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The electronic cry: Voice and gender in electroacoustic music

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I

A BACKGROUND

At the onset of my research into gender issues in electrovocal music, the first and foremost question was a simple ‘how to’. Studies on gender issues in electroacoustic music are sparse; despite the fact that discussion on gender issues is encouraged by several leading organisations and scholars in the field, it is actually not practised by many.¹ The prevalent discourse on electroacoustic music is to a large extent technical or formalist. It is difficult to see how such an approach can be related to gender issues – except by pointing out that it is remarkable that gender is seldom discussed in the predominantly male world of electroacoustic music. Consequently, I explored neighbouring disciplines such as feminist musicology, gender and technology studies, women’s studies, cultural analysis, film studies and sound studies for inspiration and background.

Or, it may have been the other way around: that this research was the result of my interest to study electroacoustic music in other but technical and formalist terms, joined with my particular interest in all aspects regarding the voice. Gender issues present a good point of entry into important cultural issues away from the mere

¹ For the International Computer Music Conference 1995 in Banff, Canada, gender issues was one of the themes for which submissions were invited and encouraged. Gender issues were a theme for submissions at some other ICMC and most Electroacoustic Music Studies Network conferences as well, however, this resulted in very few papers on this topic.

Important publications are by Andra McCartney (1995 a, b, c; 1996; 1997; 2000a, b; 2006) and Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner (2006). For the academic journal *Organised Sound*, I was invited as a guest editor for a thematic issue on gender and music technology (2003, 8/1).

In the latest edition of his book on electronic and experimental music, Thom Holmes testifies both of the status quo of the predomination of male composers in accounts of electroacoustic music and his intention to include more women: ‘to provide a global view of electronic music culture that celebrates the diversity of men and women in the field.’ (Holmes 2008: xiv) One of the key changes of the new edition is an ‘expanded diversity of coverage’:

Texts in this field usually place their greatest emphasis on the accomplishments of European and American men in electronic music. *Electronic and experimental music* uses many opportunities to broaden the discussion to the compelling and normally under-reported accomplishments of women, minorities, and composers from other countries [...] (Holmes 2008: xiii)

formalist-technical discourse. In addition, gender issues proffer specific theoretical contexts.

I came upon several gender issues pertinent for my research, that resonate, so to speak, strongly with the music, in relation to the (non-)verbality of the voice, to live performance, to the listener's position, to authorship and as regards the question whether any specific feminine style may be delineated. Several of these issues are related, but not restricted to gender – a situation characteristic of the 'third phase' approach in gender studies that will be further discussed below.

Why electroacoustic music? Admittedly, electroacoustic music is a niche; concurrently, however, it is a 'laboratory' where all kinds of musical, conceptual and institutional issues surface that have a bearing beyond the genre as such. The introduction of new technologies may cause breaches which reveal or change the underlying conventions, norms and values (Pinch & Bijsterveld 2003: 538). In the following chapters, I will discuss these fundamental issues that are relevant both in other musical genres and outside of music per se: the role of the female voice; the use of language versus non-verbal vocal sounds; the relation of voice, embodiment and gender; issues of authorship; *écriture féminine* or feminine style. The electroacoustic compositions studied by me in this research offer rich opportunities to show, discuss, elaborate on and question these issues. What does the breach of musical conventions in electroacoustic music reveal about musical gender norms and values? Electroacoustic music is generally held to be innovative, experimental or avant-garde; but do its technological and musical innovations entail changes in gendered conventions as well?

Before turning to these main issues, this chapter will first break some preparatory ground. What is electroacoustic music? Why is its discourse to a large extent formalist and technical? How does this formalist or technical discourse relate to gender? What is feminist musicology and how does my research relate to the field of gender studies?² What is my methodological approach and how to position my research?

² By 'feminist musicology', I also refer to women's studies of music and musicology and to gender studies of music and musicology.

I.1.1 What is electroacoustic music?

What is electroacoustic music, computer music, acousmatic music, *musique concrète*, tape music, sonic art, radiophonics, soundscape? Definition of these (sub-)genres has caused extensive discussion.³ ‘Electro-acoustic music’ is used as a collective term in for example the lemma in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* by Simon Emmerson and Denis Smalley (2001). Their definition of electroacoustic music is:

Music in which electronic technology, now primarily computer-based, is used to access, generate, explore and configure sound materials, and in which loudspeakers are the prime medium of transmission. (Emmerson & Smalley 2001: 59)

Despite the apparent generality of this definition, it transpires from the subsequent discussion in Emmerson & Smalley (2001) that they refer to art music, not to pop music. And though Emmerson & Smalley (2001: 60) state that “[e]lectro-acoustic” gradually became the dominant term’, in many other publications, it is the term ‘electronic music’ which is used as the general term. Thus, Joel Chadabe:

Electronic music includes all music made with electronics, whether specifically with computer, synthesizer, or any other special equipment. [...] Among other terms in current use, *computer music* too specifically connotes music made with general-purpose computers, *synthesizer music* is too specifically related to synthesizers, and *electroacoustic music* suggests, at least to me, systems that combine electronic and acoustic sound generators. Electronic music, to my way of thinking, is the generic term, even if in Germany it may cause confusion with *elektronische Musik*, which refers specifically to the philosophy of the Cologne studio in the early 1950s. (Chadabe 1997: x)

Landy (2007) states that ‘electronic music’ is the preferred general term in the USA, whereas ‘electroacoustic music’ is used in the UK, France, Canada and South-America. Peter Manning (2004) argues that the term ‘electroacoustic’ music is more

³ For an overview of the various terms and their various definitions (for most terms, there are several different definitions possible), see Landy (2007: 5–19).

For a discussion of the definition and demarcation of electronic and electroacoustic music, sound art and various other (meta-/sub-)genres, see Demers (2010).

Lively discussions about the naming of the (sub-)genres took place on for example the international e-mail discussion list of the Canadian Electroacoustic Community. In 2012, this list had more than 600 subscribers from more than 20 countries. See <http://cec.sonus.ca/cec-conference/index.html>

appropriate because it does not refer to the production techniques (like ‘electronic’ or ‘computer’).⁴

In academic terms, there is much to commend this particular definition [electroacoustic music], because it does not attempt to partition the medium in terms of the techniques by which sound material is generated, processed and organized. Instead, it focuses attention on the very special nature of the acoustic results, taking account of the fact that these will always be reproduced via loudspeakers or headphones. It thus follows from this line of argument that any critical evaluation of electroacoustic works should be based in the first instance on the perceived results and not in terms of the technical means by which they have been achieved. (Manning 2004: 403–404).

His argument that the term ‘electroacoustic music’ is a term that refers not to production techniques but to sonic, musical and artistic characteristics, relates to the critique on the technological-formalist discourse of electronic art music, as I shall further discuss below. However, Manning prefers the term ‘electronic music’ because it has more appeal for a wider audience; ‘electroacoustic’ and ‘acousmatic’ have an elitist connotation.

These definitions of ‘electroacoustic’ and ‘acousmatic’, however, present very real problems to a wider public, as, unlike terms such as ‘electronic’ or ‘computer’, they have no obvious roots in the experiences of everyday life. As a result, they represent for many a vision of an art form that is both elitist and inaccessible. Whereas there are indeed many electroacoustic composers and performers who seek exclusivity in such a perspective, within the broader picture such attributes are unhelpful and indeed misleading. In the same way that common usage ultimately determines the evolution of language, so any attempt to force unfamiliar terminology in the current context is ultimately counterproductive to a better understanding of the medium. (Manning 2004: 404).

This argument hints at the crisis of electroacoustic music as an elitist art form seeking an audience.

⁴ The now common use of the computer for recording, editing, transformation, manipulation, analysis and synthesis of sound diffuses the boundaries between ‘computer music’ and other subgenres like ‘tape music’. There is no strict division between analogue and digital electronic music since techniques from the analogue studio are implemented on the computer and because digital and analogue equipment are used next and after one another for the same music. The competition and festival Ars Electronica 1999 (Linz, Austria) came with the category Digital Musics as an overarching term, to open the old category ‘computer music’ for new developments. However, in my view digital technology is not essential: much music made on computers is conceptually close to tape music, and much ‘digital music’ comes from an extension of the developments that started with analogue equipment. Moreover, to assume a musical divide between analogue and digital music would be a form of technological determinism. Or, as Bruno Bossis states in relation to electro-vocal music:

As such, great technological breakthroughs, such as the advent of digitalisation, have not systematically brought about stylistic renewal. There is not a corresponding style for each technology. (Bossis 2004: 94; see also Bossis 2005: 280, 287)

Other than his generic definition suggests, few electronic pop music is discussed in Chadabe's history of electronic music.⁵ Although in pop music⁶ many electronic devices are used, generally pop music is set apart from electroacoustic/electronic music both by way of certain musical characteristics,⁷ and the type of institutions or organisations involved (such as studio's, record labels, radio programmes). Principally, books on the history of electronic/electroacoustic music contain a treatise on electronic/electroacoustic art music, while few pop musicians are discussed (e.g., Weiland & Tempelaars 1982; Holmes 1985; Schwartz 1989; Holmes 2002; Holmes 2008; Manning 1985; Manning 2004).⁸ However, in recent years, as testified by the emergence of publications, conferences and university courses, scholars in the field of electroacoustic music have turned their attention to pop music, whereby both postmodernism, and the pressure to reach more audiences, readers and students may have played a part. Manning (2004) devotes a chapter to an overview of developments in pop music. Nick Collins and Julio d'Escriván (2007) use the term 'electronic music' to cover the 'various continua' between electroacoustic music and popular electronica (3). Indeed, they aim to bridge the divide between art and pop music and 'hope to reconcile the electroacoustic and electronic worlds' (4). Holmes (2008: 408) states that '[e]lectronic music and rock music were separated at birth but destined to meet again after adolescence.' However, by examining 'artists who contributed to the popularization of electronic music in commercial music' (Holmes 2008: 408), Holmes homes this 'meeting' only from the standpoint of electronic art music. Finally, as regards the

⁵ Chadabe (1997) mentions some pop musicians as users of specific equipment or software, such as Golden Earring, Peter Gabriel, U2, Emerson Lake & Palmer, Stevie Wonder, Todd Rundgren, Mothers of Invention, Yes, Pink Floyd, Herbie Hancock, Roxy Music and Brian Eno.

⁶ I use 'pop music' as an umbrella term that contains 'rock music'. See for a discussion of these terms and the preference for 'pop music' as an umbrella term Voorvelt (1998). Music does not have to be really popular, that is, have a very large audience, to be called 'pop music'.

⁷ My crude description of the musical difference: Most pop music has formal, melodic, rhythmic and/or harmonic features that are easily recognized and remembered. In general, electronic/electroacoustic music has few clear, easy to recognize melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements and few repetition; it is seldom possible to sing along with it; it is more difficult to recognize and remember.

For an extensive account of the productional and musical characteristics of pop music, see Voorvelt (1998).

⁸ On the other hand, sometimes 'electronic music' refers to synthesizer music; then, the main emphasis is on pop music (e.g., Darter & Armbruster 1984).

relation of electroacoustic music and pop music, it should be noted that experimental pop music and (some forms of) electronica have a particular position: not primarily commercial but neither subsidized, not popular, not entertainment, not academic, not art music; with a dedicated audience that is small but larger than for academic electroacoustic music (Voorvelt 1998, see also Landy 2007: 146–151).

