

# The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music

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## Chapter 4

# The Scream in Avant-Garde Music: The New Left and the Rediscovery of the Body

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### Various Contexts

In 1972/73, the West-German composer Gerhard Stäbler wrote his composition *drüber...*. The most striking aspect of this composition is its unconventional scoring: *drüber...* is not composed for a conventional ensemble, but for eight 'active screamers' (*Aktive Schreier*<sup>1</sup>), violoncello, synthesizer and tape. According to the score, the screamers are – as their designation indicates – supposed to scream, that is to articulate shouts of fear, of happiness, of despair, etc. Although it is more or less Stäbler's first composition, the unofficial op. 1, as regards the screams the piece does not seem to draw on models of established colleagues (Example 4.1).

What are the reasons for this bizarre orchestration? Stäbler is certainly not the first composer who intentionally used screams in his score: there are famous screams in *Lulu* and *Parsifal* (Kundry's scream). Unlike those screams, however, which derive naturally from the dramatic, not the musical, interaction on stage, Stäbler treats the screams in *drüber* as primordial musical material. This approach might have been encouraged by the so-called 'extension of the musical material' that could be observed in various strands of avant-garde music since the beginning of the century and ranged from the inclusion of everyday-life noises (Italian Futurism and John Cage for instance) to visual elements (Dieter Schnebel and Mauricio Kagel). Not surprisingly, other pieces by Stäbler use noises – of a motor bike (*MO-PED*, 1970/71) and of water and wind (*twilights – Protokolle*, 1983) – as well as other extra-musical material such as smells (*Internet 1.1*, 1996). In this light, screaming could be interpreted as the extension of vocal material. But the question remains: what inspired Stäbler to focus especially on screams – and not on sighs, breathing, humming or speaking, in other words on other aspects of extended vocal technique?

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<sup>1</sup> See Gerhard Stäbler, *drüber...* (1972/73) (full score), without place, publisher and year.



8.

Sieht hinter einer spanischen Wand, nur der Kopf ist sichtbar. Arme und Hände stützen den Kopf (siehe Vorwort), keine Bewegung.

*Stand behind a Spanish screen, only the head is visible, support your head with your arms and hands (see preface), no movement.*

\* Angaben vor oder nach einer Aktion erklären die Orientierung bei einer Aufführung.  
*Numbers or signs before or after an action mark links to other sounds using them for orientation.*

AS1 \*

Stirn steilwärts; Bogen bereits auf den Saiten, mit der Faust hinten, regelmäßige Haltung. Blick sehr geradlinig.  
*Forehead ready to play, bow on the strings, forehand, stare straight ahead.*

Brutale, extrem schnelle Bogenwechsel, sehr viel Druck, nahe am Steg streichen. Saiten ca. 12-15cm vom Steg entfernt niederdrücken durch Ringmodulation den Klang schärfen.  
*Brutal, very quick bow changes, much pressure. In Beginn: Agente as at the beginning.*

Wiederholung wie eigene Lautsprecher wiedergeben.  
*Press away from the bridge, sharp and modulate.*

\* Diese Angaben verweisen auf andere prägnante Einzelsätze und markante Klänge, auf die man sich bei Aufführungen beziehen kann.  
*These indications refer to actions and sounds of other active screener and the tape.*

L1

Sehr scharf, Collophan zusammenknallen.  
*Very sharp, Collophan together.*

Bahyschreie, werden aufgesaugt.  
*Bahyschreie, werden aufgesaugt.*

Wingasklänge (hoch, stehend).  
*Wingasklänge (hoch, stehend).*

L2

AS1 \*

Ausschnitt Nussknackens *nuts cracking*

Ausschnitt aus einem PingPong, Ausschritt aus einem Aufschlag

Ausschnitt aus Babygeschrei: pressen

Hebe Frequenzen des Originals verstärkt.

Originalklang - stechend

Originalklang penetrant scharf.

L1

Glas sehr dünn, Loustecke bebte, sehr stark durchdringend.  
*Glass very thin, Loustecke bebte, sehr stark durchdringend.*

Grandfrequenz des Originalklanges verstärkt.

Originalklang - stechend

L2

Bandgeschwindigkeit: statisch. Später Eindruck der Geschwindigkeit schnell.

Mit Speichel «gröblen» Fluservokale, Zischlaute (sch, s, ch, f), Reibelaute (pf, w, v.) Mit deutlich hörbarem Speichel gemischt.

hängig Luft einziehen, große dynamische Schwankungen

Hebe Frequenzen des Originals verstärkt.

10' 20' 30' 40' 50' 60'

↑ sobreactes / self-agressiv

VIOLONCELLO

TONBAND TAPE

In later pieces, extra-musical factors – factors which, per se, do not belong in the aesthetic sphere – play a decisive role: for instance, the central element in *Den Müllfahrern von San Francisco* (1989/90) is a low major third produced by a San Francisco garbage truck, which woke Stäbler up during the night.<sup>2</sup> Is this approach foreshadowed in *drüber...*?

According to Stäbler's introduction to the score of *drüber...*, the piece coincides with the socio-historical phase, when – following the events of 1968 and the emergence of the New Left – musicians and composers felt driven to contribute to political upheaval and reform in West Germany by means of *political* music. Composers such as Hans Werner Henze, Dieter Schnebel as well as Heiner Goebbels, Rolf Riehm and Luca Lombardi partially moved away from 'radical' avant-garde music and pursued a style oriented towards the aesthetics of the workers' choir and the compositional technique of Hanns Eisler,<sup>3</sup> jazz, Dada and popular music such as dance music. Furthermore, contemporary composers created music for, and performed in, ensembles that were dedicated exclusively to political music: among them the ensemble Hinz & Kunst, the so-called Linke Blaskapelle, and the Linksradikales Blasorchester.

