating concepts and relations. Though having to do with vague essences a minor semiotics is not a haphazard process, but on the contrary highly sensitive to minute inflections of both content and expression. While this article has been unfortunately silent on the

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Sholtz 2016. To some the ethical maxim of counter-actualization, diagrammatics and experimentation as a practical ethic is a highly problematic element in Deleuze's philosophy, given again that the principle of immanence and total affirmationism comes head-to-head with a notion of selection and rules for deterritorialization (see Brassier 2018).

former, it constitutes an essential pole. The complex *event* of listening causes the two series to resonate, forming new interrelationships between them each time, constituting new series of contents and expressions (Williams 2008: 9), even as the text we might be dealing with is the “same”. In truth the text itself undergoes changes, reveals new singularities; listening as event could be seen as a milieu of meaning – or that of a problem – before and through which deductive segmentation, discrete signs and propositions are made possible and through which they obtain their sense (Deleuze 1990: 121).

The task then is to relate differences with differences in a diagrammatic experiment with no pre-given object or concept, affirming chance in both constructive and destructive capacities in an affirmation of differential sensation and experimental construction of relations (Vellodi 2014: 90). In this experiment the previously described means of deterritorializing expression must be considered and linked with various contents: embodied affective responses, political, commercial, social, personal dimensions, collective ensembles of enunciation (Deleuze, Guattari 1986: 17–18). If there is a maxim, then this can be borrowed from the principles of connection and heterogeneity that characterize a rhizome and make disentangling these dimensions impossible: any point can be connected to any other and must be (*ATP*: 7). The concrete rules that guide the creation of a plane of consistency for Deleuze and Guattari have to do with increasing the potential pool of connections that can be made – making a productive Body without Organs of interpretation.

Of course, this experimentation, outlined here in the roughest terms, cannot proceed without caution and rigor. An altogether too sharp or wild deterritorialization can always lead to an empty or a cancerous BwO which can result in muteness or an even stronger blockage (*ATP*: 503). In the case of musical meaning and interpretation we can be left with the twin pair of ineffability and banality, which, as Susan Sontag (1966: 236) remarks, often go together. Yet according to Deleuze it is this type of becoming that makes meaning-making possible at all. In semiotics a minor science would be responsible for conceptual renewal. That is what a major science can appropriate from these types of experiments (if it does not suppress them), though in the context of a major science renewal would proceed by jumps which it would call *progress*. A minor science, however, has no end goal, it does not proceed by aiming at a next stable point, but rather constitutes a line and becoming, considers its creations and the striated categories of a major science only as intermezzos (*ATP*: 478, 486). Yet it is in the context of a major science that a minor one always has to operate and depart.

## References

- Adkins, Brent 2015. *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: The Athlone Press.
- Agawu, Kofi 1991. *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400861835>
- Agawu, Kofi 2004. *Music as Discourse: Semiotic Adventures in Romantic Music*. Oxford University Press
- Allanbrook, Wye Jamison 1983. *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le Nozze di Figaro and Don Giovanni*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226437712.001.0001>
- Allanbrook, Wye Jamison 2014. *The Secular Commedia: Comic Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Music*. Oakland: University of California Press.
- Almén, Byron 2008. *A Theory of Musical Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Assis, Paulo de 2018. *Logic of Experimentation: Rethinking Musical Performance through Artistic Research*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Assis, Paulo de; Giudici, Paolo 2021. *Machinic Assemblages: Deleuze and Guattari Artistic Research 3*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Badiou, Alain 2000. *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bogue, Ronald 2013. *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315822044>
- Bogue, Ronald 2019. *Thinking with Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781474447300>
- Brassier, Ray 2018. Concrete rules and abstract machines: Form and function in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In: Somers-Hall, Henry; Bell, Jeffrey A.; Williams, James (eds.), *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 260–279. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748697274-017>
- Campbell, Edward 2013. *Music after Deleuze*. (Deleuze Encounters.) London, etc.: Bloomsbury. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472548092>
- Campbell, Iain 2020. Sound's matter: 'Deleuzian sound studies' and the problems of sonic materialism. *Contemporary Music Review* 39(5): 618–637. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494467.2020.1852804>
- Campbell, Iain 2021. Sounds flush with the real: Mixed semiotic strategies in post-Cagean musical experimentalism. In: Assis, Paulo de; Giudici, Paolo (eds.), *Machinic Assemblages: Deleuze and Guattari Artistic Research 3*. Leuven University Press, 107–114. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1595mb9.10>
- Campbell, Iain 2023. Beyond the 'last phenomenology': Rhythmic modulations in Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sensation*. *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 17(3): 301–325. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dlgs.2023.0520>
- Cook, Nicholas 2006. Uncanny moments: Juxtaposition and the collage principle in music. In: *Approaches to Meaning in Music*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 107–134.
- Cook, Nicholas 2021. Mashed-up classics. In: Kostka, Violetta; Castro, Paulo F. de; Everett, William A. (eds.), *Intertextuality in Music: Dialogic Composition*. New York: Routledge, 32–51. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003092834-4>

