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**HETEROZYGOTIC:
ON LUC FERRARI**

(from: Noisegate Number Eight)

To paraphrase Cineas, it is not worth one's while to explore history if one does so in order to rediscover there perception such as we are already able to have it" Castoriadis

(A Little History) Most of the earliest histories of electronic music seem to point to two post-war configurations, two institutions that pioneered experiment in the pursuit of sound as sound. In Paris there was the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) established in 1945 and, in Cologne there was the WDR Radio studio. Running through both these loci was an interest in moving away from the canonical restriction of an orchestral sound and, to varying degrees, a move away from the reliance of music upon notation. Though other electronic music studios grew up in places like Brussels, Milan and Tokyo and in the United States at Columbia University, the mutually Inherent polemics that passed between Paris and Cologne seemed to offer the early documentors of electronic music a starting point for discussion about the postwar growth of the electronic treatment of sound and the use of tape as a medium. At Cologne the interest lay in generating sound from electricity, a 'new' sound that had never been heard before. In Paris the interest lay on making a music that "emerged" out of the known world of sounds, and the use of natural sources, often transformed in some manner" [1]. Though it's difficult to suggest that 'electricity' is not a natural source the issue between the two locii of Paris and Cologne is that the former were, on the whole, taping the found sounds of the environment and by means of processing them in the studio and placing these "sound objects" in juxtaposed combinations, making these sounds unfamiliar. At best sound here was being used to make too readily perceptible sounds pass through a stage of being imperceptible but this potentially positive disorientating recognition of perception as desiring-perception was cushioned by both a 'scientific' pursuit of inventorising "sound objects" and a reliance on placing these In narrative structures. Cologne on the other hand, though similarly fired by Webern's concept of an "individual, isolated sound event", was making an imperceptible sound, the sound of electricity, perceptible as a sound in itself yet, in many ways, it too softened the affectivity of these 'new sounds' by pursuing a formal method of composition that was indebted to serialism: "the German groups proposed to develop Webern's 'totally organised' row system, which is rigidly and mathematically constructed" [2]. But what both 'musique concrete' and 'elektronische musik' had in common, aside from the use of tape as a medium and a reliance upon the studio, was that both sets of practice could lead to an astonishing freeing-up of sound that centred on developing timbres to the point of actually constructing them.

It is worth bearing in mind that the early conceptual division between GRM and WDR has perhaps been overblown as part of the historication process of electronic music [3], Not only does it play quite nicely into the hierarchical and divisive pitfalls of the canonisation process, which would elevate the competing claims of canonical privilege played out in absentia between, say, Pierre Schaeffer and Stockhausen, it just as damagingly leads to an ingraining of the dichotomy between electronic and acoustic musics that limits the potential for new means of perception by making mutually defensive positions the subject of choices that are thereby deemed to be the markers of expertise or specialisation. Thus it is not always the case that electronic music, in offering an expanded range of interacting and layered sounds, is indicative of a more radical push towards a new means of perception that is unreliant on prior conceptions of 'tradition' and the 'canon': musique concrete can often work as sound effects in accompaniment to an adapted literary narrative - Pierre Henry's *Apocalypse de Jean* - and the 'pure' elektronische musik can sometimes function like an analogue or a 'pictograph' to some scientific and overly rational experiment in musicology - Gottfried

Michael Koenig's Funktion series. In the case of Apocalypse de Jean sounds that have the potential not to refer to a specific object or event are made to tighten the bonds of reference instead of de-anchoring the relationship between the "signifier" and the 'signified'. The sounds fill in the listening-space with what amounts to directives for imagination [4], Perception, for it to perceive as desire rather than to desire to perceive correctly, should not be forced into a referential situation, but should be made free enough to perceive its own perception as desire. In the case of the Funktion series, the listener is made dimly aware that the electronic sounds are functioning as some kind of proof of a mathematic principle. They are, whilst not functioning in a narrational way, functioning in an analogous way in that the listener is being guided towards an outcome which has not been left open enough. So, if Apocalypse de Jean works to overdetermine an emotional response in a way that 'modernises' the most sentimentalising and 'image-bonded' music of the romanticised classical tradition, then the Funktion series is engaged in overdetermining a rational approach to music that is indicative of the serialism that was rife at WDR. This latter has it that structures and forms subsist in the music without coming to the fore as sonic events. Whilst this resonates fruitfully with the use of a previously imperceptible sound material, it serves, in the long run, to make the imperceptible conform to something that, once perceived as a demonstratable 'truth', leads nowhere else. Desire and perception are severed.

