

**MUCH
TOO
MUCH
NOISE
#2**

*zine
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SOME SADOMASOCHISTIC ASPECTS OF MUSICAL PLEASURE

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Welcome to the second edition of *Much Too Much Noise*; The Hague-based zine for radical aesthetics. This issue takes a look at the idea of sadism/masochism in art, taking as it's inspiration Reinhold Friedl's important, but little commented-on, analysis of the typology of pleasure involved in the performance of contemporary music. This provides a bungee-sprung launchpoint for discussions of the article itself, the violence of the orchestra, a disavowal of the masochistic construct, and a meditation on Jewish mysticism. I hope you enjoy our litany of perversion.

SOME SADMASOCHISTIC ASPECTS OF MUSICAL PLEASURE

Reinhold Friedl

It is quite well known that music, and especially contemporary or so-called New Music, is not pure pleasure pure pleasure being comparable to relaxing in a warm bathtub.

The idea of interpreting music as a reflection of the whole world, or even a single musical piece as creating a whole “musical cosmos” (an often-used topos in critiques), is a very old idea that can be found all the way back in the ancient Greek ideal of music as a reflection of the harmonic order of the macrocosmos. But even in the Greek philosophy of music a massive problem occurred in the form of the Pythagorean limma: that is, a mathematically consistent tuning bringing together pure fifths and pure octaves does not exist. (A pitch seven octaves higher than a given note is not the same as the pitch twelve fifths higher; the difference between the frequencies of the two resulting notes is the limma [or “remnant”] ^[1]). So music was treated even then as an imperfect copy of the perfect order of the macrocosmos.

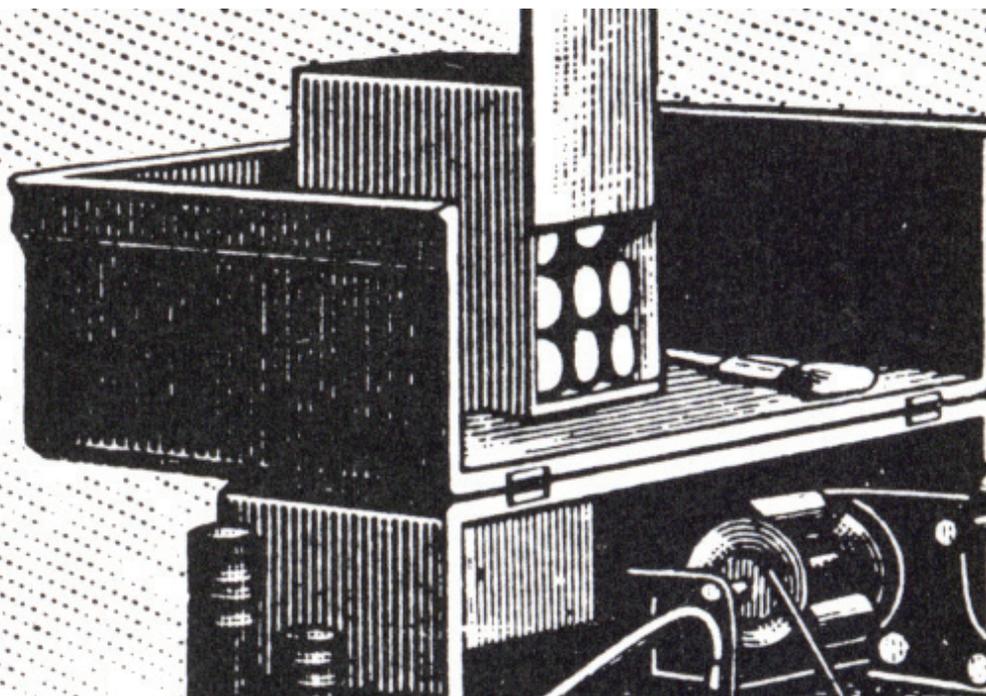
To focus on another point, the functional harmonic structure of European music is based on two main psychological tensions: the dominant, producing a tension to revert to the tonic, and the sub-dominant, inducing the feeling of leaving the tonic. I do not want to pursue here the question of the pleasure of listening to different “stories” of leaving and coming back to a harmonic basis. I just want to emphasize the fact that the pleasure of listening to that kind of music requires the capacity to follow harmonic tensions and even be misled sometimes, e.g. due to a fallacy or false cadence (trugschluff).

The problem of the relationship between pleasure and tension was an issue for Sigmund Freud, the German term Lust having a double meaning. Lust is not only the pleasure of releasing a certain drive-energy-e.g. as during an orgasm-but also the pleasure of the building up of energy, e.g. sexual excitement, tension. Thus, the first approach, that pleasure is always connected to the release of drive-energy, e.g. in form of an orgasm, cannot be upheld. The occurrence of pleasure in building up a drive-energy introduced a theoretical problem.

That is, the simple idea of drive-energy or the “axiomatic system” of the family of drives had to be changed to include the so-called death urge ^[2] With this in mind, music can induce very different pleasures. Using an up-to-date and pragmatic categorization of musics, there is “listening music,” “dance music” and “chill-out music.” Because the last two can be considered functional types of music, I want to focus on the listening music (chill-out music can be treated as the “bathtub pleasure” I mentioned above).

Returning to contemporary music and pleasure, we should remember two verdicts, handed down by Adorno. The first can be found in his sociology of music, wherein his categorization of different types of listeners develops a hierarchy. To simplify: the “best” listener is the one who is able to perceive the whole musical structure of a composition while listening to it. This is clearly an intellectual, not a physical pleasure. The second verdict was formulated after World War II: that it is impossible to write a poem after Auschwitz. The latter idea has been applied directly to contemporary music on a vast scale ^[3].

“Critical theory” has held that the music of the future will have to be critical in such a way as to change society. Political categories such as “democratization” (e.g. in serial music, where each value of a parameter has the same number of occurrences) or “emancipation” (e.g. of dissonance) have not only been applied to musical structures, but also have been given frequently as



arguments for the artistic value of a composition or a compositional style. In this way music has not only tried to become a philosophical discipline, but has also tried to temper physical pleasure.