Correspondingly, in 1970, Stäbler founded the Eisler-Chor in Essen. Later, in the second half of the 1970s, he also co-operated with politically engaged street theatre and agit-prop groups such as Rotes Sprachrohr Hamburg and Pfeffermühle Bochum.<sup>4</sup> Just as Henze subscribed to the aesthetics of political music (Eisler's legacy, workers' movement, popular genres), and at the same time in other, non-political pieces pursued his late-romantic atonal compositional style and orchestration, Stäbler continued to favour radical avant-gardist compositional styles by performing compositions by equally politically engaged colleagues such as Mauricio Kagel, Dieter Schnebel and Nikolaus A. Huber. Like the music he performed, his few compositions of the 1970s – a phase between 1974 and 1980 that scholars such as Björn Gottstein and Hanns-Werner Heister have dubbed as 'quasi-silence' (*fast Verstummen*)<sup>5</sup> – pursued a hybrid aesthetic that combined the compositional style of Eisler with radically avant-gardist techniques including

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<sup>2</sup> Björn Gottstein and Hanns-Werner Heister, 'Gerhard Stäbler', in Hanns-Werner Heister and Walter-Wolfgang Sparrer (eds), *Komponisten der Gegenwart*, loose leaf collection (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, no year), pp. 1–27: p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of the 1970s, the music of Hanns Eisler, after whom the choir was named, was considered to represent the ideal of political music: a compositional style that succeeded in arousing large numbers of listeners without abandoning compositional skill and certain, albeit not radical, avant-gardist pretensions. On the Hanns Eisler renaissance cf., for instance, *Kunst und Gesellschaft* 20/21 (November 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Stäbler, *drüber...*, 'Einführung' and email from Gerhard Stäbler, 25 March 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Björn Gottstein and Hanns-Werner Heister, 'Gerhard Stäbler', p. 1.

extra-musical material and tonal quotations.<sup>6</sup> In light of Stäbler's immersion in the 1968 Zeitgeist, his preference for screamers might be traced back to the strong emotions that accompanied the activities of the New Left. Screams became an implicit symbol of the student and protest movements as exemplified by the famous photograph of Rudi Dutschke, which was taken during a demonstration and which seemed to embody the young man's rage and indignation.<sup>7</sup>

This connection with the emotional climate of the student revolt, however, only partly accounts for the significance of the socio-cultural climate for *drüber...*: while (in the context of the protests of the mid- and late 1960s) screams figured as appropriate expression of rebellious emotions, at the beginning of the 1970s, in the course of the development of the new social movements, screams changed their meaning. They were not only symbols, but served as a performative remedy.

### Primal Therapy

The socio-cultural innovation of the early 1970s that comes to mind when one thinks of screaming is the primal therapy, or primal scream therapy that the American psychologist Arthur Janov developed in the late 1960s.<sup>8</sup> Primal therapy is based on the theory that psychosomatic disorders are first and foremost caused by early childhood experiences – mostly strong feelings of helplessness, loneliness and fear. They crystallize into so-called primal pain, causing psychosomatic problems such as muscular stiffening and cramping.<sup>9</sup> The therapeutic, healing effect emanates, according to Janov, from the patient's going through this pain a second time and expressing this pain by means of screaming, that is the primal scream.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Björn Gottstein and Hella Melkert, 'Catalogue of works', supplementing the article 'Gerhard Stäbler', in Hanns-Werner Heister and Walter-Wolfgang Sparrer (eds), *Komponisten der Gegenwart*, pp. C–N. In avant-garde music since after 1968, the political engagement of music manifests itself between two poles: first, the continuation of avant-gardist radicalism, using progressive, unusual compositional techniques to refer to political or socio- and cultural-critical ideas (most clearly visible in Schnebel, Nono, Kagel and Nikolaus A. Huber); and second, the resort to the former workers' song tradition, first and foremost Hanns Eisler, or to tonality in general (the ensemble Hinz & Kunst, various compositions of Henze, Frederic Rzewski, and Christian Wolff).

<sup>7</sup> It became an icon after having been published again and again by the right-wing press, thereby creating the image of the students as dangerous beasts.

<sup>8</sup> Although Janov dubbed his therapy 'primal therapy', in Germany, Janov's therapy became famous as *Urschreitherapie* (primal scream therapy).

<sup>9</sup> With respect to the muscular stiffening and cramping Janov explicitly refers to Wilhelm Reich: Arthur Janov, *The Primal Scream* (London: Abacus, 1970), p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Because 'the continued Pain [Janov refers to the 'Primal Pain'] of not getting, of never having one's earliest needs satisfied, tends to shut off the response until the individual goes back and dares cry again as that infant' (Janov, *The Primal Scream*, p. 55).

Janov's therapy, which soon gained an international reputation, inspired Stäbler – less because of the therapeutic procedure, or the idea that screaming results in healing a person, but more because of the characteristics of the different screams to which Janov's book, in its descriptions of various screams his patients exclaimed in therapy sessions, indirectly drew attention.<sup>11</sup> The primal scream, for instance, appears as 'an eerie scream welling up from the depths'.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, the therapeutic process does not play a significant role in the composition; *drüber...* is not a piece that imitates a therapeutic session, nor do listening to or watching the piece – presumably – have any healing effect. The psychic dimensions of screaming and the causes of different screams, however, are fundamental to the composition. Stäbler indicates the different types of screams by the specific emotions that have caused them: joy, fear, aggression, etc. As a consequence, the performers not only have to be able to reproduce the screams together with their corresponding emotions, but also independently, that is solely in accordance with the musical structure.<sup>13</sup>

The emphasis on emotions as the basis of acoustical expression is clearly owed to primal therapy, which draws attention to the deep connection between the psychic state and the physical behaviour that produces the screams.<sup>14</sup> Unlike the emotional stimuli for the screams, which Stäbler indicates in the score, the sounding result itself, by contrast, remains unspecified. This is certainly owed to the fact that the characteristics of screams caused by contrasting emotions do not necessarily contrast with each other. As is well known, the expressions of extreme emotions tend to fuse together: ambiguous behaviour modes such as 'crying for joy' demonstrate this. This might be the reason why, in the *recording of drüber...*,<sup>15</sup> the screams are certainly different, yet cannot be clearly identified with the specific causes (e.g. joy, fear, help, aggression, etc.) indicated in the score.

As instructions for actions such as 'rattling', 'rampaging', 'clamouring' and 'hyperventilating' with their associations to intense emotions indicate, it is the mental conditions, rather than their acoustic results, that provide the starting point for *drüber...* Although, as mentioned above, *drüber...* does not mirror primal therapy directly, the composition is clearly inspired by elements that shape therapeutic sessions. The combination of vocal-acoustic and bodily-scenic expression of Stäbler's *drüber...* neatly corresponds to the descriptions of Janov and his colleague, the American psychiatrist and analyst Daniel Casriel, who

<sup>11</sup> Cf. telephone conversation with the author, 4 October 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Janov, *The Primal Scream*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. telephone conversation with the author, 8 January 2007.