Joanna Demers (2010) defines ‘electronic music’ as the generic term:

Electronic music is any type of music that makes primary, if not exclusive, use of electronic instruments or equipment. It encompasses electroacoustic music, which often enlists acoustic instruments along with electronics, as well as purely electronically produced sounds. Electronic music thus inhabits a large expanse of genres, styles, and practices. (Demers 2010: 5)

Such a broad definition is problematic, because nowadays almost all music production or consumption involves some form of electronics.

At the start of the twenty-first century, a good deal of the world’s music contains electronic sounds that come from instruments such as synthesizers, samplers, or laptops. Few would be so inclusive as to argue that any work featuring a synthesizer should automatically count as electronic music, but approaching an adequately descriptive definition of electronic music proves challenging nonetheless. (Demers 2010: 6)

Demers (2010: 6) distinguishes three ‘meta-genres’ in electronic music: ‘institutional electroacoustic music’, ‘electronica’ (commercial electronic music considered ‘popular’ but without a large audience), and ‘sound art’ (with ‘nonnarrative sound’, often site-specific, more linked to art than to music). However, both in theory and in practice there is an overlap between these three meta-genres.⁹ Some electroacoustic institutions are trying to include more ‘popular’ or ‘younger’ forms of electroacoustic/electronic music, like electronica. Moreover, there is also a small non-academic, non-practising but dedicated audience for electroacoustic music, especially when it is presented outside of academia, such as on public radio, concert halls and in museums.¹⁰ Eminent ‘participant’ composer Barry Truax (1999) considers electroacoustic music to be ‘neither elitist nor populist’. In his view it is neither high art nor popular music, but ‘a niche carved between the borders of popular culture, artistic tradition, and industry’ (Truax 1999).

⁹ Demers (2010: 9) states that, paradoxically, what electroacoustic music, electronica and sound art have in common, is their ‘rhetoric of distinction’. But Demers argues that this insistence on distinction is deceptive, because the separate genres of electronic music have shared preoccupations.

¹⁰ This refers especially to the situation in the Netherlands.

Below I shall use the term ‘electroacoustic music’ to refer to the genre that is the subject matter of my dissertation. Its academic connotation, as mentioned by Manning (2004: 404), is rather appropriate, because it has indeed a strong academic presence and it is art music as opposed to pop music. Notwithstanding the various attempts to include pop/rock music, it is clear that electroacoustic music differs from the various forms of popular music. Demers definition appears to be adequate:

[I]nstitutional electroacoustic music includes works featuring samples and synthesized materials as well as those involving traditional instruments subjected to signal processing. The audiences for institutional electroacoustic music consist of small communities of academics and practioners. Participants in these communities tend to view their music as elite and intellectual rather than popular or accessible. (Demers 2010: 6)

My research deals with electroacoustic music that contains vocal sounds, whether pre-recorded, live, manipulated and/or synthesized. For this, I coined the term ‘electro-vocal music’.¹¹ In Chapter II, a sizeable representative body of compositions was selected to be able to trace some general tendencies with regard to gender and voice in this music; the criteria on the basis of which I have made this selection are explained there. Subsequent chapters will home in on individual compositions that are relevant to the theoretical themes at issue. There is a vast amount of pertinent electro-vocal music. To take all of this music into consideration within the framework of my research, would have been neither possible, nor pivotal inasmuch as my purpose is to develop some theoretical issues with analyses of some relevant compositions, rather than an exhaustive discussion of all relevant compositions. Consequently, mainly electroacoustic compositions with female voice shall be examined.¹²

¹¹ My term ‘electro-vocal’ is related to the term ‘artificial vocality’ of Bruno Bossis (2004, 2005). Bossis points out that artificial vocality is based on a perceptual analogy with the voice, and that there is no strict division between recorded, manipulated, transformed, synthesized and simulated voice sounds, both from a perceptual and a technical point of view (Bossis 2004: 91; 2005: 223). Neither is there a strict division between artificial vocal and non-vocal sounds; between these poles there is a continuum (Bossis 2004: 92; 2005: 274, 287–288).

¹² Thus, no attention is paid in this study to for example the canonic composition *Gesang der Jünglinge* by Karlheinz Stockhausen. A discussion of compositions with children’s voices (such as *Gesang*) would be interesting for another study.

I.1.2 Electroacoustic music, modernism and formalist-technological discourse

In her ethnographic study on IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique)¹³ Georgina Born (1995) presents the distinction between electronic art music and pop music as a central issue. She shows that the aesthetics, practices and politics of IRCAM, its music and its research, are thoroughly modernist. Its ‘scientific and technological discourses on music tend constantly toward the transcendent and universalizing’ (Born 1995: 20), founded on notions of progress, with the implicitly white, western, male subject as main actor. The believe in and quest for perceptual and musical universals is dominant (however, these ‘universals’ may be based on the perceptions of a limited number of individuals people from within their own circle, implying that as such their universal nature is by definition questionable) (Born 1995: 202). Pop music is an ‘Other’ in this modernist practice.

Born distinguishes six characteristics of the composite aesthetic modernism that started with different artistic movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and that prefigured the major characteristics of IRCAM culture:

- 1) a self-conscious experimentation with form and ‘language’ of art as a reaction against the prior aesthetic and philosophical forms of romanticism and classicism; in musical terms: the rejection of earlier harmonic and melodic forms and of tonality;
- 2) a fascination with new media, technology and science; e.g. futurism;
- 3) theoreticism: a proliferation of manifestos and theoretical texts, often preceding creative processes;
- 4) political rhetoric, vanguard and interventionist aims, primarily directed at the art environment itself (its audience and institutions) and without a broader political scope; with a rhetoric of progress, constant innovation and change;
- 5) an oscillation between rationalism and irrationalism, objectivism and subjectivism; with modernist rationalism allied to the importation of science and technology;

¹³ The main part of Born’s ethnographic fieldwork at IRCAM was done in 1984; she also discusses the later developments in the early 1990’s (Born 1995: 8, 11). She argues that ‘many themes of the analysis are not temporally specific’ and were still relevant at the time of publication (Born 1995: 11).

- 6) ambivalent relations with and otherness from popular, commercial, mass culture (in the form of disinterest, hostility, or occasional fascination or borrowing) (Born 1995: 40-45).

Serialism is the main modernist development in art music. *Pure* serialism has not had a long life, but its principles and its technique had a lasting impact. It was mainly based in Europe and universities of the East Coast of the USA.

It is [...] the serialists who best exemplify mid-century musical modernism and who became established internationally, beginning in the 1950s, as the dominant tradition of the musical avant-garde. This was a hegemony in which the Europeans and the East Coast Americans, despite the apparent conflict arising from their differing positions in the field, were ultimately collusive. (Born 1995: 54)

Serialism played an important role in the development of electronic music after the second world war. The principal serialist composers Karlheinz Stockhausen, Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt were defining figures in electronic music: Stockhausen and Babbitt by virtue of their compositions and theoretical work, Boulez as the founding director of the prestigious IRCAM. The electronic music of the serialists was motivated by the search for 'total control': for serialists, electronic music was instrumental to obtain exactly calculated timing, timbres and pitches – out of reach with human performers and conventional musical instruments. Sciences like acoustics, physics, phonetics and mathematics are important for electronic music, not only in terms of the development of electronic musical tools, but also of aesthetic theories and compositions. Scientism and theoreticism are prominent characteristics of postwar musical modernism (Born 1995: 50–56).

Born categorizes the experimental music of composers inspired by John Cage as postmodern. According to Born, experimental music is different from modernist music in that it shows interest in social and political issues, often has flirtations with Eastern philosophies, welcomes live performance and improvisation, references to other, popular or non-western, music, and in its artisanal and pragmatic use of technology, preferring cheap and small systems; it is mainly based in the West Coast of the USA; examples are *Musica Elettronica Viva*, Richard Teitelbaum, Gordon Mumma, David Behrman, Max Neuhaus, Hugh Davies, Cornelius Cardew, the Scratch Orchestra and AMM (Born 1995: 57-61). Often, these musicians considered the designing and building of electronic instruments as a kind of composing. Experimental composers often polemically criticized the modernist (post)serialists and were in many ways antagonistic to it.

Experimentalists rejected both the implicit elitism of the serialist adherence to inaccessible and expensive high technologies found only in large and official institutions and the universalizing high rationalism and scientism with which these technologies were deployed. They countered determinism and formalism with technological empiricism and with live, social, improvised, and performance-based use. Above all they countered 'high-tech domination' with a practice centered on the celebration of the small and low-tech. (Born 1995: 59)

However, Born points also to some significant common characteristics of the modernist and experimental art music movements.¹⁴ Both consider Varèse as a predecessor. Both are characterized by a strong belief in the necessity of technology as a source for new sounds, in 'experimentation' and 'research'.¹⁵ In both movements, theorization abounds; Cage, Xenakis, Schaeffer, Babbitt, Boulez and Stockhausen all wrote extensively about their musical ideas. Both (post)serialist and experimental music are embedded in the subsidized high art world; and both are defined by their otherness from commercial, popular music.¹⁶ Despite the fact that in experimental music, there sometimes are references to pop music by way of a collage, these still function as strange elements, and Born consequently continues to qualify them as 'other' (Born 1995: 61–64). Both (post-)serialist and experimental music are distant from the aesthetics and circuits of commercial popular music.

Two unities bind the antinomy: a belief in the necessity, and the exploration, of technology (increasingly evident from the postserialist period); but above all the assertion of difference from popular music and culture. (Born 1995: 64)

Born relates the controversy between the French IRCAM and GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales) to the differences between modernist and post-modernist art music. According to Born, IRCAM, with Boulez as founding director, was in 1984

¹⁴ I consider these two movements to be even more implicated and related to each other; Born's emphasis on the differences between these movements, and their internal coherence, seems too much based on their ideological polemics instead of their multifaceted musical practices. For example, Paul van Emmerik (1996) showed that the systematic composition methods of John Cage, the 'father' of experimental music, are related to serialism.

¹⁵ Edgard Varèse also used scientific rhetoric with words such as 'research', 'experimentation' and 'laboratory' (Born 1995: 51).

¹⁶ Born considers pop and art music as primarily defined by their different socioeconomic circuits: 'But whatever the sound, the point is that overall, the music as culture remains defined by its primary socioeconomic circuit. Avant-garde rock remains rock; pop-influenced art music remains art music.' (Born 1995: 21).

firmly rooted in the modernist tradition with its ‘anti-empiricist technological and scientific research and development’ (Born 1995: 59). Yet, Born places the *musique concrète* of the smaller GRM (initiated by Pierre Schaeffer) on the side of experimental empiricism. *Musique concrète* is made of recorded sounds, manipulated and organized by ear; serialist music, on the other hand, is planned according to abstract principles.¹⁷ Born found that one of the consequences of this antagonism was that ‘techniques associated with *musique concrète* – tape recording, analogue electronics – were subject to an almost irrational neglect and indifference within IRCAM culture’ (Born 1995: 77). On the other hand, Born stresses that there are many commonalities between the practices of IRCAM and of GRM: the concept of music research, the involvement of acoustics and psychoacoustics in the compositional milieu, the focus on timbre as a structural dimension, and the abundance of theorization (Born 1995: 77). I would like to add that Schaeffer’s inclination towards systematization, as found in his *sofège* system for sounds, and his focus on sound as abstract, pure, non-referential perception, are also modernist characteristics.