If we are beginning to draw up some polarities between WDR and GRM - polarities that rely heavily on such canonical dualisms as those between the emotional & rational, the electronic & acoustic, the artistic & scientific and the romantic & serialist - then it is a sure sign that we have not avoided the pitfalls that the canon is liable to place in the way of desiring-perception. The canon advances such a dualistic approach because, as the canon of a capitalistic culture, it carries out its 'archeology' in conformity to the already all-pervasive methods of competition and divisiveness. These are methods that, whilst perhaps efficacious in bringing together and compiling disparate material for the first time, can work like 'sleeping structures' in that the chosen areas of focus, the elevation of some prime movers and the omission of others becomes subject to a continuity that, taken up by other documenters, proceeds through time to give a less 'chaotic' and imbricated view of history. Thus Stockhausen becomes the remembered figure of WDR and Schaeffer and Henry become the by-word for GRM. The status of these practitioners may or may not be justified but it is, either way, a canonical process which they have all colluded with and which serves to whittle out the presence of other less well known but equally interesting practitioners. So Eimert and Hambraus of WDR takes a back seat as do Ferrari, Bayle and Parmegiani of GRM. The neglect of such 'wild cards' as these leads to a received knowledge of what it is that has occurred at GRM and WDR. Thus, in an article criticising musique concrete. Tim Hodgkinson[5] can refer to Schaeffer's 'founding' Traite and then to the work of the GRM's most ardent disciple (Michel Chion) without taking account of Ferrari, Bayle or Parmegiani's work; works that are less narration-centric and more in keeping-with Schaeffer's notion of a "concentrated listening". Such a listening implies the presence of desire and this leads to another dichotomy which the canon has instituted. This is the polarity between the present and the past or the former and the latter which, in delineating easily manageable divisions of time such as pre-war and post-war, leads to a wasted effort in pursuing an origin that, due to the socially interactive quality of culture, is always already dispersed. John Cage drew attention to one of the ramifications of this 'historic' dualism when he said "contemporary music is not the music of the future, not the music of that past but simply music present with us: this moment, now, this now moment" [6]. This privileging of the moment of perception, where the music of the past is heard always for the "first time", is tantamount to our creating the sounds as part of the practice of audition and is crucial in a refutation not only of canonical categories and dualisms, but of the canon's claim to objective authority and, by extension, our conditioned obedience to it. This is borne out when we think of those practitioners that have eluded the canon or have entered the canon much later on their own terms simply because the canon could not expand the parameters of its dualistic paradigm to

include them. In some ways we are talking of practitioners like Varese or Xenakis who, in synthesising the dualisms and hence veering towards the making of 'open works' that contain no obvious referents, neither fall into one camp or another nor reside fully in one time or another. It was Varese, responsible for bringing the extended sonic range of percussion into classical music, who later dreamed of being able to make music on a magnetic tape that hadn't yet been invented and spent years in obscurity before materially realising his *Poem Electronique*. It was Xenakis, a one time GRM member and trained architect, who has been pioneering computerised music and who even in his early tape music was straddling the divide between the mathematic serialism of WDR and the poetic 'sound objects' of GRM. Thus we must remember that not only were there countless other electronic music studios in Europe and the United States, but also that there were practitioners like Tod Dockstader who worked in isolation and were rebuffed by these institution-studios; that there were those like Ligeti, Kagel and Nono who were unafraid to experiment with the new means and materials and who intermittently stepped over the line that lay between acoustic and electronic music. And then again there were others like Luc Ferrari who have passed through many studios and institutions on the way to establishing their own.