One dream, formulated by the veterans of early electronic music, was to phase out the human interpreter and replace him or her completely with electronic versions of musical compositions.

It is a joke of history that the very romantic idea of the composer as a dictator was then reintroduced through the back door. The pleasure of the listener was reduced to that of understanding the structure of the music, and the pleasure of the interpreter was reduced to playing the right note at the right time, his or her role becoming more and more like that of a bank employee.

As a very recognizable effect of the above development, the audience withdrew. Conservative or pleasure-oriented as it was, it still wanted poems after Auschwitz. And a new kind of interpreter came into being: the new-music interpreter as a kind of scientific specialist. Interestingly, for the first time in history, a definite separation between composer and interpreter- between the "thinker" and the "realizer"-developed.

This development created a new type of interpretation, the so called principle of the unprovable wrong note.

The question remains, what kind of pleasure or satisfaction would an in-



interpreter experience from this style of playing music? This work is clearly reduced to a technical approach to music, the mere execution, precise as possible, of given structures. Two possibilities result: (1) the interpreter becomes a technician who does not know and does not care about pleasure or (2) he or she finds a certain pleasure in merely obeying orders, in the sense of the classic slave role. If this role is combined with pleasure, it turns out to be a classic example of a sadomasochistic structure.

To be motivated to perform in this way, one would need to take pleasure in it, but as there is no direct pleasure, one would need to be pleased by doing it without pleasure, which is clearly a masochistic response. If the interpreter performs in front of an audience, he or she can also satisfy his/her sadistic tendencies, as positive pleasure would be forbidden for the audience too. Freud probably would use the term “moral masochism” for this behavior: taking the role of the victim without having sexual pleasure ^[4]. This, perhaps in addition to theatrically underlining the seriousness of the work, could be a reason for the longstanding fashion among new-music interpreters of dressing only in black.

This theory would make the understanding of some new-complexity compositions possible, exaggerating the technical difficulties of their scores to the point where they are impossible for any interpreter to play. The interpreter has to work so hard onstage, trying to realize the impossible, that his ever-losing fight against the given structure gains a very emotional dimension: Sisyphus onstage, performing his masochistic pleasure, only to fail every time. But leaving aside this provocative argument, there are also some musicians who introduced in the 1980s a very hard and very physical “noise music.” One of their important protagonists is Masami Akita (a.k.a. Merzbow)-who told me in a discussion that he believes that all music is a sadomasochistic act. Somehow he has turned the above-described situation of the contemporary music interpreter upside-down: in his concerts he uses noise levels of over 110 dB, well past the pain threshold of the listeners. So he makes the sadomasochistic relationship between audience and performer quite obvious, as it becomes physical. Bass sounds really “touch” the listener ^[5].

But Akita is even convinced that every musical performance onstage is a sadomasochistic act, as it is based on a game of power between the performer and the audience. However, the agreement between the audience and the performer, which defines the roles of activity and passivity, does not obviously include the idea of suffering from the performance.

To return to the relation between pleasure and tension-which is probably one

of the most interesting questions in aesthetics and one of the points Merzbow focuses on: If tension always includes a kind of “pain” (e.g. in a composition of Vienna Klassik, the tension built up by leaving the tonic sphere can only appear as a form of pain, to return to that point), but is felt as pleasure, then this can be looked at as a definite sadomasochistic pleasure.

At least this would be very compatible with the old Greek theory of catharsis, of suffering through a drama until a solution.

But in order not to be too provocative, I would like to point out that the difference emphasized by Nietzsche is that this suffering is not a true physical suffering or pain, but a compassion ^[6].

In order not to finish without proving that I do not speak of nonexistent phenomena, I would like to mention how Schumann’s fourth finger on his right hand became crippled because he tied it up to improve his playing ^[7]. I also wish briefly to recall Karlheinz Stockhausen’s concept of interpreters, which emerged in his statements about the events of 11 September 2001 in New York. Stockhausen discusses the lengthy preparation made by the terrorists, comparing it to the idea of musicians practicing fanatically for 10 years for a single concert and then dying during the “performance” ^[8].

References and Notes

1. The pitch seven octaves higher than a given note and the pitch twelve fifths higher than the same given note are actually of two slightly different frequencies- that is, 1/27 does not equal 1/312 The difference between the two frequencies is called the Pythagorean limma.

2. In his drive-reduction theory Freud proposed “that early interactions set the pattern for later personality and social development. He suggested that people are motivated by biological drives (states of arousal such as hunger that lead us to obtain the prerequisites for survival). When one of these drives is aroused, we seek to satisfy the related need. The reduction of the drive produces feelings of pleasure and we return to a comfortable state of biological equilibrium. Thus he proposed that pleasure seeking is a basic principle of existence.” See <<http://psynets.dur.ac.uk/notes/Year1/developmental/dev/Attachment%20Lecture%20-%202001.htm>>-J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, Das Vokabular der Psychoanalyse (Frankfurt am Main, 1973).

3. Theodor W. Adorno. *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1978).

4. Laplanche and Pontalis [2] p. 305.

5. Interviews with Masami Akita (a.k.a. Merzbow) are available at <<http://noiseweb.com/merzbow/>>. Discography and other information at <<http://www.hut.fi/~omertalo/Merzbow.html>>. Merzbow’s Alien 8 recordings are listed at <<http://www.allen8recordings.com/merzbow.php3>>.