Another example of both the combination of, and the tension between, empiricism and formalism is the influential article of Denis Smalley ‘Spectro-morphology and Structuring Processes’ (1986), inspired by Schaeffer’s work. Smalley stresses the primacy of empirical aural perception and warns against its neglect in formalist, conceptual approaches. However, Smalley’s ‘spectro-morphology’ is presented as a taxonomy, a classification of types, shapes and motions of sound forms. It refers to abstract forms of sound-in-time and there are no references to specific musical examples. The spectro-morphological approach is characterized by ‘reduced listening’, in which the focus is on sound as such and no attention is paid to signification. Smalley emphasizes that he found a remarkable consensus in the evaluation of electroacoustic works, and conceives this as ‘indicating an instinctive evaluation of the newer spectro-morphological values’ (Smalley 1986: 63). Notably, this assumption of ‘instinctive’ spectro-morphological aural perception and evaluation is based on the experiences of a small and highly specialized group of people: composers and performers of

¹⁷ See Emmerson 1986 for an elaboration on the difference between the composition of syntax based on a priori, ‘abstract’ principles versus syntax ‘abstracted’ from the aural experience of the composer with the sound material, that Emmerson considers as the essential difference between the *elektronische Musik* that originated in Cologne and *musique concrète* that originated in Paris, both just after World War II.

electroacoustic music and attendants of electroacoustic music concerts and courses (Smalley 1986: 63). In line with this is his notion of the ‘universal listener’, represented by the composer (Smalley 1986: 81). Moreover, Smalley positions his project in the modernist Western musical tradition of atonality, serialism, the emancipation of timbre and the development of electronic music. He stresses its difference from the tonality of ‘vernacular’ musical language, i.e. popular music. Smalley uses a modernist rhetoric in which radical change, progression and heritage are combined:

In conclusion, we claim that the very rapid development of spectro-morphology is the most radical change in Western musical history. In less than fifty years the materials of music have changed utterly, and we must now realize that spectro-morphological thinking is the rightful heir of Western musical tradition. (1986: 93)

In his 1997-‘extensive rewriting’ of this 1986-article, discussed below in I.3.2, Smalley pays more attention to the subjective nature of spectro-morphology and is more explicit about the tension between the subjectivity and the formalism of his approach. Smalley’s articles are ‘snapshots’ of his theoretical and musical development (Lewis 2011: 2) and show the changes in the ideological climate of electroacoustic music and of its wider cultural environment.

Electroacoustic music is a broad, diverse field with both modernist and postmodernist characteristics, intermingled in diverse ways. In my view, it makes more sense to speak of (post-)modernist *features* than of (post-)modernist *music*. Equally, after Born’s study was published in 1995, more and more stylistic and ideological features were re-combined and re-defined, and more and more borders between musical genres were crossed. Technological developments of increasing computer memory and computing power helped to dissolve the border between live electronic music and tape music. The field of ‘experimental’ live electronics is related to ‘institutional’ computer music. Indeed, recently, modernist and experimental electroacoustic music are more and more felt as standing next to each other, in that they appear in the same CD series, radio programs, books or study programmes. In the traditions of both modernist and experimental/post-modernist electronic art music, abstract, systematic, formalist, technological, scientific and/or universalist discourses are abundant; however, other

theoretical approaches were developed, especially since the late 1990s.¹⁸ The formalist/objectivistic aspects in the discourse of electroacoustic music will be my concern in I.3, without claiming that this discourse consists monolithically of these aspects.

¹⁸ As for example the conferences of the EMS network show, where papers are presented that relate to issues of meaning and social-cultural context, among other topics. See <http://www.ems-network.org> (last accessed 1 May 2013).

I.2 Feminist musicology

What is feminist musicology and how does my research relate to it? Feminist musicology (or gender studies) is not merely relevant for my research because of its focus on gender. Feminist musicology is a major development in musicology that has contributed substantially to the so-called ‘new musicology’ that has established itself since the 1980s.¹⁹ Moreover, feminist musicology offers a theoretical framework that is convenient to discern different positions and approaches to gender, music history and music analysis. And last but not least, gender studies and feminist musicology are not only relevant for women’s issues, but also for musicology as a whole, on a fundamental level.

‘If gender is an issue for all people, how can we imagine that gender is marginal to the scholarly study of any human activity?’, asks Suzanne Cusick (1999a: 474). She argues that the very exclusion of Ruth Crawford by reason of her gender at the founding of the New York Musicological Society²⁰ in 1930, demonstrates that gender was fundamental for American musicology.

[The story of the exclusion of Ruth Crawford] reveals that to the founders of American musicology theirs was a kind of work that could be understood as gendered. Its gender, moreover, was unstable enough that musicology risked being mistaken for ‘woman’s work’ unless biological women were excluded from performing its practice. [...] the New York Musicological Society entered the cultural and corporate order – became an official and comprehensible voice in American intellectual life – by separating itself from the feminine. (Cusick 1999a: 473)

Cusick argues that since music per se was already considered to be feminine, it was crucial for the young discipline musicology, in order to safeguard its proper status, to dissociate itself from the inferior position of women. To ensure it was perceived to have a serious, objective and sound academic position, musicology had to be separated and demarcated from the feminine, and defined to be universal rather than gendered. This marginality of gender to musicology is one of the issues that feminist musicology has to deal with, argues Cusick.

¹⁹ See for example Kerman (1985) and McClary (1989), McClary (1991), McClary (1994), and McClary’s other publications.

²⁰ The American Musicological Society was the successor of the New York Musicological Society (Cusick 1999a: 471).

Cusick (1999a: 482) boils the diverse approaches of feminist musicology down to two basic questions:

- 1) where are the women in music and music history?
- 2) what are the representations of women in music?

The first question does not only refer to the quest for female composers, but is also related to the object and domain of musicology. Thus, women have been and are actively involved in music to a large extent as musicians/performers and as teachers – roles that despite being crucial were nonetheless traditionally underrated by musicology. '[M]usicology remains serenely detached from what its founders characterized as the "woman's work" of reproducing musical practice' (Cusick 1999a: 480). The second question also leads to fundamental debates: on the issue of meaning and representation in relation to absolute, autonomous music and its feminine or masculine gender. Concurrently with re-gendering musicology, feminine musicological practices are developed – yet another fundamental impact of feminist musicology on the discipline. Below, I will discuss some feminine versus masculine approaches to musical analysis.

But first, I will elaborate upon the various forms of feminist musicology by discussing other categorizations. Dame (1994) discerns three phases in feminist musicology,²¹ following the distinction of three phases in feminist/women's studies in general as elaborated by Buikema & Smelik (1993) and Braidotti (1994).²² These three phases are referred to as

- (i) similarity,
- (ii) difference,
- (iii) deconstruction.

The first phase is often labelled as liberal feminism, and 'is characterized by resistance against the political and social subordination of women' (Dame 1994: 21); the aim is 'to abolish the social and cultural difference between women and men' (Buikema & Smelik 1993: 19). The equality between women and men is stressed. In general, for

²¹ The feminist musicology to which Dame refers, started with publications in the beginning of the 1980s. Since I propose to consider the three phases of feminist musicology not as historical periods, but as different approaches that may occur at the same time, I will not mention any periodization in relation to these phases.

²² Dame's essay 'Theme and Variations: Feminist Musicology' appeared in Buikema & Smelik 1993 (Dutch) and Buikema & Smelik 1995 (English translation) and is included in Dame 1994 (in a revised version).

example, first phase feminist science turns to existing scientific rational and empiricist methods, and aims at getting more women into science and other male dominated areas (Wajcman 1991). Buikema & Smelik discuss two main areas of attention as part of the first phase: a) search for female authors, composers, etc., to supply the predominantly male canon with works by women; b) analysis of and critique on stereotypical, sexist representations of women in literature, film, etc. (Buikema & Smelik 1993: 17-29).

First phase feminist musicology is, according to Dame, characterized by the discovery and promotion of women composers and their work, with publication of scores, recordings and biographies; and by research on the status of women (composers, performers, patronesses) in music; and centres on the core question: why there are so few women in the musical canon.²³ Dame points out that it is characteristic for this first phase that it is seen as a transient catch-up; Dame quotes Citron's remark that 'the ultimate goal is not separatism but integration into the mainstream of Western musical history' (Citron 1990: 104).

The second phase is characterized by a positive interest in femininity. It is a critique on the tendency that equality between men and women often entails that women are made to adapt to the practices and values of men. Specific feminine practices are explored and re-valued, like in eco-feminism, *écriture féminine* or in the idea of a feminine epistemology. Often, this is labelled, in critique, as 'essentialism': assuming that women are essentially different from men (whether because of their biology, their genes, their upbringing or their cultural position), one risks to define masculinity and femininity as fixed positions and to neglect differences between women and between men as well as cross-gender identifications.

Second phase feminist musicology is concerned with looking for a specific feminine way of composing, according to Dame; the central question is: in which way are compositions by women different from compositions by men, is there a specific feminine style in music? Dame notes that this question is problematic and that it seems difficult to answer. Dame mentions several reasons for this. Firstly, there is few referential signification in music and it is difficult to verbalize music, and as McClary (1991) argues, there even seems to be a taboo on questions of signification in music.

²³ See for example Citron (1993).

Moreover, unlike in French literature, there seems to be no (explicit) movement of *écriture féminine* in music, although Dame does suggest some *écriture féminine musicale*. (I will pursue the idea of *écriture féminine musicale* in respect of electro-vocal music in Chapter VIII.)²⁴

The third phase is to a certain extent a critique on the essentialism of the second phase. Femininity and masculinity are viewed as social-cultural-historical constructions that are changeable. The emphasis is not anymore on difference as a binary opposition, but on pluralistic differences. Other differences, like race, class and sexuality, are taken into account. Instead of the term ‘Woman’ of the second phase, in the third phase the term ‘women’ is used, as it does not refer to one homogeneous group.

Third phase feminist musicology consists, according to Dame, of semiotic research of explicit and implicit representations of women and femininity in music.²⁵ Dame characterizes the third phase as the deconstruction of the binary oppositions masculinity and femininity, under influence of French theorists like Foucault, Lacan, Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray and Derrida. Queer musicology is also an exponent of this third phase (Brett, Wood & Thomas 1994 was the first main publication in this field).

Third phase feminist theory and gender studies tend to wander off in other directions than the topics of ‘women’ and gender. Gender difference is extrapolated to ‘diversity’ and to other actual social issues such as migration. Another development is ‘post-feminism’ in its diverse forms. In the 1990s, a new generation of women grew up with the accomplishments of earlier feminism; they took these for granted, were unaware of the complexities of feminist history and theory, rejected the notion of victimhood and, at its most extreme, took the stance that feminism had altogether outlived its need.²⁶

After Dame’s account in 1994, many feminist musicological publications appeared. 1997 saw the birth of the academic journal *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*. There has been a proliferation of publications on gender/women

²⁴ As an exception Dame mentions ethnomusicological studies on women’s musical traditions in non-Western musical cultures with a strong separation of men’s and women’s spheres; and popular music studies.

²⁵ See Koskoff (2005) on the adverse effects of postmodern theories for feminist ethnomusicology, when compared to their function for feminist musicology.