(Liminal Location) If our take on the history of electronic music is first mediated by the studios of the 50s which were, in the case of WDR and GRM, the aural laboratories of already established radio stations, and if it then passes through a phase of these studios becoming institutions in their own right (a process mirrored by the growth of academic studios such as the Columbia-Princeton studio founded by Ussachevsky and Luening in New York), then the canonical acceptance of electronic music, though slow, is nonetheless guaranteed by its alignment to the development of the communication industries and the electronic means of production. However, what begins in an experimental vein and as a means of providing access to what was then expensive equipment, soon hardens into an institution that in establishing rules, methods and often unconscious 'codes of practice', shows itself as replicating the institutional sloth it was originally intended to combat. Continuity and staying power are the prime requisites that the canon looks for and whether this is regarded as an individual composer's opus or an institution's ethos is by-the-by. An institution like Pierre Boulez's ERICAM, or indeed the GRM, may have begun as a counter-institution to the hyper traditional academies of Music, but like the Lacanian schism in the psychoanalytical field they are institutions that have their Masters and their disciples and which, in the long run, become as authoritarian and regressive as that to which they were originally opposed: independence can quickly turn into dependence. Against this there are plenty who fit in nowhere and the point in case here, Luc Ferrari, is one such practitioner who passed through many institutions and schools before setting up a series of his own studios: Billig in 1962 and Muse-en-Circuit in 1982. At his musical beginnings in the late forties to mid fifties Ferrari studied under the composers Honneger and Messiaen, had been to the Darmstadt summer school where he encountered Boulez, Stockhausen and Cage, before, in 1959, he had a part in establishing, along with Schaeffer, the GRM. Talking of this period in a recent interview Ferrari positions himself as a 'serial deviant'; as one whose position was on the cusp of various movements at a time when many musical counter-institutions were being founded: "My music at that time was sort of serial, but not too systematic. Mistakes were accepted! I was more at home with freedom, working on intuition. Boulez seemed to me to be a guy who wrote laws. I quickly moved away from that. When his *Domaine Musicales* started up, I wasn't part of it, and since I leaned more to Schaeffer than to electronic music, people didn't hang out with me all that much." [7]. This quote is quite revealing in its direct simplicity. Not only does Ferrari speak of the split between *musique-concrete* and electronic music, he also confers upon himself an 'outsider' status where 'hanging out' and 'talking-up' reputations are a prime means of becoming visible to the canon. Furthermore he also talks of 'leaning' towards Schaeffer and GRM and in so doing infers both a vicinity/nearness and an independent distance from the formalised methods of *musique-concrete*. A distance, an 'exterior vicinity', that is audible on two of his more renowned musical pieces: the overly signified environment recording of

Presque Rien No.1 (1970) and the a-signifying collage of Heterozygote (1963/4), It is these pieces that are illustrative of Ferrari's liminal position as a music maker; one whose invisibility to the canon is assured by an intuitive eclecticism that retaliates against the canonical notion that for a creative work to be taken seriously it must amply demonstrate a continuous sense of development, an homogeneity. That Ferrari had worked as a sound engineer for a TV production unit, as a film maker, and as a producer of radiophonics, that he has maintained an interest in composing for acoustic orchestration in a manner that allows for improvisation, and has, in the recent Wire feature, expressed an interest in Techno music and sampling, is testament to a transversal approach to musical creativity that, in crossing between different forms and interests, manages to broaden both his and our own listening possibilities. Sound becomes more than just an isolated object of study or as a sprinkling of sound-effects to 'illustrate' a narrative. Such an involutory music, that takes desire as its method and which, as a consequence, metabolises desire and perception (creates the sounds as part of the process of audition) means that canonical categorisation and the dualistic means of interpreting music are left floundering behind by the actual process of crossing and citation. Canonical comprehension becomes apprehensive. It seeks to confer unity upon the fragment and infer contrast to the monochrome when it is rather a case of the senses becoming practical and refusing to adhere to the 'psychologicistic' lag between perception and desire. And so with Ferrari we are dealing with a social soundtrack and componential fragments, a music that transversalises perception and makes freedom audible: "I have realised works which remove more or less from merely musical preoccupations. Some amongst them appeal to a meeting of different branches of what could be one single tree. The problem was to try to express ideas, feelings and passing intuitions through different means; to observe everyday affairs in all their realities, whether they are social, psychological or sentimental. This can manifest itself in texts, instrumental textures, electroacoustic compositions, reportings, films etc." [8]. Thus it is highly debatable as to whether Ferrari could be described as a classical exponent of musique concrete. He is closer to its canonical ministrations than to the scientific rigidities of serialism, but his restlessness and Independence ensure an intransigent adaptation and intuitive subversion of the rules: the narrative aspect to musique-concrete, where sound follows the exigencies of a script, is, with a piece like Heterozygote, jettisoned in favour of a textured overcoming of referentiality which presents us instead with extra-diegetic incursions, with an unconscious hubbub, a representational-flux, that sounds the social. Similarly, Ferrari uses the 'found sound' of musique-concrete, but he also adds electronically generated sound to his compositions in an 'acousmatic' immixture that is not only more centrifugal and heterogeneous than the works of his musique-concrete peers but, with the Presque Rien series, takes the sound object to the extremity by having it function as a citation of the real that problematises another canonical dualism: the distinction between the natural and the cultural.