- Cox, Christoph 2018. *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226543208.001.0001>
- DeLanda, Manuel 1997. *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History*. Zone Books.
- DeLanda, Manuel 2002. *Intensive Science, Virtual Philosophy*. Continuum.
- Deleuze, Gilles 1990. *The Logic of Sense*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles 1995. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles 2003. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. New York: Continuum.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix 1983. *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix 1986. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Diderot, Denis 2006. *Rameau's Nephew and First Satire*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Eco, Umberto 1976. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-15849-2>
- Gallope, Michael 2010. The sound of repeating life: Ethics and metaphysics in Deleuze's philosophy of music. In: Hulse, Brian; Nesbitt, Nick (eds.), *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*. Abingdon, New York: Ashgate 77–102.
- Gallope, Michael 2017. *Deep Refrains: Music, Philosophy, and the Ineffable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226483726.001.0001>
- Hallward, Peter 2020. *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*. London, New York.
- Hatten, Robert S. 1994. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hatten, Robert S. 2004. *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Head, Matthew 2017. *Orientalism, Masquerade and Mozart's Turkish Music*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge.
- Hedges, Stephen A. 1978. Dice music in the eighteenth century. *Music & Letters* 59(2): 180–187. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/59.2.180>
- Hepokoski, James 2012. Colloquy: Vladimir Jankélévitch's philosophy of music: Ineffable immersion: Contextualizing the call for silence. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65: 223–230.
- Hulse, Brian 2010. Thinking musical difference: Music theory as minor science. In: Hulse, Brian; Nesbitt, Nick (eds.), *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*. Abingdon, New York: Ashgate, 23–50.
- Hulse, Brian; Nesbitt, Nick (eds.) 2010. *Sounding the Virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the Theory and Philosophy of Music*. Abingdon, New York: Ashgate.
- Hunter, Mary 2014. Topics and opera buffa. In: Mirka, Danuta (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 62–90. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199841578.013.003>
- Ingala, Emma 2018. On the refrain (The ritornello). In: Somers-Hall, Henry; Bell, Jeffrey A.; Williams, James (eds.) *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 190–205. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748697274-013>



- Kerslake, Christian 2007. *Deleuze and the Unconscious*. London: Continuum. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472546302>
- Klein, Michael L. 2015. *Music and the Crises of the Modern Subject*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Kull, Kalevi 2023. Further considerations of semiosis in evolution: Arbitrariness plus semiotic fitting, and/or mutability plus natural selection. *Sign System Studies* 51(1): 171–194. <https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2023.51.1.08>
- Liszka, James Jakob 1989. *The Semiotic of Myth: A Critical Study of the Symbol*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Massumi, Brian 1992. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press.
- McClary, Susan 1985. Afterword. In: Attali, Jacques, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 149–160.
- McClary, Susan 2000. *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form*. London: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520928084>
- Mirka, Danuta (ed.) 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199841578.001.0001>
- Moisala, Pirkko; Leppänen, Taru; Tianen, Milla; Väättäin, Hanna (eds) 2017. *Musical Encounters with Deleuze and Guattari*. New York, etc.: Bloomsbury Academic. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781501316777.ch-001>
- Monelle, Raymond 1992. *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music*. Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Monelle, Raymond 2000. *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Monelle, Raymond 2006. *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military, and Pastoral*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Nattiez, Jean-Jacques 1990. *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ojala, Juha 2009. *Space in Musical Semiosis: An Abductive Theory of the Musical Composition Process*. (Acta Semiotica Fennica XXIII.) Helsinki: International Semiotics Institute at Imatra.
- Panos, Nearchos; Lympouridis, Vangelis; Athanasopoulos, George; Nelson, Peter (eds.) 2013. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Music Semiotics: In Memory of Raymond Monelle*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, International Project on Music and Dance Semiotics.
- Pihel, Karl Joosep 2021. Narratiiv ja topos Heino Elleri “Sümfoonilises legendis” [Narrative and topic in Heino Eller’s *Symphonic Legend*]. *Mäetagused* 81: 91–120. <https://doi.org/10.7592/MT2021.81.pihel>
- Ratner, Leonard 1980. *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*. London: Schirmer Books.
- Redner, Gregg 2010. *Deleuze and Film Music: Building a Methodological Bridge Between Film Theory and Music*. Bristol: Intellect Books.
- Rumph, Stephen 2012. *Mozart and Enlightenment Semiotics*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520950115>
- Sholtz, Janae 2016. Dramatization as life practice: Counteractualisation, event and death. *Deleuze Studies* 10(1): 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2016.0211>