²⁶ On third wave (post-)feminism and musicology, see Citron (2004), Peraino (2001) and McClary (2000). See Buikema & Van der Tuin (2009) for an overview of gender studies in media, art and culture (with no contribution on musicology).

and music with various theoretical and methodological approaches and orientations and related to various musical genres. Moreover, feminist musicology, as the main exponent of ‘new musicology’, was equally of great influence on musicological studies outside its domain. Thus, feminist musicology was absorbed into other new or mainstream approaches. In 2012, veteran feminist musicologist Marcia Citron wrote:

Though it is true that the quantity of research devoted solely to women has decreased, women and their concerns now inform all kinds of studies, with women in all kinds of roles: as performers, composers, collaborators, patrons, subjects of works, a category of representation, and so on. (Citron 2012: 445)

Dame has formulated yet another characterization of the three phases of feminist musicology, similar to developments in literary studies: as an emphasis on respectively

- (i) author (composer),
- (ii) text (music)
- (iii) listener.²⁷

In the third phase, Dame conceives the gendered listener as the determining factor in the process of signification. For this listener-response theory, see VII.1.1. Dame argues that feminist musicologists reinterpret the musical canon in terms of *resisting listeners*, similar to Judith Fetterley's ‘resisting reader’.²⁸ Dame discusses McClary's *Feminine Endings* (1991) as an example of this resisting listening and feminist criticism.

Paula Higgins, in her review of *Feminine Endings*, provides a different periodization of feminist literary studies on the one hand and musicological studies on the other hand (1993: 191 n75). Higgins describes the trajectory of feminist criticism in literary studies as follows:

- 1) “‘images of women’ criticism, focusing exclusively on the work of male writers and the negative stereotypes and pernicious misogyny of their texts’ (1960s and early 1970s);
- 2) ‘gynocriticism’, focusing on women writers and their literary production (1970s);
- 3) gender studies (rather than women's studies) with a ‘renewed interest in the male canon beyond the earlier “images of women” criticism phase’, concentrating on

²⁷ This tripartition resembles the tripartition of ‘poietic’, ‘neutral’ and ‘esthetic’ level as theorized by Nattiez (1990 and earlier publications) based on the work of Jean Molino (Nattiez 1990: 15).

²⁸ Dame refers to Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

“constructions of gender” by both male and female writers’ and on sexuality (1980s).²⁹

Higgins contrasts this development with that of feminist criticism in music, ‘beginning with the historical reconstructions of the lives and works of ignored women composers and musicians, but often without the feminist theoretical apparatus typical of gynocriticism’. Higgins classifies McClary's work in all three phases:

- 1) criticism of stereotypical ‘images of women’ like the transgressive ‘Madwoman’ (e.g., in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Schönberg's *Erwartung*) and Bizet's *Carmen*;
- 2) discussion of the feminine aspects of works by women (Janika Vandervelde, Laurie Anderson, Madonna);
- 3) ‘gender criticism’ of work of Monteverdi and Beethoven and ‘gay criticism’ of Tchaikovsky’s work.

Higgins (though, in general terms sympathetic with *Feminine Endings*) criticizes McClary (1991) for paying too little attention to female composers and to the tradition of feminist musicology mainly concerned with women composers. She perceives her writings to be dismissive about the historical work of feminist musicologists that have edited scores and written biographies of women composers. (Likewise, when Dame's three phase model of feminist musicology is interpreted diachronically, a hierarchy is easily suggested in which a deconstructive interpretation of well-known works is more advanced than sampling, editing and documenting unknown works of women composers.) Higgins, to the contrary, argues that to inject women into the musicological discourse dominated by the notion of the male genius, is in itself already a critical act and consequently, the work of many feminist musicologists consisting of the very study of women composers, constitutes per se a critique on the existing musical practices; moreover, some of these historical studies formulate an explicit feminist critique on the

²⁹ The difference between the categorizations of Buikema & Smelik (1993), Dame (1994) and Higgins (1993) is mainly caused by the two different areas of attention in the first phase: a) critique on the exclusion of women from the canon; b) critique on stereotypical and negative representations of women. Maaïke Meijer categorizes feminist literary studies along two axes. She discerns three areas: a) critique on sexist stereotypes; b) female or feminine texts; c) theory. In each area, the phases 1) similarity, 2) difference and 3) deconstruction can be found. Critique on sexist stereotypes is mostly focused on similarity or deconstruction; investigation into female or feminine texts is mostly focused on similarity or difference; feminist literary theories relate to all three phases, according to Meijer (1993: 49).

social, cultural and sexual politics that affected the careers and musical production of the female composers concerned. Thereby, facts and theory are essentially intertwined: a theoretical or ideological framework determines what is considered as ‘fact’, why and how it is looked for, and why it is found important.

Recognizing that the best historical writing is inevitably critical, feminist thought considers even the most seemingly ‘objective’ and ‘value-neutral’ work of empirical, historical scholarship as being ideologically grounded in its subject matter, selection of documentation, and modes of interpretation. (Higgins 1993: 178).

A differentiation of feminist musicology in three phases (whether according to Dame or Higgins) is very helpful to structure this heterogeneous field. But rather than opposing different phases of feminist musicology, I would like to emphasize their simultaneity and interdependence. For not only are those three phases simultaneously present in different contemporary studies, but they may also coexist in one study. An example of this is the way Higgins classified McClary's *Feminine Endings* in all three phases; equally, Higgins' argument that the earlier feminist musicological studies are empirical as well as critical.

Yet another example of the intertwining of different feminist approaches is the research of Andra McCartney. McCartney (1997) interviewed fourteen Canadian women composers of electroacoustic music.³⁰ Their experiences and practices are discussed within a framework of feminist theory related to technology and to musicology. In addition, McCartney discusses the gendering of electroacoustic music in the language and imagery of publications and software, in institutional processes and in individual practices. McCartney does not merely report negative experiences of women in the electronic music world, but goes on to show positive feminine practices of those women when composing or teaching electronic music. McCartney's study is both empirical and theoretically well founded. McCartney refers to yet another tripartition of feminist theory by Sandra Harding.³¹

- a) *gender symbolism*,
- b) *gender structure* (the division of labour by gender) and
- c) *individual gender*.

³⁰ For a study on women composers of electroacoustic music in the United States, see the book by Hinkle-Turner (2006) and the reviews by Bosma (2007a) and Keathley (2009).

³¹ Sandra Harding. 1986. *The Science Question in Feminism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

McCartney pays attention to all three levels by analysing:

- a) language and imagery around electronic music;
- b) the institutions of electroacoustic music and the division of activities within them;
and
- c) the experiences of individual women composers.

Dame's three phases of feminist musicology are equally discernible in McCartney's study. McCartney focuses on women composers, thereby promoting their work (phase i); she criticizes the sexism of the institutions and practices of the electronic music world (phase i); she brings positive, specifically feminine practices to the fore (phase ii); and analyses and criticizes gender constructions and metaphors in the discourse of electroacoustic music (phase iii).³² Thus, while McCartney focuses on women composers (phase i), aspects of all three phases may be found in her work.

In my research, I do combine different approaches, but my point of departure and main focus is the postmodern approach of the third phase: a critical analysis of gender constructions in the music and in the discourse on and surrounding the music. My aim is not only to show how gender is involved in this apparently abstract music and its surrounding discourse, but also to formulate thematic approaches and ways of discussing and analysing electroacoustic music that go beyond gender. My focus is less on individual composers, but rather more on how gender issues are configured in electroacoustic compositions and the voices in these compositions. I consider the male composer – female voice paradigm as a gender issue; I focus on the female voice and do not take the authority of the male composer for granted. Throughout this study, I act as an active, resisting listener. However, in order to be able to share one's experience, interpretation and opinion, I consider it important to refer to the music as precisely as possible. Nonetheless, interpretation is never conclusive and always leaves room for or incites other interpretations.

This is the challenge any music research has to face: to be as specific and convincing as possible regarding the musical object, but at the same time accept that your analysis is just one interpretation of the many that are possible. (Meelberg 2011: 238)

³² An important exponent of third phase feminist studies is Donna Haraway, with her deconstructive notion of the cyborg, that defies the conventional dualistic categories of human – machine, masculine – feminine and nature – culture (Haraway 1991). McCartney (2000a) relates an electroacoustic composition of Hildegard Westerkamp to this notion of the cyborg.

For an elaboration of my position on musical analysis and interpretation, see I.4.

By incorporating elements of feminist musicology and film theory, I search for alternative conceptions of gender and voice in relation to electroacoustic music. Since psychoanalytic theory plays an important role in studies of the voice, I employ these concepts insofar as they help to track the relations between voice, gender and technology in electroacoustic music. Especially the work of musicologist Joke Dame and film scholar Kaja Silverman on the female voice were a great inspiration. Throughout this dissertation, aspects of their work are discussed that pertain to the particular topic in point. In Chapter II, III, IV, V and VI the roles of male and female voices in music are discussed in relation to the use of language, to live performance, to disembodied, pre-recorded, manipulated vocal sounds, and to the listener's position. Some of the issues may go beyond gender or beyond vocal music. Chapter VII questions the status of the author (composer) in relation to gender and to sound recording technology, and its role in compositions and the surrounding discourses. Criticizing predominant practices and canonical compositions entails writing mainly about music by male composers. This, in turn, risks reinforcing the hegemony of male composers in electroacoustic music (albeit in a critical way). To compensate this, I discuss the idea of *écriture féminine* in electroacoustic music in relation to the work of female composers in Chapter VIII.

I.3.1 Formalism, modernism and technology as masculine discourses

As discussed in I.1.2, there is a prevalence of formalist, objectivist and technological discourses in the field of electroacoustic music. Such formalist, objectivist, modernist and technological discourses have been criticized by feminist theorists and gender scholars as being implicitly (and sometimes even explicitly) masculine. They may suggest alternative feminine or feminist approaches, and/or strive beyond such gendered dualism.

Although women did and do invent, (re)produce and use technological artefacts like machines and computer programmes, technology in general is seen as a male domain. Technology is mostly associated with stereotypically masculine values as: activity, reason, control, independence, desire for knowledge, and a focus on things, technical processes and abstract ideas instead of human relations (Milthorp 1996). Technology is embedded in a masculine culture. As concerns electronic consumer goods, ‘brown goods’ like audio equipment (especially hi-fi), television and video players/recorders are perceived to be more masculine than ‘white goods’ like refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners (Cockburn & Omrod 1993). An emphatically technological approach in electroacoustic music resonates with these general stereotypes of masculinity.

Susan McClary (1989) argues vehemently against the discourse of ‘difficult’, modernist, academic, avant-garde music, as for example found in the theoretical writing of Pierre Boulez and Milton Babbitt. McClary attacks academic musical modernism for its contempt for the public, its supposed autonomy from social function and context, and the prestige awarded to ‘difficult’, unappealing, quasi-mathematical, formal explanations. According to McClary, this goes hand in hand with the exclusion of popular music and jazz on most universities. McClary (1989) posits a strong divide between musical modernism and postmodernism. In line with the anti-femininity and misogyny of modernist art and literature, McClary points to anti-femininity in modernist music, such as: ‘Charles Ives's pathetic insistence on his own exaggerated masculinity and his homophobic renunciations of predecessors and contemporaries’ (McClary 1989: 73); ‘Adorno's hysteria over the “castrating” effect of mass culture’ (McClary 1989: 73); ‘formalists attitudes of revulsion’ towards ‘effeminate romantic excess’ of expression (McClary 1989: 73); ‘the celebration of unyielding, “hard-core” procedures of academic

music' (McClary 1989: 73); and 'texts that feature the slashing of women' in innovative musical pieces (McClary 1989: 74).³³ Modernism is a 'refuge of masculine prestige' (McClary 1989: 71). However, McClary distinguishes between the theoretical discourse of modernist music, as for example the writings of Babbitt, and the musical compositions of such composers that could be interpreted in other ways (for example, Babbitt's *Philomel*). After a plea for more academic study and teaching of popular and post-modern music, she states:

The avant-garde must be studied as well, to be sure, though not exclusively in accordance with the autonomous terms it has tried to enforce. (McClary 1989: 76)

Fred Maus (1993) argues in a more general way that the formal, technical, objectivist music theoretical discourse is masculine. He bases this on generalisations about the gendering of thought and discourse in contemporary, middle-class, western society (thereby referring to feminist work in the social sciences and other fields).