(Almost Nothing) As with Tod Dockstader's tape-works, Ferrari's Presque Rien series could be said to have been made on 'downtime'. Whereas Dockstader, stuck in a sound studio, worked surreptitiously in the hours after work, Ferrari, travelling through Europe as part of a TV production team used the opportunity to make field recordings: "I recorded anything that took my fancy, things which probably weren't much use to anyone"[7]. If Dockstader's pieces convey an intense concentrative drive, a solemnity of detail; then the outcome of Ferrari's 'downtime' was, after the four-tape recorder installation of the collage-piece Music Promenade (1969), the expansive, ostensibly mimetic Presque Rien No.1: Le Lever du Jour an Bord de la Mer. Setting his microphone on the window ledge of a bedroom that overlooked the harbour of a Yugoslavian fishing village, Ferrari proceeded to record the sounds that occurred in the early hours of the morning: "I recorded those sounds which repeated everyday: the first fishermen passing by... events determined by society"[7]. The result, which shocked his colleagues at GRM, is a sound piece that resonates with Cage's 4'33". Like the latter it reposes the question as to what constitutes 'music': what it is that can be allowed into the perceptive framework to become more than formalised and organised

perception? Where does 'art' begin and the social end? In many ways Ferrari, like Cage, presents a piece of 'music' that encourages a "concentrated listening" and which, to echo Schaeffer again, is a process that "never separates hearing from making". Such an accent on process, and, thereby, the elevation and explicit profiling of a 'living culture', confronts listeners not only with the sensation of listening to themselves listen (desiring-perception), but with a compositional intent that is itself motivated by listening. What is absented from *Presque Rien No.1* is the canonical authorisation to listen and to have such a listening conditioned by expectation and interpretative dualisms. Instead the canonical is bypassed by the simple presentation of the sounds of the social: a motor boat crossing the harbour, a fuel truck revving-up, the distant voices of children, the yelps of workmen, a folk song and the increasingly unnatural volume of cicadas. Here perception is not divorced from a consciousness that follows along later, but the synthesis is nothing other than the reality of listening as that which is already synthesised: "the senses have therefore become theoreticians in their immediate praxis"[9]. There is no division between the urge to listen, the desire to listen, and the consciousness of listening. This is the practice of a living culture that seeks sensuality in equal proportion to comprehension. That comprehends through the senses. It is, rather, the action of the canon that seeks to intervene into this alarming practical synthesis and make it dualistic by the ideological means of individualising and separating out the social aspects of the sound: there are villagers, there is Ferrari and there are listeners. Instead, a piece like *Presque Rien* functions to include this receptive-capacity within it. By only minimally doctoring the level and attack of the found sound objects, Ferrari makes ample room for listeners to accompany him listening to 'musicians' who are to some degree innocently making the 'music' we listen to. This unaware-ness, a kind of informal creativity that is not conscious of itself, almost features as a challenge to the overly conscious metier that the canon bids us to imbibe. The very informality of the sounds that are captured and edited by Ferrari makes music-making an ever-present environmental possibility and so, in the sound-world of *Presque Rien*, being able to hear makes the listener into a meta-musician and it does so many years before sampling technology enabled an outgrowth of 'music about music'. Here the sound objects contained in the piece become social objects. They are not demonstrations of a thesis, nor are they the dramatic incidents of a documentary narrative, but they are the component features of a subtly framed de-specialisation of music. With *Presque Rien* Ferrari absents himself as 'composer' to become an 'editor-compiler' and thus the 'almost nothing' of the title can resonate to infer the minimal manipulation of the musician (Ferrari), the elevation of the meta-musicians (villagers and listeners) and the newly perceived presence of unspectacular intimacies - that which passes by unnoticed: "the proximity of what is most distant, the absolute dissimulation in our very midst" [10].

It is interesting that Ferrari should refer to *Presque Rien No.1* as made up of "events determined by society". The usual means of framing and interpreting such a use of environment recordings is by means of a reference to the natural that avoids any discussion of the social dimension. The nature/culture dichotomy is one that allows the canon to sever the processes of the living culture into an authenticated primitivism on the one hand and a specialised and asocial perception on the other hand. There is an unconscious that is natural and a conscious that is cultural. There is the informal and the formal. There are the passive masses and the active artists. Such a framing of *Presque Rien* would lead it to be blunted by an approach to its sounds that would apprehend them as mimetic or naturalistic. Such an approach was chosen by Konrad Boehmer when he described the piece as "musical photography". But in many ways we are not witness to an aural slice of life that is unadulterated or unfiltered, one that presents itself as an authentic recording of a real situation. Instead such an illusion of reality, one that seeks to create a simulacra of reality, is undermined by Ferrari through various means. Most obvious of these is the way that the piece finishes when "suddenly, everything stops, it is the end of the tape" [11]. But there is also a subtle sense of editing and overlay that similarly make the recording equipment