- Sontag, Susan 1966. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Stjernfelt, Frederik 2007. *Diagrammatology: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Phenomenology, Ontology, and Semiotics*. Dordrecht: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5652-9>
- Stjernfelt, Frederik 2013. The generality of signs: The actual relevance of anti-psychologism. *Semiotica* 194: 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2013-0023>
- Tagg, Philip 2013. *Music's Meanings: A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos*. New York: The Mass Media Music Scholar's Press.
- Tarasti, Eero 2012. *Semiotics of Classical Music: How Mozart, Brahms and Wagner Talk to Us*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614511410>
- Tromans, Steve 2023. *Rhythmicity and Deleuze: Practice as Research in the Musical-Philosophical*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
- Uexküll, Jakob von 2010. *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans with A Theory of Meaning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Vellodi, Kamini 2014. Diagrammatic thought: Two forms of constructivism in C. S. Peirce and Gilles Deleuze. *Parrhesia* 19: 79–95.
- Williams, James 2008. *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780748631384>

### **Pieni musiikin semiotiikka: Deleuzen ja Guattarin kertosäe ja musiikillinen topos**

Musiikin semiotiikassa nähdään huomattavasti vaivaa musiikillisen merkityksen selittämiseen suhteellisen vakaiden – vaikkakaan ei aina logosentristen – käsitteiden, kuten musiikillisen topoksen, avulla. Kuten minkä tahansa merkin kohdalla, liittyy näihin vakaa yleinen *tyyppi*, joka ilmenee partikulaareina esiintyminä. Deleuze & Guattari puolestaan kehuvat musiikkia taiteenlajina, joka soveltuu erityisen hyvin deterritorialisaatioon: tapahtumiin tai tulemiseen, joka ei seuraa yleisen vs. partikulaarin logiikkaa. Tässä artikkelissa tarkastellaan mainittujen perspektiivien yhteenottoa musiikillisen merkityksen kiistellyllä sotatantereella. Teoksessa *Mille plateaux* keskustellun kertosäkeen käsitteen ja semiotiikassa tarkastellun musiikillisen topoksen sekä näiden keskinäisen dynamiikan tarkka vertailu paljastaa käsitteiden toisiinsa kietoutuneisuuden. Yhteenoton tuloksena esitetään Iain Campbellin ehdottaman merkityksellistämisen praktiikoiden uudelleensuuntaamista deleuzeläisen musikologian tahtiin. Viimeisintä voi laajentaa myös klassisen ja perinteisen musiikin alueelle. Artikkelissa esitetään myös jako toisiinsa kietoutuneisiin pieneen ja suureen musiikin semiotiikan praktiikkaan, jotka tähtäävät vastaavasti deterritorialisaatioon ja territorialisaatioon. Lopuksi näytetään, että pieni tulkintatapa kätkeytyy jo topostä käsittelevien klassismia edustavien musikologien kirjoituksiin.

### **Muusikasemiootika kui väike teadus: Deleuze'i ja Guattari refrään ja muusikaline *topos***

Muusikasemiootika näeb palju vaeva, et põhistada muusikalise tähenduse uurimine üsna stabiilsete – kuigi mitte logotsentriliste – mõistete nagu näiteks muusikalise *topose* kaudu. Nagu märgid üldse kätkevad need üldist *tüüpi*, mis kehastub individuaalsetes tookenites. Deleuze ja Guattari aga kiidavad muusikat kui kunstivormi, mis on eriti sobilik deterritorialiseerimiseks, saamisteks või sündmusteks, mis ei lähtu üldise ja üksiku vastandusest. Käesolev artikkel uuribki nende kahe perspektiivi kokkupõrget muusikalise tähenduse uurimisväljal ja pakub välja, et need on tihedalt seotud, võrreldes refrääni mõistet „Tuhandes platoos“ muusikalise ‘toposega’ semiootikast ja nende kummagi dünaamikaid. Selle kokkupõrge peadib esiteks pakkumisega ümber orienteerida deleuziaanliku muusikateaduse fookus tähistamispraktikatele, nagu pakub ka Iain Campbell, sealhulgas klassikalisele muusikale ja traditsionaalsetele muusikalistele vormidele; aga ka seesmise eristusega muusikasemiootikas vastastikku läbipõimunud väikesest ja suurest praktikast, see tähendab uurimustest, mis on orienteeritud vastavalt kas deterritorialisatsiooni või territorialisatsiooni poole. Demonstreerin, et ‘väike muusikasemiootika’ on juba tuvastatav mõnede muusikateadlaste kirjutistes, kes kirjutavad *topostest* klassikalise perioodi muusikas.