<sup>14</sup> According to Janov, the primal scream signifies both the psychophysical split and, simultaneously, the erasure of the split. 'To become whole again, it is necessary to feel and recognize the split and scream out the connection that will unify the person again. The more intensely that split [that is the primal pain] is felt, the more intense and intrinsic the unifying experience' (Janov, *The Primal Scream*, p. 41).

<sup>15</sup> Gerhard Stäbler, *crack. divided 04* (CD) (Essen: without label 1995).

adopted Janov's therapy. Both observed shuddering gasps, moaning, groaning, writhing and thrashing about during the sessions.<sup>16</sup> A further parallel is Stähler's emphasis on regressive behaviour modes, which is informed by the behaviour of patients during primal therapies. Like the patients, the screamers should 'roll on the floor', 'scream for help', 'whimper haggardly', 'sing timorously', and behave as if 'being tickled' or 'like a baby'.<sup>17</sup>

But these are only superficial parallels. Although the starting point for the particular articulation of the screams is concrete, specific emotions, the focus of the performance is on the different acoustic characteristics of the screams, rather than on the emotions from which they are derived. Stähler attributes a quasi-motivic or syntactic function to them. Stähler's aesthetics favoured non-developmental structures; since, according to him, developments are omnipresent and cannot even be avoided by spontaneous methods such as improvisation, he relied on serial techniques, which tend to produce musical structures which, from the perceiver's point of view, appear to be anti-developmental. To this end, he made a list of different types of screams in preparation of the composition in order to control the structure of screams, their types, duration and time of appearance.<sup>18</sup> This procedure leads to an ambiguous sequence of illogical, inorganic interruptions, as can be found particularly clearly from 2'20" to 3'35".<sup>19</sup>

The quasi-serial technique, however, is not applied continuously; and thus, from time to time, *drüber...*, especially its first of the two movements, can be perceived as a quasi-narrative, a sequence of exclamations, which increase and

<sup>16</sup> Janov, *The Primal Scream*; Daniel Casriel, *A Scream Away from Happiness* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1972). 'I urge him to let it out, and he will continue to try to say something. Finally, out it will come: a scream – "Daddy, be nice!" "Mommy, help!" – or just the word "hate": "I hate you, I hate you!" This is the Primal Scream. It comes out in shuddering gasps, pushed out by the force of years of suppressions and denials of that feeling' (Janov, *The Primal Scream*, p. 83). 'Some people moan, groan, writhe, and thrash about' (Janov, *The Primal Scream*, S. 91).

<sup>17</sup> 'sich auf dem Boden wälzen', 'Hilfeschreie', 'gekitzelt werden', 'Babygeschrei', 'verstörtes Wimmern', 'furchtsam verschreckt singen' (Stähler, *drüber...*, pp. 2–6). An additional psychoanalytical theory on which Stähler is drawing is the idea of auto-aggression developed by Sigmund and Anna Freud, which became particularly influential in the 1970s. Correspondingly, Stähler calls for 'the scream directed towards oneself' with conspicuous frequency (*Schrei gegen sich selbst gerichtet*) (Stähler, *drüber...*, p. 3, active screamer No. 7, 2'15"ff) or 'the self-destructive scream' (*selbsterstörerischen Schrei*) (Stähler, *drüber...*, S. 4, active screamer Nos. 3, 4, 5 and 7, 3'20"ff). In the music-theatrical composition *Dressur*, for instance, Mauricio Kagel also depicts the idea of auto-aggression. (Cf. Beate Kutschke, *Neue Linke/Neue Musik: Kulturtheorien und künstlerische Avantgarde in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Köln and Weimar: Böhlau, 2007), pp. 153, 174–7, 188.)

<sup>18</sup> Telephone conversation with the author (8 January 2007). Unfortunately, the exact serial procedure cannot be reconstructed since the sketches are currently inaccessible – possibly hidden in the composer's attic.

<sup>19</sup> *Drüber...* does not have conventional bars but uses time-span notation.



decrease in intensity in ways that evoke the trajectory of primal therapy sessions. Janov described this situation when it happened for the first time as follows:

I asked him [a patient called Danny] to call out, ‘Mommy! Daddy!’ Danny refused, saying that he couldn’t see the sense in such a childish act, and frankly, neither could I. But I persisted, and finally, he gave in: as he began, he became noticeably upset. Suddenly he was writhing on the floor in agony. His breathing was rapid, spasmodic; ‘Mommy! Daddy!’ came out of his mouth almost involuntarily in loud screeches. He appeared to be in a coma or hypnotic state. The writhing gave way to small convulsions, and finally, he released a piercing, deathlike scream that rattled the walls of my office. The entire episode lasted only a few minutes, and neither Danny nor I had any idea what had happened. All he could say afterward was: ‘I made it! I don’t know what, but I can feel!’<sup>20</sup>

Why, though, did the primal therapy come to the fore during the New Left climate? Why did the idea that screaming might heal people fascinate New Leftists – including Stäbler?

### **The Rediscovery of the Body**

Around 1970, after the protests’ climax in the years 1967 to 1969, the West-German student and protest movements that had developed during the 1960s altered the direction of their socio-political critique. Whereas in the 1960s the activists strove for the radical transformation of society’s institutions and the political system, in the early 1970s the focus shifted to the so-called ‘politics of the personal’. In connection with the increased awareness for ecological questions, New Leftists drew attention to matters of lifestyle such as their immediate surrounding, nutrition and clothing, including emphatic ideas of bodily and mental health. Additionally, these new interests could be connected with the socio-philosophical critique of the Frankfurt School that had already played so important a role for the activists of ‘1968’. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School, especially Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, had pointed to the integral connection between the predominance of instrumental reason and the subjugation of the natural world. For critical theorists nature and naturalness – i.e. the *first*, authentic nature – were counter-categories to rationality and instrumental reason, which were regarded as *second* nature; the latter dominated the former. Adorno and Horkheimer’s continued warnings about the ‘compulsion of nature’,<sup>21</sup> which

<sup>20</sup> Janov, *The Primal Scream*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Any attempt to break the compulsion of nature by breaking nature only succumbs more deeply to that compulsion. ... In the mastery of nature, without which mind does not exist, enslavement to nature persists. By modestly confessing itself to be power and thus being taken back into nature, mind rids itself of the very claim to mastery which had enslaved

originated in the 1930s, were read from an ecological perspective. Drawing on philosophemes of the Frankfurt School, Herbert Marcuse argued that nature should operate as ‘an ally against the exploitation of the societies ... The discovery of the liberating power of nature and its decisive role in the construction of the free society will be a new force of social change.’<sup>22</sup> Although the idealization of nature and the distinction between first and second nature are not unproblematic, ‘nature’ became a key value of the emerging ecological and alternative movements and a tool for socio-political change.