'audible': the fishing boat seems to disappear too quickly and the high tones of the cicadas are magnified and laminated in an accentuation of their repetition. Such minimal means of effecting the sound and such a compositional sensitivity to the sounds that are listened to are indicative of Ferrari's deceptively playing with a naturalistic illusion of reality in order not to create a simulacrum of reality, a seamlessly reproduced environment, but in order to cite reality and make its presence felt within the piece of music. Reality is cited not in order to imbue the piece with a natural authenticity but almost as a demonstration that the act of citation is a conscious social act that brings other voices along with it (the folk song, the lorry driver etc). What's more such citation infers that the 'natural' is itself a socially created category that effects our perception of ourselves and our perception of reality: it can diminish a sense of social conflict and emplace an ideology of idyllic equanimity. So, from a base of verisimilitude, from a place that, like Rene Magritte's painting of twilight, is partly real and partly (sur)real, Ferrari has the listener hover between fact and fiction, between the electronic and the acoustic, and in so doing makes *Presque Rien* a living document that encapsulates the uncertainty of reality and its correlate as active perception. Thus Ferrari's preserving of the recording and editing process, however subtly dissimulative and barely distinguishable they may be, does not allow the listener to fall into the suspended lull of naturalism's [preferred means of coherence: the narrative. Instead, perception is kept active and desiring rather than being thematically or dramatically induced to fall back upon the memory of previous categorically mediated perceptions. Thus one means of canonical judgment – authenticity - is supplanted by the more politically charged notion of sincere intention. Benjamin: "The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice - politics" [12]. Authenticity, the yardstick of, naturalism, is that which is necessary to maintain the continuity of rituals and traditions, to make perception conform to always being in the dependent position of awaiting a consciousness that comes from elsewhere: the canon. Ferrari's breach of the rules of *musique concrete* ("I remember the session where I played it to them and their faces turned to stone"[7]) is indicative of the way that his method of citation explodes the category of 'music' as a form that is separable from the meta-musician-ship of the living culture. With *Presque Rien* he bids us to explore what it is that we understand by music: "One day in a hotel room in Italy, I fell and hit my head. It hurt a lot, but the thud I heard fascinated me so much, that it kept me from fainting" [13]. In many ways *Presque Rien*, like *4'33"* offers that it is such categories as 'natural', 'authentic', 'music' and 'art' that are themselves an illusory means of determining perception, that stabilise perception and make it over as something that is not in a state of perpetual displacement. So, the rootedness of *Presque Rien*, its specific geographical location, becomes something that encourages the placelessness of perception, the roving of desire and a sensual apprehension of social reality as the site of a living culture. This point is driven home by the fact that Ferrari, having stumbled upon the form of the environment recording, did not repeat it over and over again with a diminishing desire that, whilst it would have secured his visibility to the canon, would have meant the abandonment of other projects. Sincerity of intention becomes the correlate of desiring-perception. Indeed *Presque Rien* No.1 could be seen to be resistant to such commodification in a way that is not at all dissimilar from live improvisation: it is the outcome of a sensitivity to a place whose people are collaborators, subjects in their own right, meta-musicians, rather than objects to be usuriously plundered for their exoticism [14].

(Almost Something) Many of the early works of *musique-concrete*, especially those of Schaeffer carry the title of 'study'. Pierre Schaeffer seems particularly taken with this method of titling and it is no small surprise that much of his early work is the result of sonic investigations into a single object, a single sound source. There is the *Etude aux Casseroles*, the *Etude aux Chemins de Fer*, the *Etude aux Tourniquets*. This almost academic form of investigation into the possible aural dimensions of extra-musical objects was not just the domain of *musique-concrete*. Many other of the early works of electronic music followed this