Feminist writers have suggested that men are more likely to cultivate, and to value, quantitative, impersonal, rule-bound, competitive thought, while women more easily think in qualitative, personal, empathetic, improvisatory, collaborative ways. (Maus 1993: 266).

Maus stresses that this is not a universalist, essentialist claim, but a generalisation about stereotypes in a particular time and place. In this respect, it is not important whether women really think in a more personal etc. way; what counts here is that people, in this time and place, in general think or believe that being impersonal etc. is masculine.

If I claim, correctly, that someone avoids a type of behavior in the belief it is feminine, it need not be true that such behavior is in fact characteristic of women. (Maus 1993: 267)

Maus views American 'mainstream music theory', deriving from the work of Schenker, Babbitt and Forte, as a masculine discourse, and qualifies 'marginal', 'alternative', 'experience-oriented', 'phenomenological' or 'literary' writing about music (like that of James K. Randall, Benjamin Boretz and Elaine Barkin) and 'contextual analysis' as a feminine discourse. This does not reflect the sex of individual theorists: some of the

³³ McClary mentions: Hindemith's *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* ('Murderer, Hope of Women'), Berg's *Lulu*, and Morton Subotnick's 'The Last Dream of the Beast' from *The Double Life of Amphibians*. She gives a positive interpretation however of Babbitt's *Philomel* (which deals with Philomel's rape, the ripping out of her tongue and her survival in song) as an *anti-rape* statement with great theatrical and emotional power. I discuss this composition in Chapter IV.

mainstream, ‘impersonal’, formalist theorists are female, and most of the ‘alternative’ theorists are male. Maus argues that it is no coincidence that the ‘masculine’ music theory is mainstream, while the ‘feminine’ music theory is marginal. Indeed, alternative music theory is marginal *because* it is feminine:

If the more personal, experiential kinds of writing about music seem to be persistently marginal, it is partly because they threaten to feminize the writer. (Maus 1993: 267)

Maus suggests that male music theorists have a specific (unconscious) motivation for the avoidance of ‘unmanly discourse’: it is a compensation for the fact that listening, the central activity for the music theorist, is a receptive, passive, ‘feminine’ role. This may also explain why mainstream music theory is so much focused on scores: the position of the viewer is often considered as an active and masculine position. The aim of Maus’ carefully argued essay is apparently to scrutinize the existing practice of music theory, to criticize its masculinity, to revalue the ‘marginal’ ‘feminine’ music-theoretical discourse, and to open the field of music theory for new, other approaches of feminist writing on music. But by its insistence on gender stereotypes, it risks to reproduce and reinforce them, as Marianne Kielian-Gilbert and Elaine Barkin remark in the afterword.

Queer musicologists Philip Brett and Elizabeth Wood argued that mainstream musicology is not only masculine but also heteronormative and insular (Lewis 2009: 48):

If there is one aim that unites us it is to help renovate the study of Western music and its scholarly discourse, which for many of us has become not only unresponsive to our persons, but also insular and untenable as an intellectual pursuit. (Brett, Wood & Thomas 1994: viii)

The widespread adoption of a neo-serialist technique, the development of arcane forms of music analysis, the separation of high art from any form of popular cultural expression, and the equation of musical scholarship with scientific inquiry are all signs of a dominant masculinist, highly rational, heteronormative discourse in music all too unhappily but accurately characterized by the word ‘discipline’. (Brett & Wood 2001: 599).

Several feminist music scholars have discussed subjectivity and objectivity in musical analysis, criticizing the prevalent ways of analysing and writing about music and developing new ideas about how to analyse music and why, and relating it to feminist theory. Suzanne Cusick (1994) proposes a musical analysis that does not solely focus on the score or on the sounding music, but takes into account aspects relating to the bodily performance. The prevalence of aspects relating to the mind in traditional music theory

and its neglect of the body is related by Cusick to the gendering of mind and body as respectively masculine and feminine. Susan McClary (1994) argues for a cultural-studies model in which the technically oriented focus of traditional music theory and feminist criticism can be combined. Marion Guck (1994), Marianne Kielian-Gilbert (1994) and Claire Detels (1994) criticize the one-sided technical objectivism of mainstream music analysis and emphasize the relation between subject and object, i.e. listener-musicologist and music, the situatedness and limitation of the subject, the pleasurable, emotional and bodily experience of listening to music and the advantages of non-technical, metaphorical language for describing and analysing music; they relate this approach to their gender and to feminism.

It is obvious that for discussing gender in music, purely formal and technical analyses are not sufficient, and, therefore, interdisciplinarity is required for gender studies of music. However, the idea of a *feminine* way of analysing music is quite a different thing. On the one hand, the positive aspect of a feminine epistemology is a reevaluation of femininity and feminine features. It gives a central place to approaches (featuring for example bodily, emotional or subjective aspects) that are typically qualified as unimportant or unscientific from a masculine, modernist or formalist point of view. And by making explicit its femininity, women are distancing themselves from the existing masculine tradition and emphasizing their feminine identity. Moreover, the seemingly neutral, scientific, formalist and technological practices relate to a history of oppression and exclusion of women.³⁴ This being said, most ‘feminine’ music theorists mentioned by Maus (1993) are male. In this respect, I query whether women who prefer a feminine position could be seen as reinforcing gender stereotypes. What place is there for ‘masculine’ preferences by women? Are women in a trap between a cooptation of dominant masculine values and an essentialist, stereotypical reinforcement of their femininity? However, a feminine epistemology or feminine aesthetic³⁵ is not essentialist when it is considered as a political choice and not as a consequence of how (all) women (really) are (whether by their genes, hormones, brains, bodies or upbringing). Since academic work in itself is not stereotypically feminine, a feminine approach is more a

³⁴ See for example Cusick (1999a).

³⁵ The issue of feminine and feminist aesthetics will be discussed in Chapter VIII.

mixture of gender characteristics. Stressing the feminine aspects is a political move: it implies a critique on the dominant masculine practices, and explicitly points to the existence of women in academic discourse.

Another aim of feminist criticism on masculine discourse is not to make it feminine, but to point at some of its serious disadvantages so as to be able to avoid these. Thus, the aspiration is not towards femininity, but to go 'beyond masculinity'. The aim is not the abolishment of rationality, objectivity or technology; the critique is aimed at its one-sidedness. Donna Haraway emphasizes the situatedness and partiality of knowledge, depending on the situation of the knowing subject. Yet another alternative is the development of knowledge through 'conversation' among situated knowers (Cusick 1994: 8–9). Haraway emphasizes that objects cannot be directly perceived and known as they 'really' are, but only through instruments like eyes, telescopes and microscopes; with each different instrument, an object is perceived and known differently. Evelyn Fox Keller (1987) criticizes the concealment of subjectivity in mainstream masculine science and argues that taking account of subjectivity and making the boundaries between subject and object more flexible, results in a better, different kind of objective science.³⁶

Likewise, Guck states 'that any analysis of music derives necessarily from personal experience of music and that analyses benefit from the overt representation of the analyst in the text' (1994: 29). Detels (1994) argues that the paradigm of 'soft boundaries' will enhance our understanding of music and will make musical analysis more interesting. The autonomist/formalist position is characterized by 'the view that art is ideally created and appreciated in a "disinterested" structurally-oriented manner, apart from any consideration of cultural context or function' (Detels 1994: 113). In sketching a history of autonomist/formalist aesthetics, Detels shows that it goes hand in hand with the 'museum culture' of the arts, the division into 'high' and 'low' art, the proliferation of separate professional art specialities, a hierarchisation of art participants that assign all proprietary rights to a singular author, and the exclusion and subordination of women. Finally, Detels argues, this development resulted in the institutionalisation, scientificisation and isolation of music theory and composition, such as the work of Babbitt and Forte, set theory and the use of electronic and computer systems for the generation and

³⁶ Fox Keller discusses the relation between objectivity and subjectivity in science by elaborating on the psychoanalytic object-relations theory of Winnicott, Chodorow and others.

analysis of musical works. The specialisation and isolation of music theory (most strongly present in undergraduate programs) leads to the isolation of music from general humanities, social sciences and cultural criticism. Instead of the highly formalistic, ‘universal’ concepts, values and practices of mainstream institutional music theory, Detels proposes the paradigm of ‘soft boundaries’ in which music is related to physical, emotional, cultural and intellectual experience; it features the specific rather than the universal and allows a non-hierarchical multiplicity of valid concepts and judgments. This paradigm shift towards interdisciplinarity had indeed already begun, under the influence of ethnomusicology, Marxism and post-structural theory, among others; but Detels insists on relating it emphatically to feminist theory. The mainstream ‘autonomist/formalist position’, she argues, maintains gender inequality by excluding and devalorizing physical, emotional and cultural aspects – aspects regularly associated with women or femininity. The paradigm shift will challenge the focus on the individual greatness of the Male Composer in the traditional canon. Besides, Detels points out, it will enhance our understanding of many different aspects of music, and, by its engagement with bodily and emotional experience and cultural context, will enliven the practice of musical analysis. Thus, a feminist approach will offer a better alternative to formalism and serve as a cure to the isolation of musicology. Or, in Ruth Solie’s words, who hopes that her analyses of Schumann’s *Frauenliebe und –leben* songs

serve to illustrate the usefulness of feminist method as one among several available responses to the formalism which still somehow lingers in musicology beyond its effective demise in other academic quarters. It is formalism, of course – or what, in music, we might more pointedly call autonomism – that has operated most strenuously to obliterate all presence of a cultural Other, and it does so at great price: the loss of cultural context from critical discourse. (Solie 1992: 239-240)

I.3.2 Technology and formalism as fetish

Modernist, formalist approaches aspire towards objectivity. McClary, Maus and Detels see this approach as masculine or anti-feminine. The opposite of masculine objectivism is a feminine subjective, personal, experiential and/or emotional approach, Maus argues. However, I do not think *any* scientific or artistic utterance can avoid subjectivity. Any scientific or artistic activity is embedded in language, discourse and culture. Scientists,

scholars and artists speak, write and create cultural artefacts, and are therefore subjects, formed by culture. Or, as Mieke Bal states, objectivity is the ‘key concept of deception’ (Bal 2002: 53)

The scientific and artistic subject is formed by culture, in general, and by scientific or artistic discourses, in particular. A scientist, scholar or artist works with and from concepts, methods, norms, theories and instruments made by or together with others; s/he develops or reacts against the work and ideas of others. Objective science is called objective because a group of scientists agrees upon norms and methods of objectivity. Speaking a language, or pursuing cultural activities, is having to act within the framework of a cultural order upon which one is dependent. No one can invent the rules and norms of science and art entirely by him/herself, out of nothing. Every cultural activity, and every scientific rendering of an object, is culturally mediated. Moreover, every subject is partial and finite, situated in a particular culture and context. No one can know and see everything perfectly; no subject is almighty or universal.

Kaja Silverman, elaborating on the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan, points out that subject and object develop at the same time by their separation and therefore coexist. One of the first steps into subjectivity is the separation of objects from the sense of self; the entry into language makes this gap even deeper. This separation of objects is felt as a loss, according to Silverman and Lacan. The world and the self are no longer felt as a unified whole.