Because the most natural dimension of the human individual was seen as his or her body, the body became the focus of attention. The appreciation of the human body was connected with the critique of the bodily practices prevailing in Europe, and the development of new action imperatives aiming at ‘regain[ing] [*Wiedergewinn*] the body’. Drawing on these ideologies, in 1982, Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf published a collection of papers with the programmatic title *Wiederkehr des Körpers* (‘return of the body’), thus paying tribute to a discourse on the body that until today constitutes a central strand in European and, especially, German theorizing.<sup>23</sup> Explaining the motivation for their book, Kamper and Wulf pointed to the traditional separation between body and mind, and declared their intention to disrupt the ‘process of abstraction from life with its alienation, disciplining, and instrumentalization of the body and the bodily in the church, the military, pedagogy etc. as a foundation of historical progress’.<sup>24</sup> Additionally – in accordance with the then prevailing rhetoric – they aimed at overcoming the continuous trimming and reduction of the body to its machine-like functioning in the economic process. Kamper and Wulf regarded the increase in mental and psychosomatic disorders as symptoms of the prevailing social and economic treatment of the body. The treatment of the rationalization and spiritualization (*Vergeistigung*) of life that repressed the human body consisted of body therapies, body-centred psychotherapies – such as Wilhelm Reich’s orgone therapy – and self-awareness groups that helped to recover the lost sensibility for the body

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it to nature’ (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 9 and 31) (‘Jeder Versuch, den Naturzwang zu brechen, indem Natur gebrochen wird, gerät nur umso tiefer in den Naturzwang hinein. ... Naturverfallenheit besteht in der Naturbeherrschung, ohne die Geist nicht existiert. Durch die Bescheidung, in der dieser als Herrschaft sich bekennt und in Natur zurücknimmt, zergeht ihm der herrschaftliche Anspruch, der ihn gerade der Natur versklavt’ (Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1969), pp. 15 and 39).)

<sup>22</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Konterrevolution und Revolte* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1973); Dieter Mersch, *Was sich zeigt* (München: Fink, 2002), p. 72. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

<sup>23</sup> Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf (eds), *Die Wiederkehr des Körpers* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9 and 13.

fighting ‘the armament and plating of an abstract ego’.<sup>25</sup> These healing activities were accompanied by cultural innovations such as sexual emancipation and rock music, drawing the attention to the body as well.<sup>26</sup>

Heightening its culture-rescuing significance, the body as the epitome of the individual’s nature was considered as the mirror of external, macrocosmic nature – that is, the biosphere. As Rudolf zur Lippe stated emphatically in 1974, in other words eight years prior to Kamper and Wulf, ‘the relationship to the inner nature, as it exists in every single individual, exemplifies our relationship to nature as a whole’.<sup>27</sup> Correspondingly, New Left intellectuals of the 1970s considered the human body as the manifestation and embodiment of nature par excellence. Appropriating the image of the domination of nature from the Frankfurt School, zur Lippe demanded to overcome the repression of the natural aspects of human beings – that is, as Lippe phrased it, the ‘domination of man’s nature’.<sup>28</sup> The term [domination of nature] signifies that human beings carry out the domination of nature also within their ‘own bodies’.<sup>29</sup> In zur Lippe’s view, this manifested itself in authoritarian educational and behavioural modes that, crystallized into strict self-control and self-discipline, were converted into the individual’s *second* nature. Thus, the domination of man’s *inner* nature (i.e. self-domination and self-control) on one hand and the domination of the *external* nature (i.e. the environment) on the other revealed themselves as two sides of the same coin.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, according to New Left ideology, political action had to be carried out ‘in the first person’ (*in erster Person*), in other words it needed to be guided by the needs of the individual. Re-naturalized and liberated from domination, the human body should have symbolized and performed the Other of the domination of nature as well as of the internal and external coercions that had been petrified into second nature. The human body represented, as Kamper and Wulf proclaimed, the authentic, ‘true subject that is to be discovered and is to be identified as the body’.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 10–15.

<sup>27</sup> Rudolf zur Lippe, *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen*, vol. I (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), p. 27. The rediscovery of the body is by no means an exclusively German phenomenon. In 1975, for instance, Michel Foucault investigated practices of discipline, punishment, imprisonment and control from a similar bodily-focused perspective (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975)); Kamper and Wulf, for instance, were obviously inspired by Foucault’s ideas.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. title of Lippe, *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen*, vol. I.

<sup>29</sup> Lippe, *Naturbeherrschung am Menschen*, vol. I, p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Beate Kutschke, *Wildes Denken in der Neuen Musik: Die Idee vom Ende der Geschichte bei Theodor W. Adorno und Wolfgang Rihm* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), p. 170.

<sup>31</sup> Kamper and Wulf (eds), *Die Wiederkehr des Körpers*, p. 21. Similarly – and polemically – Wolfgang Kraushaar records the position of the new social movements: ‘Under the heading of a “new subjectivity” one’s own body, one’s psyche, condition,

Consequently, the purpose of the ecological and alternative movements was to rediscover and revitalize the *first*, true and *authentic* human nature that had been obscured by the internalized second nature. Correspondingly, the slogan 'the personal is political' that, in the 1960s, had spurred the fight for socio-political change and, in the 1970s, additionally became the slogan of the new feminist movement, could now be read as pointing to the idea that the private life operates as a microcosmic mirror of the macrocosm, that is the global environment.<sup>32</sup> So we ought to ask: in which way was the body as first nature and the critique of the second nature connected with the scream – and to what degree did the aspiration for the first, authentic nature play a role for Stäbler's *drüber...*?

