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## Micrological Listening: Molecularity and the State in Luigi Nono's Late Electro-Acoustic Music

### ABSTRACT

#### Background

Recent scholarship in musicology has seen the emergence of Gilles Deleuze's concept of the "molecular" and its related terrain of micrological concepts. Molecularity is a Deleuzian concept that describes ungovernable, untotalizable, states of flux that implicate not only the dynamics of all sociocultural relations, but also the very act of listening and of music analysis. In Luigi Nono's late music of the 1980s (*Das atemde Klarsein*; *Guai ai gelidi mostri*; *Quando stanno morendo*, *Diario Polacco n.2* and *Prometeo tragedia dell'ascolto*) an evolving concept of space as "microverse" is featured that joins the new works together, but also sets them apart from an earlier overt Marxist engagement achieved through the integration of serial procedures with the use of documentary texts. The manipulation of space in these late works involves performers interacting with live electronics and directed sound within a collaborative compositional system. My paper examines the trajectory by which this late music aligns with and produces constructs related to those that Deleuze and Guattari propose in *Mille Plateaux* (1980), and which Guattari then develops independently in his later essays *The Three Ecologies* (1989), and *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (1995). Guattari proposes a multifarious antidote to the oppression of *Integrated World Capitalism* (IWC), a force that has now decentered its sites of power in order to manipulate human subjectivity, social relations and the environment. Subjectivity is repressed specifically via the rise of a hegemonic mass media. In Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, assemblages are a multiplicity of disparate flows and affects. They embody the state of becoming molecular. Machinic assemblages, by turn, refer to the domain of physical objects, including technologies, that act upon one another but are also imbricated with and act upon the collective assemblage of enunciation: the subject-less domain of symbolic repetitions, beyond language, but including music. At virtually the same historical moment Nono laments this emergent macro-subjectivity as "the tragedy of listening." Nono approaches the task of becoming molecular again through the subtle use of new studio technologies ("machinic assemblages") that produce sonic stratification of environmental and social space. The resultant multiple subjectivities (of listener, composer, performer) implicate the polyphonic strata of mental, social and environmental ecologies of which Guattari writes. The materials and techniques of these works are explicitly conceived as a compositional environment that merges political, social and ecological dimensions in a holistic aesthetic reality that Guattari would theorize as *virtual ecology*. Venice, at once an artificial metropolis and an island, is the site of both intense social struggle and devastating ecological disaster. It forms the basis for Nono's own tragic sonic ecology, and provides a compre-

hensive structure for theorizing it. I will conclude with some thoughts on the ways that Deleuze and Guattari's thinking may be irrevocably transformed when applied to Nono and Cacciari's southern solution to these global problems.

#### Aims and repertoire studied

In Luigi Nono's late electroacoustic music from the 1980s, an evolving concept of space as "microverse" is developed, which relates these works to one another, but also sets them apart from Nono's earlier overt Marxist engagements, achieved through the integration of serial procedures with the use of documentary texts. The manipulation of social and acoustic space in these late works involves performers interacting with live electronics and directed sound within a collaborative compositional system. I will focus upon *Guai ai Gelidi Mostri* (1983), with the purpose of considering it within the body of late works taken as a variegated whole.

#### Methods

*Guai ai Gelidi Mostri* is one of the first collaborations between Nono and Massimo Cacciari wherein Cacciari curates a series of textual fragments that form the philosophical substrate of the work itself. These include passages from Lucretius, Ovid, Pound, Nietzsche, Rosenzweig and Benn synthesized within Cacciari's own late political discourse, and then joined not only to Nono's collaborative experiments with directed sound conducted at the Heinrich Strobel Studio, but also with the paintings by Emilio Vedova from which the individual movements take their respective names. I will use the established framework provided by the Deleuzian categories of the micrological as a way into exploring the means by which Nono's sonic landscapes enact the complex commentary of Cacciari's texts. I will next identify those broad features of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, and especially their critique of "the state," which Cacciari and Nono explicitly reject in favour of a specifically Venetian frame of reference.

#### Implications

This work builds upon recent scholarship on the late music of Nono, and also upon the growing field of Deleuzian interrogation into the socio-ecological dimensions of sound and music.

#### Keywords

Musical epistemology; contemporary music; electroacoustic music; spatialization; music hermeneutics.

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