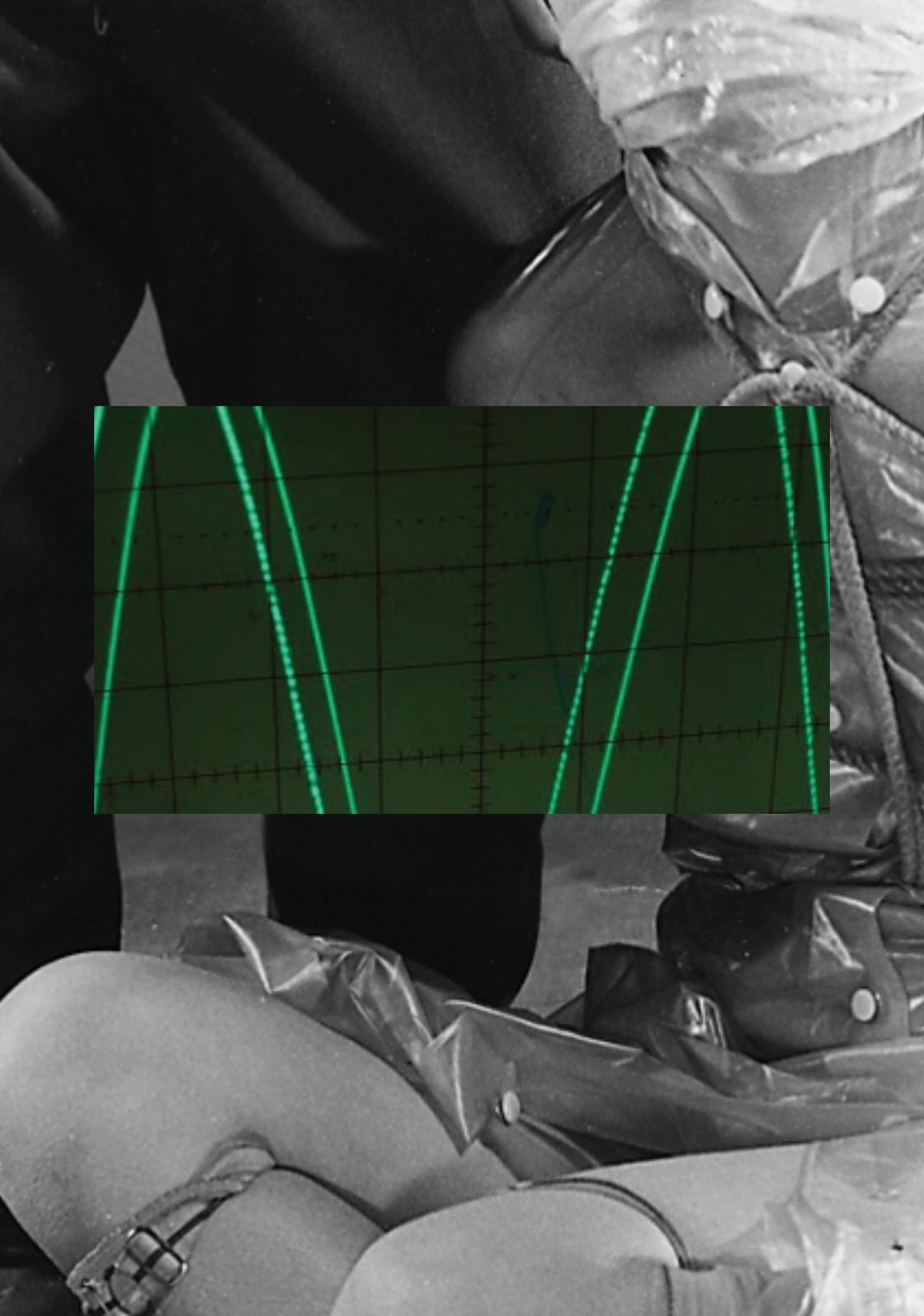
6. Nietzsche’s first book was published in 1872: *The Birth of Tragedy* O. ut of the Spirit of Music (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*). A listing of Nietzsche’s writings is available at <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nietzsche/>>.

7. More information about Schumann’s life and injury to his hand (somewhat varied accounts) are available at: <<http://www.veritasdigital.com/schumann/biography.htm>>; <[http://carolinanavy.com/fleet2/f2/zclassicalmusic/RobertSchumann%20\(1810-1856\)hall/cas/40.html](http://carolinanavy.com/fleet2/f2/zclassicalmusic/RobertSchumann%20(1810-1856)hall/cas/40.html)>; <<http://www.ptloma.edu/music/MUH/composers/schumann.htm>>.

8. Stockhausen’s comments came at the end of a press conference in which Stockhausen was questioned about his works and his beliefs in the works of St. Michael and Lucifer. Stockhausen stated that he believes Lucifer was present in September 2001 in New York, which led to a reporter questioning Stockhausen further. The original statement (responding to a reporter’s query to Stockhausen’s about his notes to his work Hymnen in relation to the 11 September events) was as follows: *Hm. Also was da geschehen ist, ist natirlich-jetzt misen Sie alle Ihr Gehirn umstellen-das grolte Kunstwerk, was esje gegeben hat. DaB also Geister in einem Akt etwas vollbringen, was wir in der Musik nie traumen kñnnten, daB Leute zehnjahre lüben wie verrickt, total fanatisch, fur ein Konzert. Und dann sterben. [Zogert.] Und das ist das gröte Kunstwerk, das es überhaupt gibt fir den ganzen Kosmos. Stellen Sie sich das doch vor, was da passiert ist. Das sind also Leute, die sind so konzentriert aufdieses eine auf die eine Aufführung, und dann werden flintausend Leute in die Auferstehung gejagt...*

A transcription of the Stockhausen press conference was published in “Huuuh!” *Das Pressegespräch am 16 September 2001 im Senatszimmer des Hotel Atlantic in Hamburg.* “MusikTexte 91 (2001) pp. 69-77.