Although primal scream therapy primarily aimed at curing traumatic experiences from infancy and early childhood, the lively German reception of Janov's therapeutic method focused on those aspects that were related to the revitalization of the patient's body and, connected with this, questions of nature and authority. To this end, the German readers of Janov's book could draw on several features of his theory. In comparison with Freud's psychoanalysis – which was exclusively carried out by verbal, that is purely intellectual, cognitive means – Janov's primal scream therapy was clearly bodily oriented. In his own words:

The point of Primal Therapy is to connect the body's needs with the stored and unconscious memories and so unify the person. ... Perhaps the most dramatic changes which take place in post-Primal patients [who have passed the first three weeks of intensive individual therapy] are physical. ... about one-third of the moderately flat-chested women independently reported that their breasts grew.<sup>33</sup>

Since the external and internal domination of the body (by means of physical exercises, standardized behaviour modes, and self-discipline) prevents us from acting out spontaneous, libidinal bodily impulses, the scream – of Janov's therapy as well as in general – was considered as the emblem of regaining nature, understood

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feeling, the needs became the centre of attention and merged almost completely into the magical belief that only rites of disintegration could effectively protect oneself against the assimilation to the norms of the system' (Wolfgang Kraushaar, 'Thesen zum Verhältnis von Alternativ- und Fluchtbewegung', in Kraushaar (ed.), *Autonomie oder Getto* (Frankfurt/Main: Neue Kritik, 1978), pp. 8–67: p. 36).

<sup>32</sup> Before becoming the slogan of the new feminist movement, 'the personal is political' represented a key principle of the US-American student movement. By means of the slogan, the students aimed at drawing attention to the fact that due to the actions of the US government (such as the recruitment of soldiers for the Vietnam war), it was no longer possible to exert full responsibility over one's own personal life. Cf. Beate Kutschke, 'Avantgarde-Musik der USA aus bundesdeutscher Sicht um 1970' *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 61/4 (2004), pp. 275–99 and Kutschke, *Neue Linke/Neue Musik*.

<sup>33</sup> Janov, *The Primal Scream*, pp. 62 and 154.

as a stage in which bodily behaviour modes are intact. The scream operated as an appropriate aural symbol for the revitalization of the microcosmic, human, nature. Correspondingly, the German psychologist Hilarion Petzold defined the scream as the psychic outlet for the experiences that affected western industrial societies at the time of the appearance of the alternative cultures in the 1970s and 80s: the 'ecological destruction', as Petzold called it, and nuclear armament, i.e. the 'risk of overkill'.<sup>34</sup> In conjunction with Dutschke's screaming face as icon of the student movement, the act of screaming that violates social norms of self-control and discipline was considered not only as a *symbol or expression* of protest, but also as its *method and instrument*: protest in general and against social restrictions and the domination of the individual's authentic nature in particular. Consequently, Petzold interpreted Janov's therapeutic modes, promoting screams as a means to 'realize new naturalness'<sup>35</sup> and, in this way, constructed a close relationship between primal scream therapy and the ideology of the new social movements which tried to vanquish instrumental reason that, in their opinion, dominated the natural, authentic body. 'The scream in therapy', Petzold claimed, 'is the expression of the fight between nature and [instrumental] reason'.<sup>36</sup> In sum, the scream could be considered as articulating the specific social and ideological climate of the alternative movements with respect to their protest as much as with respect to their hopes and utopias:

Only if we start to expose ourselves to the pain of dissonances, if we stop denying the cacophony of violence, will we be able to recognize that the primal scream therapies as historical phenomena lend their voice to the *conditions inhumaines* of our time, a voice which must not be swallowed unheard by the walls of primal scream therapy rooms.<sup>37</sup>

It is certainly no coincidence that the purpose of the screaming act in *drüber...* matches Petzold's intention, that is to fight authority and regain first nature. *drüber...*, Stäbler defines, 'takes up spontaneous emotional expressions, crystallizes them into their extreme appearances (as a scream of rage, as mad roaring, as frightened babbling, ... etc.), employs screams to express the elementary opposition against mechanisms of suppression'.<sup>38</sup>

Correspondingly, *drüber...* performs the clash between first and second nature, between authentic expression and civilized control. Not all of Stäbler's screamers, however, resort to first-nature modes of expression: active screamer no. 8 does

<sup>34</sup> Hilarion Petzold, 'Der Schrei in der Therapie', in Michael B. Buchholz (ed.), *Schreien* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1983), pp. 63–77: p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Gerhard Stäbler, 'Für später: jetzt', *Neuland*, 3 (1982/83), pp. 104–119: pp. 109 and 111.

not scream, but sings – at least at the beginning. Over a period of 10 minutes, he continuously performs and repeats the theme of Hassler's five-part motet on Psalm 119:1.2: 'Ad dominum cum tribularer, clamavi'. Stäbler obviously chose especially this motet in order to relate its text to the topic of his work. The words 'I cried to the Lord in my tribulation' express unpleasant emotions like these of the fellow-screamers of no. 8. What is most important as regards Stäbler's selection from the 'classical' repertoire is that he has chosen *music*. Unlike natural screaming, singing is a typical cultural, not natural, mode of expression that clearly belongs to human beings' second (i.e. culture-caused) nature, coping with emotions in a cultivated–sublimated manner. So, what mode of articulation can be considered as more cultural and – in this sense – more un-natural than singing, a distinctive, controlled sound production set to verbal language? It is this character of singing, its self-controlled habitus, that – in the framework of the diegetic action – turns out to be fatal for active screamer no. 8.

The score instructs no. 8 to infinitely repeat the motet by starting each repetition 'a step' – semitone or whole tone is not specified – higher. Not surprisingly, he soon reaches the limits of his range and his sound production turns into screaming or rather howling. The self-controlled, culturally accepted form of emotional expression, i.e. singing, appears to be finally overwhelmed by unarticulated exclamation, expressing the direct pressure that pushes the voice to its limits.<sup>39</sup> The part of active screamer no. 8 is, however, certainly an exception. Such a narrative cannot be applied to the other screamers, for their parts are derived from serial procedures. In light of this the question arises: how does the fact that the screamers of *drüber...* do *not* spontaneously scream, but have to follow an intricate time schedule which subverts any naturalness, fit together with the idea of authenticity that shaped the New Left climate? Furthermore, how does the fact that, during the performance, the scream and its specific expression are produced independently from the emotion which usually motivates the scream fit an idea of authenticity that screams, according to Petzold, epitomize?