Subjectivity is thus from the very outset dependent upon the recognition of a distance separating self from other – on an object whose loss is simultaneous with its apprehension. (Silverman 1988: 7)

Subjectivity involves thus losses and insufficiencies.

Music has a special relation to the drama of separation; and speaking and writing about music can bring the losses and insufficiencies of subjectivity urgently to the fore. Music and sound blur the boundaries between self and other, between subject and object.³⁷ Music can be experienced as part of the self; or one can lose oneself in music.

³⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy states that the sonorous is ‘tendentially methexic’, related to ‘participation, sharing, or contagion’ (Nancy 2007: 10).

Sounds resonate in the body. Music makes your body move.³⁸ Music often evokes emotions or affects, or seems to render particular emotions well. Music is often felt ‘deeply inside’, very closely related to intimate feelings and experiences. Joke Dame (1994) elaborates on the role of music and the mother’s voice in early childhood. Some relate the experience of music to early experiences of the mother’s voice singing lullabies as a ‘musical blanket’, to comfort the little child (Dame 1994: 73-75).³⁹ Music can function as a transitional object (Dame 1994: 80). Donald Winnicott’s notion of the transitional object refers to something (e.g. a blanket or a lullaby) that functions as a bridge between the ‘me’ and the ‘not-me’ of a little child. It helps the child in separating from the mother, soothing the child when she is away, and helping the child to experience the separation. The child experiences the tune or song as part of itself. Dame points at the similarity between Winnicott’s transitional object and Lacan’s *objet (a)* (*objet petit autre*). The *objet (a)* is an object that was previously experienced as part of the self, like ‘the breast, the feces, the mother’s voice, a loved blanket’ (Silverman 1986: 7). To become a subject, one has to separate these phenomena from the self and make these into objects. *Objets (a)*, however, tend to keep some reminiscence of the former feeling of wholeness, they are only ‘a little bit different’ from the self. *Objets (a)* can be experienced as very attractive, but also as threatening to the boundaries of the subject. Silverman and Dame argue that the mother’s voice, and the female voice in general, can function as an *objet (a)*. Female singing, and music in general, can be reminiscent of this function. The experience to become absorbed in the music, involves a loss of boundaries between self and music.⁴⁰ Also, the musical play of tension and release relates to the drama of division and union of the subject and the other (Silverman 1988: 82). Music can be experienced in many respects as a transitional phenomenon, oscillating between self and other.

³⁸ For a short overview of recent empirical research on how music affects the body, see Meelberg (2011: 233).

³⁹ See MacKinlay & Baker 2005 for the effect of lullaby singing on mothers; it also contains an overview of studies from the disciplines of music therapy, medical science and psychology on the effect of lullabies on babies.

⁴⁰ Of course, this is not the only way music is or can be experienced.

Maus finds a difference between historical musicology and music theory with regard to the prevalent objectivist and the absent experiential mode. Historical musicological discourse is focused on historical facts and not on musical experience and thus evades experience, whereas music theory formalizes experiential aspects and thus substitutes experience.

Neither field [mainstream musicology and mainstream music theory] has been primarily concerned with sensitive accounts of musical experience, but they have avoided the issue in different ways. Mainstream musicology has put out a fact-oriented discourse that obviously has no bearing on the details of musical experience, and therefore doesn't tend to deny or distort such experience. It's as though musicology has relied upon a strict distinction between public discourse and the realm that is more private and intimate. In contrast, the discourse of mainstream theory, when it is unequivocal, does not seem to be protecting the privacy of listeners. It seems more like a *substitute* for sensitive, evocative description, an *Ersatz* even; something that responds, publicly but speciously, to the desire for a shared articulation of musical experience. (Maus 1993: 275-6)

This idea of the discourse about music as avoiding something feminine (subjective musical experience) by substituting or disguising it with something masculine (objective discourse)⁴¹ is very suggestive of the notion of the fetish.⁴² I will argue that the abundance of objectivism and formalism in electroacoustic discourse may function as a fetishistic defence against the lack that the subject encounters in electroacoustic practice

⁴¹ See Cusick (1999a) for an account of how American musicology was constituted as masculine, to avoid the association with 'woman's work' (see I.2). 'A hierarchy of musical thought over the various musical practices would thus be established: musicology would be at its apex, controlling through an objective approach to musical knowledge the subjective experience of music as creation, physical and social practice, emotional and sensual pleasure.' (Cusick 1999a: 480)

⁴² For a different account of the fetishism of music theory and analysis, mainly based on Marx's notion of the fetish but also related to Freud's notion of the fetish, see Klumpenhouwer (2002). According to Henry Klumpenhouwer, music theory is fetishistic because its objects (musical pieces) are commodities, but this is not acknowledged. 'All disciplines, especially those that, like music theory, have as their objects of study commodities, must logically be understood as fetish-based modes of thought, however complicated they may become through other mediations.' (Klumpenhouwer 2002: 33-34) Klumpenhouwer draws a parallel between commodity value and aesthetic value. The fetishism of music theory is not only that it studies the material characteristics of music instead of the underlying social context and the social relations of the producers of the music, but also that it pays no attention to the social nature of listening and analysis. 'The fetish nature of institutional music theory lies not only in its examination of material aspects of pieces as the source value (in the form of aesthetic value or meaning), but also in its concealment of the social nature of consumption or appropriation behind these styles of investigation into the material properties of musical pieces.' (Klumpenhouwer 2002: 36) And, music theory loses sight of the historical dimension of its various objects. Moreover, the belief in a radical discontinuity between the material and social aspects of music, is itself fetishistic. Significantly, passive objects correspond with passive subjects. 'Furthermore, it is easily drawn to positivist epistemological and methodological ethoi that entirely fragment the world into passive objects and correspondingly passive subjects.' (Klumpenhouwer 2002: 36) His critique on the disavowal of subjectivity in music analysis links Klumpenhouwer's position to Maus's.

and experience. By excluding the subject, objectivism testifies of a mistrust towards the subject and thus points to its lack. Like a fetish, objectivism both conceals and points towards the lack of the subject – the lack, as Silverman argues, that structures each subject, but is incompatible with masculinity.

With her interpretation of the work of Freud and Lacan as a point of departure, Kaja Silverman reworks the concept of castration to a powerful tool for feminist analysis of social-cultural phenomena. Feminist theorists emphasize that the Lacanian phallus is an abstract notion signifying masculine privilege. It is the symbolic marker of sexual difference (Macey 1992, Grosz 1992).⁴³ Silverman reinterprets the work of Freud and Lacan such, that the notion of castration gets a more general meaning, related to lack. She argues that all cultural subjects, men and women, are already castrated from the outset. Silverman's notion of castration refers to the separation of the subject from the world of objects and to the entry into language.

To become a cultural subject is to differentiate between self and other(s), between subject and object(s). To perceive an object as an object, as other, as not-I, implies the loss of it: it is not a part of the self. The separation of the subject from the world of the objects is the loss of one unified world of self.

Subjectivity is thus from the very outset dependent upon the recognition of a distance separating self from other – on an object whose loss is simultaneous with its apprehension. (Silverman 1986: 7).

According to Silverman, the child's acquisition of its own boundaries by the severance of objects previously experienced as itself is experienced as castration.

Since the loss of the object always entails a loss of what was once part of the subject, it is – in the strictest sense of the word – a castration. (Silverman 1986: 9)

Silverman's and Lacan's use of the notion of language is related to the notion of the arbitrary signifier of Ferdinand de Saussure. A word is an arbitrary signifier: it has no

⁴³ For an account of the female voice as fetish, for both the male listener and the female singer, see Dame 1994: 161–191. This article appeared in English as 'The female voice as fetish: Occurrences in the practice of psychoanalysis and music', in Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer. 1994. *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; New York: Continuum/Crossroad, pp. 260–270.

intrinsic relation to its signified; its signification is based on socially established rules.⁴⁴ Language implies a distance from the objects to which it refers. There is a radical division between signifiers and objects. Language also implies a distance from the senses and the body. With the entry into language, the subject not only loses the object, but also 'its own being', according to Silverman. The entry into language is a symbolic castration. Moreover, language is 'already there': it is based on socially-culturally established rules. Language, so deeply constitutive of the self, is made by and with others.

All subjects are symbolically castrated, according to Silverman. However, since the male subject is constructed through identification with the phallus whereas the female subject is constructed through identification with lack, any lack or 'castration' is far more threatening for him than for her. Lack is incompatible with masculine subjectivity; but any insufficiency can remind him of his denied symbolic castration.

Male lack can be denied in different ways. The idea of woman as lacking (versus man as powerful and in control) functions as a primary fetish to disavow male lack: 'woman herself [...] is required to conceal from the male subject what he cannot know about himself' (20). Thus, male lack is projected on women. This fetish stands in for 'all those divisions and losses suffered by the male subject in the course of his cultural history' (22). But when for a male subject even the idea of the lack as projected on a woman is too threatening, a secondary, Freudian fetish⁴⁵ functions to disavow this lack. It is important to keep in mind that this lack is so threatening for a male subject, because it reminds him of his own: it is not female lack, but male lack which is threatening for the male subject.

[A]lthough the fetish conceals female lack, its presence testifies to the male subject's knowledge of that lack. (Silverman 1986: 13)

⁴⁴ For example, such different words as 'hond', 'chien' or 'dog' all refer to the same kind of animal; the sounds of these words do not have any natural relation to this animal.

⁴⁵ A Freudian fetish is a substitution for the penis that woman lacks, often something adjacent such as a shoe, a garment or another part of the body (Silverman 1988: 13). Woman's lack of a penis reminds man of the possibility of his own castration; when a man cannot accept this, a fetish functions as a substitute. Silverman deconstructs Freud's account of the fetish to come at the more general argument discussed here that a fetish primarily conceals male lack/insufficiency/loss.

Male lack can be negated in three ways:

- 1) by projecting it on women (Woman as fetish);
- 2) by a secondary, Freudian fetish to disavow female lack when even this is too threatening;
- 3) by disavowing male lack directly by a fetish other than Woman.

It is this third kind of negation of male lack that will be my concern here in relation to the technological and formalistic discourse on electroacoustic music.

Silverman shows, by analysing texts from the dominant tradition within film theory, that film is especially apt to remind the viewer of symbolic castration: the viewer is foreclosed from the world of objects depicted in the film, as well as from the site of production. Film is a representation of a representation: not only is it fiction, but the actors and objects representing the fiction are not even there – there is only light on a screen. To disavow this loss of objects, the viewer believes in the simulated real, while s/he of course also knows that it is not real. Another way of disavowing the loss of the object is found by Silverman in the work of Bazin: the belief that the image is a pure, automatic, objective, indexical reproduction of the originating object by the camera without human intervention (Silverman 2086: 9).

The foreclosure of the viewing subject from the site of production is disavowed by identification with a powerful character in the film who has authoritative vision, hearing and speech. Normally, this character is male. The lack is projected on powerless female characters. Both powerful male characters and powerless female characters function as fetishes for the male spectator to conceal his exclusion from the site of cinematic production. This site of production is not only absent from the viewer; it is also an abstract Other because it consists of a technological, ideological, cultural and social apparatus (e.g. ‘Hollywood industry’) that exceeds the authorial subject. Silverman shows ‘that classic cinema has the potential to reactivate the trauma of symbolic castration within the viewer’, and that ‘it projects male lack onto female characters in the guise of anatomical deficiency and discursive inadequacy’ as a defence (Silverman 1986: 1).