This document is available online at <<http://www.stockhausen.org/hamburg.pdf>>. A discussion of the controversy surrounding Stockhausen’s statements and the manner in which they were reported in the press appears on the Stockhausen web site at <<http://www.stockhausen.org/>>



SOME FURTHER SADOMASOCHISTIC ASPECTS OF MUSICAL PLEASURE

David Pocknee

“Virtuosity, which can yet never be detached wholly from art to the extent that a moment of nature-domination inheres in all art, has always pointed towards achievement. In mass culture such virtuosity is all that remains. . . The jazz musician and anyone in front of the microphone or camera are forced to inflict violence upon themselves. Indeed the most rewarded are those who do not even need this violence to be exercised upon them in the first place, those who are so utterly compliant with the expected behaviour that they can even simulate the signs of resistance spontaneously precisely because they no longer feel such resistance in themselves. . . . So it is that ‘sportification’ has played its part in the dissolution of aesthetic semblance.”¹

[Theodor Adorno]

No response can come too late; unless it is “don’t shoot”. So forgive my tardiness in analyzing a paper already dust-snowed in the yellowing purgatory of library archives. In 2002, Reinhold Friedl’s article *“Some Sado-masochistic Aspects of Musical Pleasure”* was published in *Leonardo Music Journal* to a criticism of anechoic and tumbleweeded magnitudes.² But a decennially amnesiac birthday can always be passed off as an anniversary, even if time has hardened the celebratory cake as much as our loveless souls.

Friedl’s style is speculative and scattershot, heavy on referential tangents and light on detail. In a little under two pages he posits that, due to what he refers to as “the unprovable wrong note” in Contemporary Music, the pleasure that a player would normally elicit from the correct performance of a work can no longer be attained, and that their sole mode of pleasure is achieved by entering into a sado-masochistic relationship with both composer and audience.

1. Theodor Adorno *The Schema of Mass Culture* from 'The Culture Industry' ed. J. M. Bernstein (Abingdon, 1991), 88-89

2. Reinhold Friedl, *Some Sado-masochistic Aspects of Musical Pleasure*, *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 12, Pleasure (2002), pp. 29-30, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1513345>. Accessed: 14/02/2011 13:24

Friedl's analysis rests upon two assumptions:

1. That the "unprovable wrong note" in Contemporary Music prevents a performer from experiencing the pleasure they would traditionally elicit from the "correct" performance of a piece of music.
2. That the Performer substitutes the pleasure gained from "correct" execution of a piece of music with a pleasure gained through entering into a sadomasochistic relationship with the Composer and Audience.

In the spirit of perversion, let me address the second point first and venture with knee-bent deference to examine the Holy Trinity Of Music: the relationship between Composer, Performer, and Audience.

Friedl posits that in Contemporary Music sadomasochistic pleasure has been injected into the relationship between both Composer and Performer:

"[the performer] finds a certain pleasure in merely obeying orders, in the sense of the classic slave role. If this role is combined with pleasure, it turns out to be a classic example of a sadomasochistic structure."³

and Performer and Audience:

"If the interpreter performs in front of an audience, he or she can also satisfy his/her sadistic tendencies, as positive pleasure would be forbidden for the audience too."⁴

In his analysis of Composer and Performer, Friedl is extremely astute in recognizing in the Performer the typically masochistic impulses towards gaining enjoyment through subjugation. However, in his investigation of the Performer and Audience relationship, his Freudian analysis fails to fully realize the complexity of the sadistic and masochistic impulses at play.

Friedl's conception of sadomasochism derives from that of Sigmund Freud, and Richard von Krafft-Ebing's. Their proposed framework consists of two complementary forces: one in which the pleasure comes from the infliction of pain on another person, and one in which the pleasure comes from the pain inflicted on oneself. Gilles Deleuze, in his book *"Coldness And Cruelty"*, questions the validity of this relationship and instead posits that sadism and masochism are

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.





two distinct forces devoid of complementarity:

“The belief in this unity is to a large extent the result of misunderstandings and careless reasoning. It may seem obvious that the sadist and the masochist are destined to meet. The fact that the one enjoys inflicting while the other enjoys suffering pain seems to be such striking proof of their complementarity that it would be disappointing if the encounter did not take place. ... a genuine sadist could never tolerate a masochistic victim (one of the monks’ victims in [Sade’s] Justine explains: “They wish to be certain their crimes cost tears; they would send away any girl who was to come here voluntarily.”) Neither would the masochist tolerate a truly sadistic torturer. He does of course require a special “nature” in the woman torturer, but he needs to mold this nature, to educate and persuade it in accordance with his secret project, which could never be fulfilled with a sadistic woman.”⁵

“The woman torturer of masochism cannot be sadistic precisely because she is in the masochistic situation, she is an integral part of it, a realization of the masochistic fantasy. She belongs in the masochistic world, not in the sense that she has the same tastes as her victim, but because her “sadism” is of a kind never found in the sadist; it is as if it were the double or the reflection of masochism. The same is true of sadism. The victim cannot be masochistic, not merely because the libertine would be irked if she were to experience pleasure, but because the victim of the sadist belongs entirely in the world of sadism and is an integral part of the sadistic situation.”⁶

5. Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness And Cruelty*, in “Masochism” trans. Jean McNeill, 40-41

6. Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness And Cruelty*, in “Masochism” trans. Jean McNeill, 41

In the same way that the Performer consensually receives their punishment from the Composer, the Audience similarly subject themselves to, what Friedl sees as, the pleasure-deprived whims of the Performer. This consensuality is a defining characteristic of a masochistic relationship in which there is no sadomasochistic duality, but what Deleuze defines as the “subject” and the “element”. Thus, the Performer becomes the projection of the Audience’s masochistic fantasy, just as the Composer is the projection of the Performer’s own fantasy:

“By distinguishing in a perversion as that between the subject (the person) and the element (the essence) we are able to understand how a person can elude his subjective destiny, but only with partial success, by playing the role of an element in the situation of his choice...Each subject only needs the “element” of the same

perversion and not a subject of the other perversion.”⁷

This means, however, that the sterotypical idea of the dictatorial and sadistic Composer, imposing their will upon the Performer, is revealed as a falsehood. In its place, the consensual masochistic relationship clearly places the power in the hands of the Performer, on whose terms the Composer enacts their punishment. The very co-operation of the Performer in performing the score reveals the situation for what it really is: a masochistic one, in which the Composer fulfils the role of the torturer, existing as a mere projection of the Performer’s masochistic fantasy.