The above-mentioned cultural-critical theories are by no means mirrored directly in Stäbler's piece. *drüber...* does not present a process of authentication, understood as the highlighting of the quality of authenticity by means of a musical artwork, nor do the performers enact such a process.<sup>40</sup> It does not regain first,

<sup>39</sup> 'Many of my patients reported the differences in their breathing after therapy; only after they had begun to breathe deeply did they understand how shallow their breathing had been previously. Now they say they can feel the air go "all the way down" when they breathe. In the primal context this means that they do not dip into their Pain in the ordinary course of events, which suggests that one of the functions of shallow breathing is to prevent the egress of deep Pain' (Janov, *The Primal Scream*, p. 117).

<sup>40</sup> For the distinction between 'authentication' (*Authentifizierung*) and 'authentication' (*Authentisierung*) see Helmut Lethen, 'Versionen des Authentischen: sechs Gemeinplätze', in Hartmut Böhme and Klaus R. Scherpe (eds), *Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996), pp. 205–231.

authentic nature. In their artistic transformation, the screams at best evoke the socio-critical connotations connected to the screams. Since they are the result of highly artificial performances, they do not mirror, but contrast with the authenticity-creating atmosphere of primal therapies. In this way the piece oscillates between, on the one hand, short quasi-narrative fragments, and on the other, structural dissociation, which unforeseeably and irrationally interrupts and subverts these narratives. Stähler articulates a dialectic between immediate expression and artistic and planned performance. Furthermore, the socio-cultural critique, the need for the first, authentic nature, manifests itself not only in connotations, but – and this might sound surprising – in the composition itself: namely the composition as a sign system. The authenticity which *drüber...* articulates has to be specified as *semiotic* authenticity (as opposed to performative or natural authenticity for instance). What is semiotic authenticity?

### Semiotic Authenticity

The lament about the loss of authenticity and first nature through second nature was not heard for the first time in the 1970s. In the 1940s, philosophers, psychologists and writers such as Ernst Cassirer, Aldous Huxley and Jacques Lacan had already formulated a similar type of cultural critique. Interestingly, they carried it out with respect not to ecological, but to semiotic phenomena. Within the course of the so-called ‘semiotic turn’, they voiced the observation that the natural, authentic world (the first nature) is dominated by signs (the second nature). For the awareness of a thing or phenomenon by means of a sign – a verbal description for instance – hinders the perception of the thing or phenomenon *itself*. In a nutshell: the theoretical discourse *about* a specific experience such as love cannot replace the experience, i.e. the practice of love itself. Thus, Cassirer lamented:

no longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man’s symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the interposition of this artificial medium.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Huxley explained: ‘However expressive, symbols can never be the things they stand for’.<sup>42</sup> And – he went on – ‘Words are uttered, but fail to enlighten. The things and events to which the symbols refer belong to mutually exclusive realms

<sup>41</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New York: Doubleday, 1953 [1944]), p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> Aldous Huxley, ‘The Doors of Perception’, in Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), pp. 11–65: p. 26.

of experience. ... This world is the universe of reduced awareness, expressed and, as it were, petrified by language.<sup>43</sup>

This loss of direct perception of the authentic object or phenomenon not only applies to the thing or phenomenon but also to the sign itself, as Jacques Lacan demonstrated: 'In order to make the symbolic object ... become a word [i.e. a verbal sign] freed from the *hic et nunc*, not the sonorous quality, its material, but its disappearance is important.'<sup>44</sup> The word 'house' for instance, the sequence of letters – h-o-u-s-e – must not be consciously perceived in order to operate as a sign, that is in order to *refer to the signified* (in this case, the house). The word itself, the sound configuration and letters that can be considered as the primary, authentic nature of a word, is wiped out by its semiotic function.

This perceptual erasure, caused by the signs' referential functions, can also be recognized with respect to music. Yet this concerns a different type of referentiality. Unlike verbal language, which is based on extra-referential relationships (the word – the signifier – referring to the referent or signified), music is based on exemplification – that is, inner-referential relationships emerging from similarities ('likenesses' according to the terminology of Nelson Goodman<sup>45</sup>) between different sound configurations. The focus on musical structure undermines the awareness of the musical sounds and the source of the sounds: that is, the musical instruments. What has usually occupied the perceptual foreground of Western art music is the *relationship* between the sounds and sound configurations, not the *quality* of the sounds themselves. In sum, what has been semiotically underappreciated in Western culture is the 'materiality of the sign' (Mersch<sup>46</sup>): that is, in spoken language and music, the sound and its timbral quality, its intensity, its articulation and, of course, the body as vehicle of the sound.

To what degree does this cultural-semiotic critique play a role in *drüber...?*

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 14 and 22.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Lacan, 'Du sujet enfin en question', in Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 229–362: p. 276.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2nd edn (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976).

<sup>46</sup> As a counter-programme to the prevailing – in pragmatic respects undoubtedly reasonable – way of dealing with signs, Mersch, who argues from a phenomenological, purely epistemological, and thus less pragmatic perspective, re-directs the focus on the so-called materiality of the signs, on the 'being of signs', as Michel Foucault calls it in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1974, p. 43): that is, on the vehicle of the signs, the signifier. Mersch aims at recovering the materiality of the signs by descriptive means. Signs, Mersch states, signify something 'which is absent'; by doing so 'they nevertheless need to be present ... in order to represent the non-present, the absent. They assert their own presence preferably by means of their materiality, the sound of language, the trace, which, as an imprint of that which has passed, preserves its presence, or the physicality of the material which the artist uses to create his painting, his sculpture or object' (Mersch, *Was sich zeigt*, p. 11).



### The Infant's Scream – Ontogenetic, Natural Authenticity

The score of *drüber...* not only instructs the active screamers to adopt regressive behaviour modes, but it also demands the scream of an infant to be played from tape for a few seconds during the performance (3'02"–3'12" and 4'12"–4'17"). What does this focus on regressive, infantile modes of expression signify within the context of the striving for first, authentic nature and the perceptual erasure of the phenomena themselves as well as of the materiality of the sign?