same methodology especially when they were exploring the Interaction between acoustic instruments and electronics. But it is Schaeffer, as the main theoretician of musique concrete, who seemed most enamoured of accruing some scientific legitimation to the work of the GRM: "It is the object... that has something to tell us, and consequently we should use it in assemblage according to its familial relationships and the concordance of its characteristics"[15]. Though it is such work that was part of a post-war current of defamiliarisation and the opening up of sound-worlds, though it is work that participated in the creation of the new timbres and modes of perception that marks all electronic work, it is still, in some ways, a measure of GRMs need to be accepted by the canon that its very name includes the term 'research' (his 1952 book *A La Recherche d'une Musique Concrete* surely plays upon the title of Proust's renowned work, *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu*)[16]. This research-accent is no crime in itself, but it is a pointer to that restricted perception that afflicts the least interesting examples of musique-concrete where research is not included as part of the process of music-making, a citation of the living culture, but as a kind of outcome of an ongoing colloquium. Pierre Henry's *Variations Pour un Porte et un Soupir* (*Variations for a Door and a Sigh*) is a point in case, as is the more dynamic collection of studies that goes under the title of *La Ville Die Stadt*. What can occur, then, with musique-concrete, is that a single sound, however transformed, becomes susceptible to a restriction of potential resonance with other sounds. Tim Hodgkinson refers to this as the problem of composition and form that afflicts musique-concrete and which perhaps ensures that, after the exhaustion of repetition, it falls back upon the narrative form. Furthermore Hodgkinson also speaks of the "missing ratio" of musique concrete where "the ratio between sounds that opens the psychological space of music" is thereby inhibited. Schaeffer has himself commented upon just such a restriction: "With the repetition of a recorded sound, I hear the same object, even though I never hear it in the same way, even though the unfamiliar becomes familiar, even though I would successively perceive different aspects of it, such that it would never be the same, still I always identify in the quite securely determined object" [17]. It is this mode of identification with an object that can often remain recognisable that acts to delimit the psychological space of music and hence re-close the possibilities for perception and desire to work in consort. The senses are not theoreticians in that practice, the process of listening as praxis, is being made to conform to a blurred recognition of the already perceived. It is determined. The blurring of the sound object may be pleasing but it relies upon referentiality. Thus sourced it does not work to sever the bonds between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' but is satisfied by the varying outlines of the same sound object. Such a restriction, where the object of study is always sending out a referential pulse and where it appears that the aim of the 'etudes' is to arrive at an exhaustion of its potential to sound, acts as a disinclination for the listener to perceive perception. Instead we continually perceive the object and this, in stilling our desire, restricts our capacity to imagine: "perceiving presupposes imagining. To perceive is to imagine... to perceive (as well as to remember) is a species of imagining" [18]. Thus at its least stimulating musique-concrete's practice of either studying individual sound objects or harnessing multiple sound objects into the service of narratives both end up in the same directed exhaustion. Pierre Henry's *Apocalypse de Jean* is already, even in its title, too overdetermined and oversignified, to achieve a freeing up of sound necessary to provoke an imaginative input on the part of the listener. Such preemption provides the security for an untroubled and objectified canonical interpretation. Identification is not suspended. Desire cathects its object, is bound, rather than being encouraged to become unbound and cathect social space.

(Walking Ear) It is this aspect of referentiality that some practitioners of musique concrete have tried to avoid. Francois Bayle has been working in this direction and his *Vibrations Composees* (1974), whilst avoiding narrational traps, does not quite escape a studious relation to sound objects. In this case Madagascan acoustic instruments are tracked with reference to the "morphodynamic singularities" that are brought out from "beneath the threshold of the audible" and in this way the blurring of the 'signifier' achieves a kind of

turning inside out of the sound object. Bernard Parmegiani seems to extend such work and presents us with a dense, simultaneous layering of sound objects and thereby seems more intent on removing any trace of the object as a paradigmatic referent although, in his case, he does not quite escape a mythico-symbolic dimension that is reflected in such titles as *De Natura Sonorum* (1975) and *La Creation Du Monde* (1982-84). Luc Ferrari is similarly inclined to jettison work with single sound objects and, as we have seen with *Presque Rien No.1*, is more interested in using the unadulterated sounds of the social and the environment- one long sound object that avoids both the scientific tracking of sound objects and the narrational crutch in favour of an 'open work' that often sounds like a metaphor illustrative of the much obfuscated fact that perception is shared and social and not limited by single 'ecological frameworks'. This dispersion of the sound object, its being unbound, its return to the social context that bore it, is what enables all the meta-musical participants to share equally in a familiar sonic dimension and has the effect of pointing to sound as an ever present possibility for immersion and the disappearance of a subject who is ideologically upheld as a unity, a centre for whom perception and desire are distinct moments. In reference to the latter point it is Ferrari's removal of patterns of identification that normally act as blueprints for perception, his abandonment of an overriding thesis, his rejection of a methodology and an aim, and his improvisational practice of just "switching on the tape machine" that work to disassemble the "creative unity of the subject" and urge it to reappear as a "plurality of positions" [19].