“In discussing male masochism in Venus im Pelz, Koschorke argues: “While torments are indeed meted out to the willing male protagonist, his abandonment strictly follows rules he himself has

7. Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness And Cruelty*, in “Masochism” trans. Jean McNeill,⁴¹



devised. Playing the part of victim on a perverse stage, behind the set he is in fact the director”⁸

The consensuality of masochism points towards what Deleuze, in his literary and psychological analysis of Leopold Sacher-Masoch’s “*Venus in Furs*”, sees as another one of its key features: The Contract.

“She has drawn up a contract by which I am to commit myself on my honor to be her slave for as long as she wishes. Her arm around my neck, she reads me this incredible document, punctuating each sentence with a kiss.”⁹

[Leopold Sacher-Masoch, “*Venus In Furs*”]

8. Elizabeth Anne Schreiber-Byers *Castrating the Female Dominant: An Analysis of Female Agency in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s “Venus im Pelz”*, https://doi.org/10.2190/ib.unc.edu/2Fid%3Dduid%3A9ea0adea-80d7-4546-8c05-2e544a2eb6ff%26ds%3DDATA_FILE%26dl%3Dtrue&ei=aJ0i8PI MpT34QsqyMSWBQ&usg=AFQjCNEJLs3KAo413slbeQmTZJa701glww&cad=rja, accessed 3/5/2012

9. Leopold Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, in “Masochism” trans. Jean McNeill, 196

Deleuze sees the the difference between sadism and masochism as being partly defined by their relationship to the law. Sadism operates with no respect to the law, often wilfully and purposefully transgressing its boundaries to ensure pleasure. Masochistic relationships, on the other hand, are very much defined by legality. In “*Venus In Furs*” the character Severin signs a contract that legally defines his subjugation under his mistress. Deleuze sees this as the way in which “By observing the very letter of the law, we refrain from questioning its ultimate or primary character; we then behave as if the supreme sovereignty of the law conferred upon it the enjoyment of all those pleasures that it denies us”.¹⁰

In musical terms we see several manifestations of “The Contract” in the masochistic relationships of the Holy Trinity Of Music. The ticket that the Audience pays for entry to a concert is one example of this; their tacet entrance into a legal/financial transaction with

10. Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness And Cruelty*, in “Masochism” trans. Jean McNeill, 88



the Performer, although indirect, indicates the masochistic character of their relationship. However, a far more powerful and symbolic contract exists between Composer and Performer: The Score. The Score is a symbolic representation of the Masochistic Contract and reveals the true nature of the Composer/Performer relationship, a relationship warped by the dual role of the Performer, which seeks to subvert it.

The Performer plays two roles:

One in which they are the Masochistic victim, manipulating the Composer to abuse and humiliate them for their pleasure through the contract of the Score.

The other, a more passive role, in which the Audience project onto the Composer/Performer relationship a sadistic one, in order that they might elevate the Performer to the level of martyr, and through whose suffering they can experience redemption or transcendence.

This perceived suffering, although utterly constructed by the audience, is often bought into by the Composer. In talking about his composition *"Time & Motion Study II"*, Brian Ferneyhough makes the following comment about his work:

"I wanted to subtitle the cello piece 'Electric Chair Music', but decided that that would be far too explicit for the final interpreta-

tional approach. The cellist, who sings, 'plays' two foot pedals and reads complex notation on up to five systems simultaneously is certainly tortured throughout"¹¹

It is clear that Ferneyhough sees his relationship with the performer as somewhat of a sadistic one, even though it is clearly masochistic. However, his insight into the "tortured" aspect of his piece allows us to contemplate the first of Friedl's suppositions:

That the "unprovable wrong note" in Contemporary Music prevents a performer from experiencing the pleasure they would traditionally elicit from the "correct" performance of a piece of music.

Friedl implies that the two primary modes of pleasure for the Performer are through the "correct" performance of a work, or through sadistic/masochistic pleasures. However, although his article clearly uses the music of the "New Complexity" as the whipping-post for a lot of his criticisms, he misses one of the essential modes of pleasure which this type of music seems set up to achieve. This pleasure is not only limited to New Complexity, but actually shares a lot in common with a set of other artforms happening contemporaneously with its inception: Free Jazz/Free Improvisation and Body Art.

11. Brian Ferneyhough *Interview with Andrew Clements* from 'Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings' Ed. James Boros and Richard Toop pg. 204-216 (Amsterdam, 1998), 215-216

At the same time that Ferneyhough was composing the aforementioned *Time & Motion Study II* (1973-1976)¹² not only were Free Jazzers/Improvisors such as Derek Bailey and Ornette Coleman creating music, but Body Artists such as Chris Burden, Marina Abramovich and Vito Acconci were performing pieces in which physical pain was a main feature. In the period mentioned, Chris Burden performed some of his best known and most painful work: “*B.C. Mexico*” (1973), “*Fire Roll*” (1973), “*Doomed*” (1975) and “*Trans-fixed*” (1974).

The temporal simultaneity of New Complexity, Free Jazz/Improvisation and Body Art is not an accident. Bearing in mind Ferneyhough’s quotation above, does it make sense to talk about his work without talking about Chris Burden getting shot in the arm?

Friedl’s key mistake in dismissing the New Complexity occurs due to his perception that it uses a notation that is “descriptive” (describing what should sound) instead of “prescriptive” (prescribing what actions the Performer should under-take). This presumption has blighted many critiques of the New Complexity and has missed one of the key features of both this style and Free Jazz/Improvisation:

New Complexity and Free Jazz/Improvisation are NOT ABOUT SOUND.

New Complexity and Free Jazz/Improvisation are an off-shoot of Body Art, all three presenting forms of ritualized violence, articulated through

the body.