The male subject ‘proves’ his symbolic potency through the repeated demonstration of the female subject's symbolic impotence. (Silverman 1986: 24)

Music, as a transitional phenomenon, is related to the interplay of separation and

unity. Its experience is fundamentally uncertain. Does what one hears and feels in a piece of music belong to oneself or to the music? In the tradition of Western classical music, one can find conceptual tools to describe musical sound objectively, like pitches, tone scales, harmonies, rhythms and instrumentation; and in this respect, the score is very important. However, in electroacoustic music there is seldom a score and many sounds and musical processes are difficult to describe.⁴⁶ Moreover, electroacoustic music disrupts the traditional roles of composer and performer, and of the score: often, there are no performers or scores required (e.g. ‘tape music’), or the composer may be considered as a performer as well (live-electronics, composer-performer, see Chapter VII; see also Keathley 2001). Landy (2007) argues that the study of electroacoustic music⁴⁷ lacks parts of its foundation, related to the inadequate, confusing categorisation of musical works and (sub-)genres (see I.1.1); he argues that more appropriate classification systems and genre terminology would enhance accessibility (Landy 2007: vii–viii, 5–10). In this non-popular genre, for an uninitiated listener there is often not much ‘to hold on to’ (Landy 2007: 21–35). Moreover, when listening to electroacoustic tape music, but even when attending live electronics, the listener is radically foreclosed from the site of production. It is unclear and often unimaginable for the listener how the sounds are produced that come from the loudspeakers. And with tape music there is even no performer to identify with.⁴⁸

Denis Smalley is explicit about the experience of uncertainty when listening to or composing electroacoustic music:

⁴⁶ Scholars in the field of electroacoustic music still feel an urgency to find ways to classify, represent, transcribe and describe its sounds, as the recurring themes of ‘transcription and representation of sound’ and ‘taxonomy, terminology’ of the EMS network conferences testify. See <http://www.ems-network.org> (last accessed 1 May 2013)

Bruno Bossis (2004, 2005) stresses the ambiguity of artificial vocality, the difficulty of analysing it and the lack of adequate modes of representation, analytical methods, technological analytical tools and classification. ‘[...] le compositeur qui met en jeu la vocalité artificielle abolit l’évidence d’une présence corporelle. Il déchire le voile des certitudes entre voix et non-voix.’ (Bossis 2005: 275) Bossis (2004, 2005) pleads for better, more integrated technological tools for the analysis and graphic representation of artificial vocality. Bossis (2004, 2005) seems to vacillate between the acknowledgement (or perhaps even celebration) of the inherent ambiguity of artificial vocality on the one hand and the desire to tackle it with objective and technological tools on the other.

⁴⁷ The area of his study (Landy 2007) is ‘the art of sound organization’, which includes, but is not limited to, electroacoustic music.

⁴⁸ See Dusman (2000) for an account of the experience of uneasiness and uncertainty for the audience of tape music concerts.

Electroacoustic music opens access to all sounds, a bewildering sonic array ranging from real to the surreal and beyond. For listeners the traditional links with physical sound-making are frequently ruptured: electroacoustic sound-shapes and qualities frequently do not indicate known sources and causes. Gone are the familiar articulations of instruments and vocal utterance; gone is the stability of note and interval; gone too is the reference of beat and metre. Composers also have problems: how to cut an aesthetic path and discover stability in a wide-open sound world, how to develop appropriate sound-making methods, how to select technologies and software.

How are we to explain and understand electroacoustic music? (Smalley 1997: 107)

Smalley (1986) explains that a neglect of aural perception in music comes from an avoidance of this ‘threatening’ uncertain subjective experience:

Aural perception is fragile, fickle, empirical, and thus presents a threat to those musicians and researchers who have difficulty in coming to terms with the insecurity of their subjectivity. (Smalley 1986: 63)

In Smalley (1986) there is both an acknowledgement of the insecurity of subjective experience, and its avoidance by a formalist, objectivist, universalist discourse (discussed in I.1.2 above). Smalley (1997), an ‘extensive rewriting’⁴⁹ of Smalley (1986), stresses the subjective nature of spectro-morphology even more:

There is no objective method of achieving visual spectromorphological representation, and the analyst hopefully becomes only too aware of subjective decision-making and alternative ‘readings’. This is as it should be. (Smalley 1997: 108)

He warns for losing the subjective experience of listening:

But we must be cautious about putting too much faith in written representations because writing freezes the experience of temporal flux. It is a device for counteracting the fleeting and selective nature of wayward aural attentiveness and memory during the sounding flow of music. (Smalley 1997: 108)

Smalley (1997) states that this lack of universality and objectivity may be a hindrance for musicological success:

The problems of representation combined with the lack of consistent, thorough and fairly universally applicable analytical tools have undoubtedly inhibited electroacoustic music’s acceptance in more intellectual, musicological circles. (Smalley 1997: 108)

⁴⁹ Smalley (1997: 107n1).

Smalley proposes to consider electroacoustic music's 'lack' as an opportunity to focus on musical experience instead of the often objectivist and/or formalist approach towards Western classical music:

Electroacoustic music's strength is that unlike traditional Western art music it cannot so easily suffer by being reduced to a notation system, thereby courting the danger that music writing might be regarded as a separate entity, a substitute for perceptual experience. (Smalley 1997: 108)

But Smalley (1997) is also more explicit than Smalley (1986) on the ambivalence between subjectivity and formalism in his own approach, which consists of many pages of abstract classification of sound forms.⁵⁰

Some of the concepts and language of spectromorphology have formalist tendencies, but ideally, intrinsic spectromorphological description, although not directly interpretative, should be capable of helping a listener to pinpoint those musical qualities which are carriers of meaning. (Smalley 1997: 111)

Listening to electroacoustic music can be a confusing experience. Learning to structure, name, perceive and analyse more and more aspects of the initially indefinable mess of sounds can be very satisfying. But trying to describe the subtle nuances and sound qualities one hears, can be a painful affair as well: when translated into language, the fine, detailed, impressive perceptions are lost. Moreover, Elizabeth Keathley (2001) argues that the disruption of the hierarchy of composer and performer in electronic music, may invoke anxiety that composers try to overcome by reinstating the hierarchy, by insisting upon a direct transmission of the composers intentions and by producing scores:

I would suggest that this disruption of hierarchies has had a great deal to do with electronic music's slow acceptance in the 'art music realm'. ['If you can't write it down, and we can't see it played, how do we know it's music?'] The anxiety produced by this disruption is evident in attempts of figures like Stockhausen and Babbitt to reinstate the hierarchy – and salvage their place at its pinnacle – through the discourses of modernist metaphysics and the minute detailing of ex-post facto 'scores'. By Babbitt's account, the excision of the performer's imperfect body assures the unimpeded transmission of the composer's intentions, the perfect consonance of audition with analyzable construction, and thus guarantees the authenticity of the work and its rational contemplation by a qualified listener. For him, electronic music is more absolute than absolute. (Keathley 2001)

⁵⁰ The apparent need for classification in electroacoustic music studies is noteworthy, for example the classification of modes of listening and of types of sounds by Pierre Schaeffer (Schaeffer 1966; Schaeffer 2006), and the classification of musical works by Emmerson (1986) and Landy (2007).

The abundance of objectivism and formalism in electroacoustic discourse functions as a defence against the lack inherent to electroacoustic practice and experience and, when such discourse is too rigid and confining ('self-reification', McClary 1989: 78), at the cost of openness to wider cultural influences, it can be considered as fetishistic in Silverman's sense.

Silverman (1992) suggests that male lack can be disavowed not only by men, but also by women. According to this idea, a female fetishist insists on assigning phallic masculinity to a man, even if he bears clear signs of lack. Let this be a warning: an extreme formalist discourse may be a masculine fetishistic defence against the inherent uncertainties of electroacoustic music; but the *assignment* of formalism to the multiplicity of electroacoustic culture, practice and discourse may be a feminine fetishistic projection as well. Such a feminine fetishistic projection of formalism to male electroacoustic culture could lead to sweeping statements and simplifying categorisation. However, careful, close analyses will reveal that an electroacoustic work is not a monolithic autonomous formalistic block, but full of complexities, contradictions and relations to the outside world. Close reading of theoretical texts often reveals ideological tensions, discrepancies and combinations of various approaches, as for example shown above for Smalley (1986) and Smalley (1997). Such tensions, ambiguities and inconsistencies make electroacoustic music an interesting field of inquiry. The following chapters would have been inconceivable if the field of electroacoustic music was not rich with extra-musical references, contradictory tendencies, openings for multiple interpretations, and links to urgent issues of current interest.

I.4 A way to go (methodos)

There are many productive tensions in the following chapters. I sympathize with an approach such as Marion Guck's, whose 'Rigors of Subjectivity' is inspired by the, often considered formalist, theoretical work of Milton Babbitt (Guck 1997). Guck bases her analyses on her personal experiences as a listener and performer, but takes from Babbitt the following methodological principles: 1) precision and 2) providing evidence or reasons for the claims or interpretations being made, explaining how the musical piece gives rise to such an interpretation. Guck points out that these are essential for clear, informative and interesting communication. 'An author should make it possible for a reader to understand and evaluate for him- or herself that author's claims.' (Guck 1997: 54) By making it possible for the reader to follow the steps of the argument, the author also takes care of its accountability or 'intersubjectivity' (55). Intersubjectivity, not in the sense of consensus, but in the sense of communication between subjects, is also essential for Mieke Bal's practice of cultural analysis (Bal 2002). For Guck (1997), the aim of such analysis is to enhance, refine and enrich the perception of the piece. Aim and method are related, for to make explicit and precise references to the music and to explain how these relate to the interpretation, allows both reader and writer to hear or notice more. (To which I would like to add, however, that too much detail can hinder the communication, so a balance is preferable between detailed precision on the one hand and more concise overview, explanation and interpretation on the other hand.) By interpretation, a musical work comes into existence.

[... T]he purpose of musical analysis is to develop interpretations of musical events, because, in a sense, it is only when events are interpreted that they come into existence as part of a musical work. (Guck 1997: 61)

Meelberg (2011) takes a related position, but with a critical twist. He pleads for approaches that form 'suggestions for alternative ways of listening, experiencing, and understanding music, ways that do not exclude other forms of musical experience', and to 'think through the manners in which music can be experienced and understood, without claiming that there are no alternative ways of experiencing and understanding music, and without any absolute truth claim.' (Meelberg 2011: 240). However, he adds a critical objective: Meelberg's aim is not only to enrich the experience of music, but also to become critically aware of what one hears, and what the music may imply:

Regardless of the approach, ultimately all music research should contribute to what I call sonic literacy. Especially in present-day society where sound and music are used and misused to influence and even manipulate human behavior, it is very important to know what you hear, to be sonically aware, and to become a critical listener. (Meelberg 2011: 241)

While I sympathize with Guck's call for 'rigors of subjectivity', my intention would be to attain more than merely enriching musical experience. My aim is to explore and understand the gender connotations of the music under research, so that listeners (including myself) can become aware of these and think its implications through. I consider this to be an aspect of Meelberg's 'sonic literacy'.⁵¹

How can the making of explicit and precise references to the music, lead to a richer perception of the musical work by the analyst-writer? Is it not the other way around: that because the analyst has a rich perception of the work, s/he can write explicit and precise references to the music? According to this last position, the musical work is the object, perceived by and written on by the subject making the analysis. A similar situation occurs when a theory is applied to a piece of music. However, the first position presupposes an interaction between music, analyst and theoretical frame. The analyst perceives, but also interrogates his/her perceptions, and searches for explicit and precise musical references for his/her often initially imprecise or intuitive perceptions. This testing of ones own impressions, can lead to other, perhaps contradictory or additional perceptions and interpretations.⁵² And so on. By focusing on the musical work again, the music can, so to say, 'speak back'.