This disassembly and re-positioning of the listener is more overtly audible in the two heterogeneous aural-collages that preceded *Presque Rien No.1*. With *Heterozygote* and *Music Promenade* Ferrari resists the self-explanatory continuity of traditional musique concrete and instead makes his liminal practice, his transversal experience, come to form the substance of his work: not only does Ferrari draw upon the many musical and extra-musical idioms he is acquainted with, he seems to transpose his interest in film making in an adaption of a cinematic approach to music that utilises sound not as a soundtrack but as the very 'unit-frames' from which the collages are built. The changing position of the camera becomes the changing position of the microphone and as with much contemporaneous cinema (Pasolini, Godard) the effect is a multiplication of the points of perception to the detriment of the alienated and habitual prescriptives of a unified and fixed subject that perceives itself as central as it listens. Thus the sound objects that Ferrari uses are neither the source material for an 'etude' nor are they aural supports for images, but feature as components, as a vast collection of 'acoustic documents', that, by including snippets of conversation in varying languages, the sounds of rural and urban life together with electronically generated sounds and recorded samples from classical and popular music, make it inevitable that the listener is immersed in a sequence of social citation. This is further driven home by the fact that Ferrari does not subject the sound objects to the usual musique-concrete methods of transformation, he does not make them over as meek abstracts that are still in some way connected to their signifier, however blurred, but rather mines them for the emotional qualities that they contain. These sound objects, more than likely to be specifically evocative for Ferrari of time, place and feeling, are severed from such a potentially restrictive autobiographical function to become 'designified signifiers': enigmas familiar enough to summon up the real but dislocated enough to encourage the listeners to re-examine and reform the real. In this way the very title of his first collaged piece, *Heterozygote*, in referring to the possibility of genetic mutation, does not override the music with a descriptive means of reference, but poetically-charges the resultant piece with the sense of the affectivity of sound, its potential for effecting such 'genetic' changes of prescribed perception. Thus the 'realism' of these collaged pieces lies in the direction of their anti-naturalism, they are not 'mirrors of reality', but edited combinations of sound objects that are allowed to retain their social ambience and be held together in a collage-form that, in whichever field it is used, always seems to be evocative of potential breakdown and indicative of a lack of conclusive control. As collages, then, the pieces are not intent on telling a story or acting as 'documents' but

figure as assemblages that Ferrari has described as an example of "diffuse narration". Like the Vertov movie, *Man With A Movie Camera*, Ferrari's aural collages enable music to be freed from its reliance upon specific thematic supports - supports that conform to the canonical hierarchization of the senses, where the aura subsists beneath the visual and, as is aptly demonstrated by classical musique concrete, needs the canonical support of literary and scientific interpretations in-built into it. Ferrari, in resisting the canonical and in pursuing music as a means of social citation, in embellishing a sense of social reality as an antidote to music's recourse to transcendentalism, is intent on collaborating with meta-musical partners. To this end, in choosing the familiar form of collage and in utilising social sounds we can all share, he establishes a mutual ground from which he can dispense with narrative props and proffer instead the enigmatic: "We have forgotten the theme, or do we actually need one? Would it not be better if it remained hidden in the uncertain?" Like Vertov, Ferrari's practice is one that exists as a collecting, a collating and an editing. It is a citational practice. A heteroglossia of differing languages and musical idioms that doesn't restrict the social to the reductions of the particular and the general, but allows their differences to co-mingle in paradox and possibility that themselves offer other means of perception, other adjustments of the 'legological frameworks' of perception. As with much other electronic music, this diminished referentiality is provocative of an uncertainty that resides in the suspension of the narrative and the removal of the usual props of identification. The subject 'disappears' as a unity that is encouraged to identify with thematic continuities only to reappear between the fragments. Such a positional uncertainty, in being always on the seam of the edit, provokes perception. The aural fragments of *Heterozygote* and *Music Promenade* are figured, then, as multiple beginnings: as one fragment follows another, as one ambiance clashes with another, as one command ("ne pas casser") is repeated and another meets with no reply, as the wind rocks a window, as a voice sounds in an empty warehouse, as a plane takes off and a stone plunges into the water, as a voice intones "dans un reve", the effect of discontinuity and spatio-temporal overload is felt as an actual strain on perception. A series of micro-traumatic shocks.

Such a being between beginnings assures these collaged pieces of their access to intimacy and sincerity in that conscious, self-censorious directives are replaced by an effect of unconscious adumbration: the improvisational quality of the conversational fragments are themselves indicative of the informal creativity of the living culture rather than their being prescribed and formalised speeches drawn from a canonically-approved literature [20]. As unformed as all this the very intonation of such informal speech as used by Ferrari can be a speech in the process of being articulated, a pre-articulation epitomised, at the end of *Music Promenade*, by the wary exchange between a woman and a young girl. The trauma of learning how to speak becomes the trauma of being best-expressed and such a process is necessarily one that is disjointed and discontinuous, full of stumblings and embarrassed silences. That an inferential language of many tongues and dialects is cited by Ferrari thus becomes another means of emplacing the ambiguity of meaning as a central incitement of desiring-perception: language sounds, is rhythmic, but it also, here, fails to communicate directly. Language is thus subject to a defunctionalisation and becomes, instead, the bearer of suggestives and evocations. As with the other aural fragments it incites perception by coming to sound the absence of causation and outcome. We are left, as with dreams, with the micro-trauma of a provocation that defies a finalised interpretation, but which triggers an endless interpolation: each fragment of the dream seems to become the starting point for another dimly remembered chain of fragments. Such a use of multiple fragments seems related to Ferrari's work as a film-maker. Like Vertov's nomadic camera there is a mobility of the microphone, a walking ear rather than a static ear, but the 'cinema' of *Heterozygote* proceeds by an aural linkage of the fragments rather than one that depends upon the visual. Yet the severance of the image from the sound becomes, with the rapidity of some of Ferrari's edits and laminations, the severance of the sound from the sound itself, its tinting and splicing, its montage, its rearticulation as the beginning of another sound. Such a