In the book *Improvisations*, by the Free-Improvisor Derek Bailey, he quotes the musicologist Curt Sach’s assertion that “instrumental music ... is as a rule a florid fast and brilliant display of virtuosity ... Quick motion is not merely a means to a musical end but almost an end in itself which always connects with the fingers, the wrists and the whole of the body”, to which he responds:

“That would serve as a description of one of the underlying forces in free improvisation.

It is the attitude of the player to this tactile element, to the physical experience of playing an instrument, to the ‘instrumental impulse’ which establishes much of the way he plays.”¹³

The reason that all of these artistic movements occur roughly concurrently is due to a type of pleasure which Friedl does not acknowledge – that of transcendence.

In the psychologist Abraham Maslow’s theory of Peak Experience (“a moment in the individual’s life when he is functioning fully, feels strong, sure of himself and in complete control”¹⁴), he contended that organized religion, although always originating in a Peak Experience, created rituals designed to invoke in its participants that same

13. Derek Bailey *Improvisations* (Ashbourne, 1992), 97

14. Frank G. Goble *The Third Force: The Psychology Of Abraham Maslow* (New York, 1970), 56

12. Brian Ferneyhough *Time & Motion Study II* (London, 1976)

Peak Experience that occurred at the religion's inception. However, over time, the ritual ossified into a non-functional set of symbols, divorced from its original purpose.

“Apparently it is one danger of the legalistic and organizational version of religion that they may tend to suppress naturalistic peak-, transcendent, mystical, or other core-religious experiences and to make them less likely to occur, i.e. the degree of religious organization may correlate negatively with the frequency of ‘religious’ experiences...Familiarization and repetition produces a lowering of the intensity and richness of consciousness, even though it also produces preference, security, comfort etc.”¹⁵

The move of Performance Art, and composed and improvised music towards these action-based acts of masochism, occurred as a way of re-engaging with an experience whose codification had ossified. In other words, the functionality of their antecedent artforms (total serialism, post-bop and modal jazz) had become purely symbolic, and that these artistic renewals were a way of re-functionalizing them via a direct engagement with the body, and an avoidance of extraneous symbols.

This re-engagement with the body had a transcendental aim (see Coltrane's late album titles: “Ascension”,

15. Abraham H. Maslow *Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences* (Columbus, 1964), 33-34

“Meditations”, “Om”, “Infinity”, “Transition”, “Cosmic Music” etc. and Ferneyhough's own Liszt-referencing “*Etudes Transcendentale*” etc.). In his work on “Flow” (a modified and more refined version of Maslow's “Peak Experience”), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has analyzed some of the factors that lead to a heightened state of performance, a state which has many similarities to that of transcendental or religious experiences. He identifies “Flow” as being “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it.”¹⁶ A beautiful example of this in action is a description of Jackson Pollock painting:

“[Hans] Namuth's more than five hundred black-and-white still photographs have provided posterity with a stunning visual proof of the psychic and physical changes which took place in Pollock as he worked. It is evident from these pictures that, under the spell of his creativity, Pollock's body motions – often awkward and heavy in a more conscious state – took on the fluency and agility of a well-trained acrobat or athlete.

No longer fighting his medium, he seems to become one with it, absorbed and ‘transfixed’ by actions over which he admitted having only varying degrees of emotional

16. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi *Flow* (New York, 1990), 4

and motor control¹⁷

Thus, the goal-oriented pleasure which Friedl describes as being the primary mode before the advent of Contemporary Music's "unprovable wrong note" is not the key to the pleasure he thinks Modernism has so vigorously denied us but, instead, Csikszentmihalyi locates this pleasure in what he refers to as the "autotelic" (meaning to do something for the sake of doing it) nature of the activity.¹⁸

This re-engagement with the body can be seen in the New Complexity penchant for parametricization based on physical parameters (embouchure, fingering) rather than the abstracted ones of pitch, dynamics etc. and in Free Improvisation/Jazz's discarding of the complex harmonic structures of its ancestors, in favour of a more experience-centred engagement with their instruments. Ferneyhough, himself indicates in one of his interviews his attempt to create in the performer something that sounds suspiciously like "Flow" in his flute piece "Unity Capsule":

"often this high level of change in many parameters effectively prevents the performer from 'remembering' ahead very far, leaving him in a constant state of 'performative surprise', the horizon of memory closing in around him. The only wrong sort of interpretation, in my view, would be one in which the player attempted to 'rationalize' this overload, to 'translate' these

complex constellations into 'poetic' renderings of approximately the sound he thinks should come out in a general way¹⁹

If one compares this passage to one from Csikszentmihalyi's book *Flow*, one can see the similarities even more clearly:

"A professor of physics who was an avid rock climber described his state of mind while climbing as follows: "It is as if my memory input has been cut off. All I can remember is the last thirty seconds, and all I can think ahead is the next five minutes." In fact, any activity that requires concentration has a similarly narrow window of time²⁰

So, in its autotelic nature, the ACTION becomes the primary way of articulating musical pleasure. Friedl's idea of the "unprovable wrong note" becomes a matter only for the ossified scores whose non-functional symbolism blocks the road to transcendence. The score itself – the masochistic contract between Composer and Performer – becomes not a fixed object dictating a sadistic torture upon the Performer, but a tool to enable the Performer's elevation; not a fixed object to be brutally adhered to, but a wavefunction of possibilities that collapses only at the moment of performance...

17. Ellen G. Landau *Jackson Pollock* (London, 1989), 182

18. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi *Beyond Boredom and Anxiety* (London, 1975)

19. Brian Ferneyhough *Interview with Philippe Albéra* from 'Brian Ferneyhough: Collected Writings' Ed. James Boros and Richard Toop pg. 303-335 (Amsterdam, 1998), 325

20. Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly *Flow* (New York, 1992, 2008), 58

Leo Svirsky

The proper order of the law is hidden to all those except the messiah. Its proper meaning is contained in the blank spaces between its words. The messiah's task is to reveal these letters.