Quite obviously, the cultural critique of language articulated by Cassirer, Huxley and – recently – the German philosopher Dieter Mersch corresponds to the desire for 'first, actual, immediate nature' and 'authenticity' promoted by the new social, especially ecological and alternative, movements of the 1970s. For, both *qualia* (properties of sensory experiences, i.e. qualities not as such, but as we perceive them) – the materiality of the sign and the first, authentic nature – are primordial: the former in relation to the referentiality of signs (in the semiotic field) and the latter in relation to the second nature (in the socio-cultural field). At the same time, however, one should be aware that as regards the sense in which they can be regarded as primary, the *qualia* differ from each other: semiotic authenticity is conceptually based on a *logical* relationship, whereas the notion of first nature, or natural authenticity, is based on a *temporal* relationship.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, semiotic and natural authenticity are treated as conceptually similar in our culture; they tend to be identified with each other. According to Mersch, 'the language of the body is considered as the language of nature'.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Mersch started his philosophical investigation of the materiality of the sign and the body by drawing on the thought figure of 'the body as natural language', as it can be found, for instance, in Montaigne and Merleau-Ponty. Montaigne considered body language as expression 'which is proper [i.e. authentic] to human nature'.<sup>49</sup> In his lecture on 'Nature et logos: Le corps humain', Merleau-Ponty similarly suggested that the human body has been a natural sign ('symbolisme naturel').<sup>50</sup> Additionally, Mersch draws on the characterizations of dance in the context of various German reform movements at the beginning of the twentieth century. Here the dancing body has been implicitly considered as a 'natural sign'.<sup>51</sup> Mersch's identification of

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<sup>47</sup> As Mersch puts it, the "pointing to something" is preceded by the "manifesting itself" not in the sense of temporal precedence, but in the sense of an implicational relationship, a logical relation' (Mersch, *Was sich zeigt*, p. 65).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> Michel de Montaigne, 'Apologie de Raymond Sebon' [1580], in de Montaigne, *Essais*, Livre II (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1989), pp. 105–261: p. 121.

<sup>50</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Le concept de nature, 1959–1960. Nature et logos: Le corps humain', in Merleau-Ponty, *La Nature: Notes du Cours du Collège de France*, ed. Dominique Ségald (Paris: Seuil, 1995), pp. 263–351: p. 289.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Mersch, *Was sich zeigt*, p. 49 and Gabriele Brandstetter, 'Ausdruckstanz', in Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke (eds), *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen*

the materiality of the sign with the body as a natural symbol system that antedates culturally created and convention-based symbol systems also corresponds with Cassirer. The philosopher called the era that, in his view, preceded the symbolic universe the 'physical [i.e. natural] universe'.<sup>52</sup>

In light of this, the infant's scream represents authenticity in both respects at the same time. In a semiotic respect, the scream is a type of utterance that is independent of verbal language. It is one of the most basic vocal expressions that an infant is able to use right after birth. In its ontogenetic, natural respect, it epitomizes naturalness since the infant is not able to produce culturally conventionalized symbols. The infant's scream is ontogenetic: in other words, temporally earlier than verbal language, which – rationally oriented and culturally shaped – becomes the human being's second nature during their ontogenesis. Thus, the primal scream which lends Janov's therapy its popular name is the manifestation of authenticity in both respects, semiotic authenticity (the material of the sign) and natural authenticity (first nature).

Philosophers, pursuing the rediscovery of the body and revitalization of the materiality of the sign, must have sensed this interconnection between ontogenesis, naturalness, first nature and semiotic authenticity, and therefore recently focused on the infant's scream. According to the German philosopher Sybille Krämer, for instance, the infant's scream epitomizes natural expression *before* verbal language acquisition.

What is more demanding, haunting, than the scream of the infant? Undirected, without meaning in a semantic sense [i.e. preceding the referentiality of verbal symbols], beyond all conventions, entirely indication, involuntary trace of the body whose muscles strain in its neediness, this sound is nevertheless extremely significant, infallibly meaningful as an appeal: the scream arouses the person who hears it. Before the emergency of the speech, which provokes the transition from speaking to screaming, there is the elementary emergency situation of the body that bursts its bonds in screaming.<sup>53</sup>

In Krämer's view, the scream is not a message, but primarily voice, body and, thus, existence:

[W]hat is culminated in the infant's scream – that its voice evokes care, at the alternative, if it is not silenced, of mentally unhinging the listener – this holds true of any human utterance ... As part of the elementary and existential corporeality of the speakers, the voice testifies to our neediness, which is characterized by

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1880–1933 (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1998), pp. 451–63.

<sup>52</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 43.

<sup>53</sup> Sybille Krämer, 'Negative Semiologie der Stimme: Reflexionen über die Stimme als Medium der Sprache', in Cornelia Epping-Jäger and Erika Linz (eds), *Medien/Stimmen* (Köln: Dumont, 2003): pp. 65–85: p. 68.

longing and which is directed towards the other. In our voice, we reveal ourselves not only as 'essences', but in fact as concrete, bodily 'existences'.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, infants possess the whole spectrum of possible sounds that they 'forget' within the first six months when they start to adopt the so-called mother tongue. Thus, the infant's scream (i.e. the first, authentic nature) also epitomizes the entire, universal and unreduced nature that is lost at the moment the infant incorporates second nature in terms of the mother tongue. In light of this, it becomes clear why *drüber...* features the infant's scream. It is not an arbitrary supplement to the various types of unarticulated exclamations. It is universal authentic expression; it is the paradigm of first nature. It demonstrates the semantic connection between screaming, body and authenticity as regards its ontogenetic (i.e. temporal) and semiotic perspectives. As the reservoir of all human sounds, it represents acoustic wholeness.

### **Semiotic Authenticity vs. Performative Artificiality**

Quite obviously, however, the semiotic authenticity of the infant's scream is contradicted by the way it is presented in the performance of *drüber...* Played from the technical device of a tape, the infant's scream as acoustic phenomenon represents the opposite of authenticity. It is artificial. This perspective, however, ignores the specific conditions of the performance of avant-garde music. The tape recording played in an avant-garde concert setting has by no means to be considered as an implicit reference to Walter Benjamin's well-known critique of technical reproduction – a critique which, to be sure, resonated among New Left musicians and musicologists at the beginning of the 1970s. Yet, in the framework of a piece of new music and with respect to its *aesthetic* meaning, the tape does not differ from other, mechanical musical instruments (although extra-musical meaning such as the idea that technology is the opponent of humanity and nature might be associated by the perceiver).<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, as regards the reproduction of an infant's scream, it is most likely that Stäbler chose the tape, instead of a live-performance of an infant, simply because it is difficult to make a baby scream on cue.