⁵¹ However, I sympathize with but do not exactly follow Meelberg's plea for 'open approaches' that combine empirical and theoretical research, with the use of mathematics, physics, psychoacoustics, cognitive psychology, philosophy, and critical theory.

⁵² Or, as Maus (1999) refers to the aesthetic philosophy of John Dewey (orig. 1934): musical experience must be both 'doing and undergoing', actively construing and evaluating (Maus 1999: 189). Cook & Everist (1999) in their Introduction highlight a related position of Maus (1999): analysis not as a one-way account of musical experience as it is (or: was), but musical experience (of the analyst or of the reader) being influenced by analysis; thus, a process of reciprocal influence between musical experience and analysis. 'Analytical enquiry, then, does not simply – maybe does not primarily – aim to represent experiences as they *are*; it aims to represent experiences as they are not, but fruitfully might be.' (Cook & Everist 1999: 7) Cook & Everist (1999) stress the importance of analysis that keeps the music, as a viable art work, open to new interpretation, instead of intending to explain the music for once and for all, stopping the piece and leaving it dead (Cook & Everist 1999: 8). 'Each "music view", as it might be called, captures different aspects of actual or potential experience; each allows generalization across a different range of contexts.' (Cook 1999: 258)

In such a detailed, fine-tuned analysis, a ‘close reading’ as it were, the music is not an inert object. When the music is allowed to ‘speak back’, it can participate in the adjustment, elaboration, supplementation and construction of the theoretical reflection.

The text does not speak for itself, but it does speak back; the theory will not get away with overruling the object, nor with obscuring its own contributions, impositions, and control. (Bal 1999: 138)

This dialogical or interactive approach is one of the features of Mieke Bal’s ‘cultural analysis’, characterized by ‘a cohabitation of theoretical reflection and reading in which “the object” from subject matter becomes subject, participating in the construction of theoretical views’ (Bal 1999: 12). Thus, it is not the application of a strict method or theory to a musical object, but neither can the music ‘speak for itself’.

[A] text does not speak for itself. We surround it, or *frame* it, before we let it speak at all. (Bal 2002: 8)

In this sense, the analyses of compositions in my study are cultural analyses. That is, the compositions are not approached (framed) as autonomous art works, but as part of our larger culture (Bal 2002: 9), with cultural relevance (in this case related to gender issues). Thus, cultural analysis consists of the interaction of close analysis and theory to obtain cultural relevance, intersubjectivity, rigour and accountability.

[I]n practising detailed analysis from a theoretical perspective, one is led to resist sweeping statements and partisanship as well as reductive classification for the sake of alleged objectivity. (Bal 2002: 44)

Making sweeping statements about objects, or citing them as examples, renders them dumb. Detailed analyses – where no quotation can serve as an illustration but where it will always be scrutinized in depth and detail, with a suspension of certainties – resists reduction. Even though, obviously, objects cannot speak, they can be treated with enough respect for their irreducible complexity and unyielding muteness – but not mystery – to allow them to check the thrust of an interpretation, and to divert and complicate it. (Bal 2002: 45)

Because of the interdisciplinarity of the endeavour, there are no methods ‘waiting to be applied’: ‘[The methods] are part of the exploration.’ (Bal 2002: 4) My main objective was to search for ways to discuss gender issues *in* and *around* the music, taking the presentation (e.g. in a concert, on a CD) as part of (the surroundings of) the musical work. People/actors such as composers, performers or listeners only play a role to the extent that they are perceived in or around the music, which depends on the focus

of attention: the instance of the music (e.g. a specific performance or recording) under scrutiny and the theoretical frame. For the analyses, I have searched for ‘something to hold on to’: a link, a point of contact, between composition and theory; a point of entry into the composition via something bordering on its very limits, quasi-extra-musical, like text in the composition, the title, text about the composition (by the composer or by someone else), text to which the composition refers; as well as a point of entry into theory: a story, an association, a concept.⁵³ I have taken these as starting points for further exploration both into the composition and into a theoretical elaboration.

My objectives reach beyond the mere analyses of individual pieces. Indeed, there are assertions, relating to gender issues, some by others and some by me, that refer to tendencies in specific musical genres or have an even broader extent. In my opinion it does not suffice to give a mere few examples to account for the existence of tendencies. It will not likely convince sceptical opponents, as for every example, counter-examples may be found. In addition, it may well be possible that an assertion based on a few examples only, is more a reflection of one’s own prejudices rather than an accurate reflection of the actual situation. Thus, to substantiate general claims such as ‘there are many compositions for female vocalist and electronics, but almost none for male vocalist and electronics’, I felt the need for a systematic search in a well-defined domain, as set out in Chapter II. This research is focused on a larger scale than that of the individual composition, it ‘zooms out’ as it were, and consequently, there is no room for details, complexities and contradictions inherent to individual compositions. In so doing, the compositions are objects, of which just a few rough characteristics are noted, such as male/female/ambiguous voice, speaking/singing/other, live/pre-recorded, etc. While doing so, other interesting aspects of individual compositions came to the fore, be it that, for the purposes of Chapter II these were ignored (some were taken into account, though, in the subsequent chapters). Admittedly, this coarse, broad approach often felt like violating the individual musical art works. (Which is why the chapters following Chapter

⁵³ The term ‘something to hold on to’ is developed by Leigh Landy. It refers to something in a musical (sonic) work offered by the composer (sound-based artist) to the listener as a means to enter the work, so that accessibility and appreciation will be heightened (Landy 2007: 26). However, I use the term here in a different way: not as something offered by the composer, but as something found by me (listener/analyst) in and around the music; as an interpretative element. In my study, it is not providing a (more or less abstract) point of contact between (the intention of) the composer and (the reception of) the listener, but it serves as a point of contact between music and theory. Instead of a tango for two (Landy 2007: 26, ‘it takes two to tango’, i.e. composer and listener), I celebrate a dance of multiplicity.

II do contain more detailed analyses, on the basis of ‘close listening’.) But even on such a global level, the careful scrutiny of a few broad characteristics caused the music to speak back: leading to a refinement of the gender pattern in relation to pre-recorded voices as well as to ideas and examples for the subsequent chapters. The gender patterns evidenced in Chapter II function as a frame of reference for these subsequent chapters. The tension between making general claims and doing specific analyses is recognized by Mieke Bal as productive for cultural analysis:

Perhaps the hottest issue in cultural analysis: the tension between the need to account for difference and specificity, and the desire to construct [...] global comparative frames. (Bal 1999: 14)

But a remaining tension in this renewed reading practice has been the unbridgeable gap between the particularistic, microscopic view of close reading and the larger claims of those important critical perspectives. (Bal 1999: 138)

My research focuses on the music, not on the people involved.

It is not the artist or the author but the objects they make and ‘give’ to the public domain that are the ‘speakers’ in analytic discussion. (Bal 2002: 9)

A great influence is the theoretical approach of ‘the death of the author’, named after the famous essay of Roland Barthes with that title and refined afterwards in literary studies and feminist musicology, amongst others. My aim is not to find the intentions of the composer in the music and I do not consider the composer as the ‘master’ of the music or of my interpretation. However, both with regard to feminist musicology *and* contemporary music, I am critical of simply ignoring the composer. In contemporary music, the composers are often alive and participating in or attending to performances of their work. It is often quite difficult to ignore the composer, not to meet or talk with him/her. Moreover, isn’t it ironic to be declaring the composer ‘dead’ just at a point in history that more female composers are coming up? The concept of the author is central in Chapter VII and the female/feminine composer in Chapter VIII; but the entire study is based on a critical and careful stance towards the notion of the author. My point of departure was the bracketing of the composer. Subsequently, I took into account the signs of the composer as I found these surrounding the music. Names, voices and people pop up in and around the music, and I consider these instances as ‘texts’ that can take part in the analysis. I juxtapose the music with the writings of the composer, and sometimes found in a composer’s text a point of entry for a critical analysis of the music.

Especially in Chapter V, a critical analysis of a text by the composer about the composition plays a crucial role. I consider the author as an analytical category, not as an authority. In Chapter II, I count the number of male versus female composers, to get an idea of the gender patterns of the genre. The gender pattern male composer – female vocalist and the roles of the composer and the vocalist are reconsidered in the following chapters, mainly with regard to what can be perceived in and around the music. There have been instances, however, where I was in contact with living composers. Sometimes I contacted composers in order to be provided with scores or recordings (many electroacoustic composers are publishers of their own work as well). Or I met composers at musical or musicological events, such as concerts or conferences. Some of them I have even sent my analysis of their work or asked specific questions. Composers are human, and accordingly, social and ethical aspects are involved. But one may suppose that it is part of the composer's job to leave the interpretation to others after finishing the composition.⁵⁴

[I]sn't it the artist's ambition that his work will outlast the time allotted him to master it[?]
(Bal 2002: 265)

To summarize, my methodological ethics are based on accountability, intersubjectivity and respect: by making precise references; by giving enough evidence, reasons or explanations; by providing explicit theoretical framing; and by assuming a dialogue or interaction with the musical works. Each chapter focuses on a theme or concept: gender patterns in Chapter II; embodiment in Chapter III; the vocal persona in Chapter IV; the female vocalist in Chapter V; the listener's position in Chapter VI; the author in Chapter VII; *écriture féminine* in Chapter VIII. Chapter IV, V, VI and VII contain (more or less) extensive close analyses of the following compositions (other compositions are discussed more briefly): Milton Babbitt – *Philomel*, Lars-Gunnar Bodin – *Anima*, Alejandro Viñao – *Hildegard's Dream*, Luciano Berio – *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*, Paul Lansky – *as it grew dark*, Larry Austin – *La Barbara: The Name, The Sounds, The Music*, Christian Marclay – *Maria Callas*, Gilius van Bergeijk – *Een Lied van Schijn en Weezen*, Charles Dodge – *Any Resemblance is Purely*

⁵⁴ Because composers are often dependent upon performers for the performance of their work, which is in a sense a (re-)creation, in practice this is not at all self-evident with regard to the relation composer–performer (as long as the composer is alive). See also Chapter VII. Mieke Bal refers to visual art, but there is an ontological difference between music and visual art (painting).

Coincidental. Except for the last one, these compositions all represent pairs of a male composer with a female vocalist, but in different configurations. Chapter II shows that this ‘division of labour’ is the most prominent; these compositions are representative for this pattern. I elaborate on this archetypical duo of male composer – female vocalist from different angles. (Parts of) theories and concepts are discussed where and to the extent needed for the deliberation in point. I hope that this enhances the focus and readability of the thesis and avoids vexing the reader with spun-out summaries of theories. Thus, instead of giving a ‘complete’ theoretical account first and then applying it to one or more compositions, I choose to intertwine theoretical discussions and musical analyses. This encourages feedback from the analyses to the theories. Another reason I have chosen to do so is that several chapters were first published as articles. The reader may read the different chapters separately. Consequently, different partial accounts of the same theoretical source may be found in different parts of the book and some duplication could not be avoided. I hope this helps the reader and may provide a sense of the underlying continuity.