The messianic age is like this age in all but the subtlest detail, yet entirely other. The characteristic of messianic action is its proximity to inaction. Almost

nothing.

The development of material has become a procedure of its devaluation. It is hoped that material can approach its lost authenticity through scarcity. Such hope is simultaneously an affirmation and a betrayal of redemption. A consolation for the fallen is always a betrayal of utopia.

Silence is the severance of presence and action, a polemic that throws all action into question. Yet this severance is itself an action, a polemic, still far too coarse to approach the almost nothing of messianic action. The intention to remove intention is still an intention.

BROKEBACK SYMPHONY: I WISHED I KNEW HOW TO QUIT YOU

Jeremiah C. Runnels

Sound does not exist. We are deaf, and sound is a fiction - a real fiction to be sure - but sound has no truth. Sound is fake at best.

The orchestra however is real. The orchestra is not only the symphony orchestra: the orchestra needs only to be two.

Peter Brook, speaking of the art of Grotowski, proposed that what was at the heart of the great master's theater was the «theatrical shock» of one organism confronting another. This is at the heart of the atomic two two-man orchestra. Each must be confronted by the other; together they mutually form the prototypical audience.

“Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I will also be...”

...

The notion of the orchestra in composed art music is that, as a musician, the heart of your practice will be to give your full talent, dedication, energy, and even life-long capital investments (instruments) over to a creative vision that is not your own,

on a regular basis.

Not only will you do this but it This will not be an act of generosity, it will be a pleasure.

Our taste is a pleasure, and our playing is a pleasure and they need not be aligned.

There are orchestras of musicians everywhere. There are no orchestras of performance artists. Artists collaborate, musicians just play.

In visual art the notion of control and responsibility cannot be given up as an author without foregoing the credit. The musician plays, and he can play bad music well, and it is a pleasure.

The orchestra is both a collective of intelligence and the confirmation of its absence.

...

In Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, the cruelty is not a pantomime of a ghoulish cruelty but rather a disciplined one. The cruelty that a musician does to themselves to become

the instrument of composed music is an ideal of cruelty in the mythical sense.

Music accidentally made manifest the ideal of Artaud.

...

Sound has made itself stand apart from Music because it can and was quantified. Once Noise was made into Sound - quantified by an envelope and a spectrum - it was allowed to interpenetrate Music.

Sound-made-metric endured the Theater of Cruelty that is Science, so it was allowed to become part of it, having withstood violence.

Sound did not entirely succeed in incorporating Music into its own definition: There is still the membrane of an «and» that separates Sound and Music.

...

It seems that sound, because of its militaristic development (see consider the anechoic chamber, electronic and computer music, acoustics), is a form of violence.

Cage was building radar to kill better, and to avoid going to kill in person. The anechoic chamber was not to study sound, ; it was a mecca to sounding silence as death.

Sound in-and-of-itself is plausible deniability; another camouflage to for doing violence. Our larynx is not worthy of careful study, unless that study would help you kill the Germans and the Japanese (see consider Leo Beranek).

The orchestra has organized itself around sound, and sound is a form of violence.

Sound is violence in both real and abstract terms.

...

Life is the creative position that we take, knowing we will die, and not being able to change that. This confrontation is carried forward by a life force.

I will call this force "violence". Not the socially constructed violence, a mythical violence, like Artaud's cruelty.

Sound via science was socially constructed. If science and sound were socially constructed, then I will use the mythical violence to construct a creative violence.

My violence is the impulse that resonates and concatenates all other structures. The orchestra is an arena for violence.

The ideal creative arena is to make the creative leap to take violence for granted. Go past the prohibitionism.

If prohibitionism in sex leads to perversion via suppression, then what will be the outcome for violence if we suppress it as well?

~~Sex in the past was prohibited, banished in all but its chaste forms but modernity rehabilitated into it to a basic drive, so we place it along side thirst and hunger. I think we need to rehabilitate blood lust into a basic drive.~~

~~Sex is divided, made apart from violence. I want to return it to the mythical violence. There is no difference between the sex drive and the hate drive.~~



We should ritualize and aesthetise our violence to the gourmet standards of our food and drink.

The modernist discourse on duration, pitch, rhythm, and timbre, may inform the compounding of violence, hatred, and blood lust. Serialization of the aspects of music might be a powerful technology to serialize creative violence more generally.

The orchestra via sound, has organized itself into an arena that suits the aestheticisation of ritual violence.

We have left the sounds, but we have kept the culture. The culture of submitting alternately to different creative visions, wholeheartedly, with and without reservation. Dedication through discipline; passion through distance.

I want to ritualize this violence with the orchestra. There will be sound, either—Either before, during and after, there is always sound; Let us say that the intention of violence will remove the intention of sound.

Let us open up violence. Not in the sense that we have culturally constructed it, but as a force that propels that construction and allows it to take place. Perhaps a creative violence, rather than its prohibition, may have more to do with the way forward and perhaps, all be it an unlikely possibility, even a way out.

ON MARTYRDOM. SANCTITY AND PERVERSION

Ana Smaragda Lemnaru

The mythical avant-gardist, Art as a way of living, contaminated by the romantic vision of exalted and extraordinary lives; discharging his vitality on the altar of Constructing New Ways of Inhabiting the World; denouncing the corruption of worldly comfort and spilling his blood for the church of reason, measure or balance.

All hail to the irrational rationality of the modernist artist! Futile efforts, his denial of bare life, the progressive rationalist view, the beauty of functionality and the utopian dreams (all failed) - were drowned. And he has been proven wrong, so many times. Brazil is a slum...

Ladies and gentlemen, repeat after Kurt Vonnegut:

“(some misfits say) there is no such thing as progress.”

We concur; for the time being, time is only moving forward.