proliferation of the fragments enables a sound to become the microscopic bearer of something other than the object that should be attached to it: a mood, an ambiance, an intimacy. The fragment of sound thus becomes the best way to fall away from representation, from a naturalism that is the bearer of prescriptive outcomes and models of behaviour, and to instaurate, instead, a sensuality of perception unencumbered by referentiality and received meaning. Thus, with these collaged works and with the later *Presque Rien Avec Filles* and *Danses Organiques*, where there is no opportunity for the listener's desire and perception to become seduced into being parted, there is thus won an ability to deal with the real as the precarious-ness of potential metamorphosis and subjective becoming. For the senses to thus become theoreticians we have to lose that image of ourselves as the centre and allow the senses to become the conduit through which desire is allowed the freeplay of an expanded social field and not channelled by means of narratives and representations that restrict its roving and give desire an impotent aim and object. Pieces like *Presque Rien No.1* and *Heterozygote*, seem suggestive of such possibilities. (8/99 & 11/00)

NOTES

[1] Paul Griffiths: *A Guide To Electronic Music* [Thames & Hudson, 1979].

[2] Herbert Russcol: *The Liberation of Sound* [Englewood Cliffs, 1972].

[3] In the time since this article was first drafted a considerable amount of electronic music has been reissued. This can give the present-day listener a less restricted overview.

[4] It is such lineaments as this that make David Tudor's *Rainforest* a kind of reverse *musique concrete*: homemade and kit-built synths are made to replicate the sounds of a rainforest in a sonic equivalent of a documentary snapshot.

[5] Tim Hodgkinson: *Migraines Of A Caustic Ear* (*Resonance*, Vol.6 No.2). This is a response to Chion's text '*L'Art de Sons Fixes*' and whilst Tim Hodgkinson offers some crucial criticisms of *musique concrete*'s falling back upon "a notion of narrative dependent on a level of non-acoustic information" that is "forced to revert to a preconcert, pre-sonata era when music served as a text, ritual or social narrative" these are for me tempered by a polemical tone that, informed by his 'clash' with Chion, confers canonical privilege to 'notational' and 'improvised' musics.

[6] John Cage: *Silence*, p43 [Wesleyan University Press, 1961].

[7] Luc Ferrari cited by Dan Warburton: *Serial Devianti*. *The Wire*, April 1999.

[8] Luc Ferrari cited by Konrad Boehmer in the sleeve notes to Luc Ferrari's contribution to the *Acousmatrix* series [Bvhaast CD 9009].

[9] Karl Marx: *Early Writings*, p 352 [Pelican 1975].

[10] Michel Foucault in *Foucault/Blanchot*, p24 [Zone 1987]. The dissimulation here may well be Ferrari's: to what extent can we know how the piece was put together? Was it a long take or a edited series of fragments? It is worth adding here that Ferrari turns the microphone on himself in *Presque Rien No.2* *Ainsi continue la nuit dans ma tete multiple* (1977).

[11] Daniel Caux: sleeve notes to *Presque Rien* CD [Musidisc245172].

[12] Walter Benjamin: *Illuminations*, p218 [Fontana, 1992].

[13] Luc Ferrari cited by Konrad Boehmer, *Ibid.*

[14] Post-techno 'jobber' Scanner rose to prominence through just such an appropriation of working class accents and inflections in those early releases of his that were made up of scanned phone calls.

[15] Pierre Schaeffer cited in the booklet accompanying his *L'oeuvre Musicale*: INA/GRM, 1998.

[16] It is interesting to note that Proust's work is scattered with many descriptions of its narrator's attentiveness to a kind of proto 'musique-concrete': the sound of pipes, the sound of carriage wheels on cobbles, the sound of metal shutters being raised etc. On one occasion in *The Captive* he goes as far as to title the sounds that greet his waking as an "Overture for a Public Holiday".

[17] Pierre Schaeffer quoted by J.Nattiez: *Music & Discourse*, p93 [Princeton University Press, 1990].

[18] Cornelius Castoriadis: *World In Fragments*, p273 [Stanford University Press, 1997].

[19] Maurice Blanchot in Foucault/Blanchot, *ibid*, p76.

[20] For instance Bernard Parmegiani has drawn upon Dante and Michel Chion has drawn upon Gustav Flaubert. Ferrari's use of improvisational and phatic speech can be further witnessed with his 1971-73 piece *Danses Organiques* [Elica MPO-3340].