In light of this, the extra-musical noises such as 'turning on the motor', 'bouncing ping-pong ball', 'pistol-shot' or 'cracking nuts' (at ca. 0'60", 1'30", 2'05", 5'20"), that the tape – simultaneously with the screamers – plays do not possess a different

<sup>54</sup> Krämer, 'Negative Semiologie', p. 68.

<sup>55</sup> Luigi Nono, for instance, combined tape and voice or tape and traditional musical instruments in his compositions *La fabbrica illuminata* (1964) and *Das atemde Klarsein* (1980/81), respectively. The interpretation of the voice, the *vox humana*, as representing humanity in contrast to the electronic devices signifying inhuman machinery, applies only to the socio-critical dimension (i.e. the narrative or extra-musical content), not the aesthetic value.

aesthetic status. Stähler does not display two different classes of sounds: ‘real and authentic’ vs. ‘reproduced and simulated’ sounds. On the contrary: what is aesthetically relevant is not the *difference* as regards the sound production, but the *similarities* of the sound qualities – regardless of their sound source, that is their disruptive, disjunctive, dissociated developing and their disharmonious sound quality.<sup>56</sup> In this respect, the vocal utterances – screaming, groaning, whimpering, rattling – the tape recordings and also the violoncello, which has to perform ‘brutal, extremely fast bow changes’ with ‘high pressure’ and ‘bowed close to the bridge’ (40”–52”) or should produce ‘creaky’ and ‘cracking’ noises on the back of its body (3’46”–4’26”), are acoustically alike.

Indeed, Stähler pursues an aesthetic of rupture and the fragmentary that manifests itself not only in the quality of the sounds, but also the structure of the piece. This becomes even more conspicuous in the second movement of *drüber...* Where the serial principles underpinning the order of the screams in the first movement are already quite elaborate – note, for instance, the quasi-polyphonic screams for help and of joy, performed by AS 3 and 4 (2’15”–3’10”), which are accompanied in counterpoint by self-accusing screams (AS 5 and 7) – this aspect becomes even more important in the second movement. In preparation for this part, Stähler encoded and permuted not screams as wholes, but smaller fragments of screams and rudimentary vocal material (cracking, aspirating, squeezing, straining), thus drawing attention to the aesthetic aspects – ‘aesthetic’ in the etymological sense of ‘aesthetic’ (i.e. perception): that is, the sound quality – of the material.

Thus *drüber...* – as a process, not as a final product – consists of two performance-related phases that differ with respect to the status of authenticity. While in the preparatory and rehearsal phase, the direct, immediate contact with emotions causing screams (i.e. the authentic experience) is indispensable for the performers, the performance itself (the second phase) is essentially a highly artistic, aestheticized act. What do these qualities of *drüber...* – the uneven, fragmentary sounds and the serial organization that determines parts of the composition – mean on the semiotic level? Parametrical predetermination, numerical codification and permutation produce referentiality on a merely logical and thus virtual level; which is to say that the numbers that encode the various sound elements and the relation of the numbers to each other do not necessarily possess perceptual relevance. Rather than a ‘unified whole’ in which every element relates to every other element as well as to the totality in the manner of organicist models, the perceptual level is governed – as I described above – by disconnectedness, the experience of constant interruption and fragmentation manifesting itself, in semiotic terms, as non-referentiality. This way however, the serial pre-determination supports the perception of the screams as authentic sound phenomena.

If referentiality plays any role in Stähler’s composition – and this is essential for my following argument – it is *another* type of referentiality: in the terminology of Nelson Goodman, it is a specific type of exemplification that derives from the

<sup>56</sup> Cf. telephone conversation with the author, 8 January 2007.

similarities of the sounds' qualities, their attack, timbre, developing etc. and thus make the materiality of the signs visible: their source and physical origin, that is the body as epitome of the first, authentic nature.<sup>57</sup> It is this semiotic property of screams (and noises) that Stähler highlighted when he explained, in 1999, almost 30 years after his creation of *drüber...*: 'The scream – which consists of concentrated experience – tells me infinitely more about my body (and my mental condition) than reading about it, even than hearing or seeing, in mediated form on the radio or television or fixed on tape, CD or video ... For, since it requires all senses, the bodily quality, the quality of being present is essential for communication.'<sup>58</sup> *drüber...*'s focus on non-denotational sounds carries out the programme of the sounds' liberation that Cassirer, Huxley and Lacan had implicitly asked for in their critique of the hypertrophy of the symbolic practice in the middle of the twentieth century.

Thus, Stähler succeeds where Cage failed, namely by liberating sounds from referentiality: it is this, after all, that Cage's idea of 'let[ting] the sounds be themselves' aimed for and which his chance and indeterminacy techniques were meant to guarantee.<sup>59</sup> For it is the listener's decision whether or not to perceive the sounds as possessing 'no relation and reference' and, thus, focus on the sounds' quality, i.e. the materiality of the sign – or whether the isolation of the sounds operates as a challenge that stimulates the hearer to put the disparate sounds into relation to each other, in spite of all obstacles. Stähler, by contrast, does not only hinder the usual kind of referentiality by means of quasi-serial techniques; he also supports the perception of a type of referentiality which draws attention to the sound qualities as such.

All in all, *drüber...* is the paradoxical product of divergent elements: during the performance, semiotic authenticity and naturalness, on the one hand, and performative mimicry and artificiality, on the other, compete with each other. The anti-organic aesthetics of rupture, which is derived from serial techniques, draws attention to the material of the signs, i.e. their authenticity. In other words, Stähler exhibits authenticity by highly artificial means.

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<sup>57</sup> Exemplification as it is found in *drüber...* is distinguished from the standard type of reference of classical-romantic music. The latter type of exemplification emphasizes the quality of referentiality, not the sound qualities. It is based on *gestalts*: that is, sound configurations such as motives and themes, which, according to *gestalt* theory, derive from the relationship of their elements to each other. The former type of exemplification is based on the similarities of sound qualities.

<sup>58</sup> Gerhard Stähler, '.rs.tz', *Positionen*, 40 (1999), pp. 17–19: p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> See also Kutschke, *Neue Linke/Neue Musik*, Kapitel VIII; and Beate Kutschke, 'Neue Natürlichkeit – Das Verhältnis zwischen semiotischer und "natürlicher" Authentizität in der Avantgardemusik', in Alexandra Kleihues (ed.), *Realitätseffekte: Ästhetische Repräsentation des Alltäglichen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2008), pp. 135–52.