...At the other end, defining themselves by what they are not, with high raised eyebrows, stand the cynical priests of the Post-Modern Church. All is ironic and nothing matters because the world ended somewhere between the return of the marching troops from the Second World War and the production of the 55th Maneki Neko^{1*} –sculpture-batteries-not- included.

We salute your western guilt! Your political correctness, your devotion to fair trade -everybody is included. Well, there is no playing - not outside the national borders – not with the poor or homeless kids, and not if they ask questions about funding public culture campaigns.

We're sorry that you're sorry.

We know how to make you feel better. Let's bathe in the absolute relativist re-nomination of the world. Let's relax in a sauna of externalizing responsibility, by denouncing any position taken, as soon as it arises. Close your eyes and enjoy massaging your scalp with self- righteousness.

It is this newly gained desire for Alterity that seems to position the artist at some strange underground periphery. Martyr saints, starving themselves for the love of god, renouncing their lives in order to prove a point, enunciating and example: a way of being. This experience is a pedagogical example. And for this trespassing of boredom, we will worship them forever.

At the opposite end, but in the same practice of escaping the ordinary, lay the perverts. The ones who escape habit and boredom for self interest and personal gain. The freaks, that are greedily lusting for experience. The rich, the bored, the blaze: the ones that suffer from not being victims. And it is here, in this suburban showdown that the martyr- artist sometimes hangs out: experimenting with the limits of perception, making the first exception – the avant-garde of social practices, or criticism it takes, taking the political stance and pointing fingers, in the imaginary center of the arena where he stands.

Do not misunderstand. No criticism for the critics. Abramovic, Beuys or Kaprow cannot be condemned. They are not on trial here, because being-into-matter is the only court we have. And they already happened, and they already are. What we're contesting is leech ideology. We like the martyrs, we do not like the schooling that comes with them. We do not agree with the transformation of a life into the lives of many. There is no sainthood when we're all the same.

Let's not get lost in this routine of crying over the spilled blood of our victims while flagellating our backs with Sjamboks and say why postmodernism is, to



say why postmodernism is, to some extent, masochistic. And to do that we shall proceed by fleshing out our ad hoc, ruthless definition of masochism.

We call 'masochistic' the practice of individual conversion of significance for self interest. Be that converting an act of pain into pleasure, or be that exchanging the roles, practices and volition between victim and aggressor; between what is willed to be so, and what just happens by mistake. We call masochistic the control freaks that have to portion their pies before they're baked. We call masochist those who refuse to be the victims of others and would rather be the victims of themselves. We call upon those who want to be super-human and emancipated and look for any means to do that, even if that means shouting. What post-mo lamentation does then, is to eat-up what ruins of dystopia it had left.

“What then is hysteria? Without ignoring anxiety hysteria (phobia,panic attacks, etc.), we are concerned primarily with conversion hysteria, a condition in which we present symptoms that mimic those of organically- based medical illnesses, but that have no organic basis.”

[Fugitives From Guilt:Postmodern De-Moralization and the New Hysterias*by Donald L. Carveth, Ph.D. & Jean Hantman Carveth, Ph.D.]

The difference between De Sade and any given body-carving rock star that goes for the knife to take ten years off, is merely historical. Refinement and perversion have a morphological overlap. Bodies never coincide, but their use is often coincidentally the same. For them, it is about the means of passing time and about the desperation of stopping it, eluding it or resisting its passage. For us, it's the same way of looking. Simply put looking at De Sade from this point in the present will tell us more about the present than about DeSade.

“Contemporary design is part of the great revenge of capitalism on postmodernism, a re-copying of its crossing of arts and disciplines, a routinisation of its transgressions.”

[Hal Foster- Design as Crime and other diatribes]

Isn't that stance also mapping the relationship between art and life?

Art as life – Life as Art. The distinction between the two is a mere figment of our cultural imagination, asserted by some, denied by others - instituting the negation of both. On the left side, you can notice a sedimentary division

between labor and leisure, work and pleasure. The closely related two headed child waving next to this: Art separated from life, exiled into museums, into audience time, into 'another' time. Big A art. On the right side, next to an cased mammoth, we can notice the commodification of the unquantifiable – something fun to do in our free time. Showing cheap tricks but forgetting how they are made: spectacular art as spectacle life as the spectacle of life.

For the performer, for the composer, and for the audience member alike, providing that these roles aren't some sort of vestigial tail of outdated taxonomy, the distinction between the performance time (read "art-time") and any other time is irrelevant, as far as their experience or conscience is at stake. The distinction between work and leisure is more relevant for the factory owner, for the build- ing and for the use of infrastructure than for the workers themselves. In the economy of time we all have one unit, limited by the immanence of our death and elevated by its abstraction. The privatization of time (working time for the performers, passive time for the audience) sketches the division: a hierarchy of power in performance settings – there is no one head rising over all in this ecology. Look at it as a zoological garden – you need the animals, you also need the cages, you need the keeper, the hunks of meat and the annoying little boy upsetting the gorilla. All as all important, and in this scene there is no surrender. The artistic zoo, the fleshing of the artwork is translated into the space between these bodies, and it has this ability to be more than a form, because of its vagueness. Art as constructed accidents that happen to happen?

"The pursuit of forms is only the pursuit of time, but if there are no stable forms there are no forms at all"

[Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*]

We disagree with masochism as a practice of form, as an aesthetic practice that is permanently suspended in between impoverishment and excess, with the mention that the first is always preceding and determined by the latter. We do not like masochism as a practice, because it is too eager, it is too willing, selfish and self-centered. It smells like vanity mixed with urine, it is the supreme form of emotional bed-wetting transposed into pretentious arguments. It proposes elevation instead of escalation. Most of all, we fail to see its urgency, necessity and consequence outside an embodied transgression that is alienated by its very means. It doesn't matter what coins you use to pass the threshold: transgression using the coins of work (so time), authorship or power. In the world of many centers, lying to the liars does not constitute truth, and if there is time for playing games where saying yes means no, but put in other words, that time is a luxury and it should be declared as such.