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## **The Inscription of the Feminine Body in the Field of Sound: Vocal Expression as a Platform of *Feminine Writing* (*écriture féminine*)**

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### **Abstract**

This paper brings together several theoretical issues relevant both to the fields of musicology/ethnomusicology and feminist/gender studies – above all, the issue of the status of the voice within the complexity of a body-textuality tension, and the issue of mapping the strategies of *feminine writing* in the contemporary vocal performance. Through the analysis of chosen case studies it highlights the possibility of making an alteration, transformation and re-signification of a firm structural linguistic/social order in the field of sound, thus creating a space for a feminine body to be *heard*.

### **Key words**

*Feminine writing*, performance, vocal expression

## **1. Introduction: The Turn of the Century and the Revision of the Theoretical Approaches in the Fields of Art, Sound and Performance**

Following the extreme complexity of methodological and interpretative approaches in the fields of theory of art and performance, in the continual line of the multiplication of viewpoints in theoretical and analytical discourse, the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries brought a new issue into focus: instead of striving to find some kind of new, original interpretation technique (which marked a lot of the modern and even postmodern theoretical approaches of the last century), the contemporary views on the fields of art, performance and media tend to contain a more reflexive approach. This does not mean that there was a reversion to the known discourses, to be used again in their original formula – on the contrary, they are being reinvestigated, reinterpreted, their dynamics revisited and revised, leading to the new reception and new strategies of their use for the contemporary times. The disciplinary approach, turning into multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shifted

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to a need for transdisciplinary analysis at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, creating a wide potential for both the revision of previously developed theoretical and analytic discourses and the application of such renewed (trans)positions in the field of the theory of art, as well as sound and performance.

## 2. The Body in the Field of Sound: Understanding the Voice Within the Performing Context

The relations between the sound phenomenon and performance are close and complex, intersecting through the performing body. Both being an embodied experience, the sound and the performance effectively shift the focus onto the body (Case 2001). Secondly, a performance is almost always a sonorous experience; it is almost impossible to perform without making a sound, without making the happening of a *living thing* – whether or not the voice is included. Following Slavoj Žižek's thesis (Žižek 1996), absolute soundlessness is not quite possible, since absolute silence is something that would mark the suspension of life (ibid.: 93) – thus the performance can be defined as a living thing *because* of its sonority, because of the body that *sounds*. Having all this in mind, the performance is always a little bit *more* than just a textuality presented, read and comprehended.

So the movement, the breathing body, and especially the speaking and the singing body stands in the place of an *immedium*, being a symptom of a *presence* and *proximity* (Silverman 1988; Fisher 2010), of the practically physical, bodily contact of the performer and the audience without even a touch or the *live* context of a performance.<sup>2</sup> According to Mladen Dolar (Dolar 2006), the voice – vocal expression – is an especially challenging category because of the specificity of the phenomenon of voice. As Dolar stresses, the voice is something that, being produced by the body and through the body, always contains the *living* traces of the body which are, simultaneously, and paradoxically, torn from the body and frozen into a readable textuality, into the voice of the Other (ibid.). So, basically, the voice *is* and *is not* mine. Tearing from my body, being produced by the very breath and muscles of my carnality, the voice refers to my body's inevitabil-

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<sup>2</sup> In other words, the sound transcends the boundaries of time-space contextuality, preserving the physical contact of a vibration and a body that listens to it, even in a situation of mediated performance (a performance emitted through a recording and even watched later, in another space from the one in which it actually took place originally). Or, to put it another way, the sound, whenever heard (recorded or live), produces that strange loop that, as Dolar says, binds together time and space (Dolar 2011: 119): “The sound implies a missing link of time and space at the point of their overlapping. This is the point from which it sounds” (ibid.: 131).

ity,<sup>3</sup> but still loses it by solidifying into a text – a readable textuality pronounced by the Other – by the Law of the Symbolic order which introduces the cultural comprehension code (ibid.). My voice is, so it seems, always-already the voice of the Other. Since the Other (the Law) doesn't have a body but still uses bodies to enact and exercise its power (to inscribe the signifier into their raw substance, to domesticate to civilize it), my body is lost in the process of solidification of the textual meaning. Or, as Roland Barthes puts it, “what is lost in the transcription is quite simply the body” (Barthes 1977: 183).

Following this thesis, it would seem that the bodily – sonorous and textual – semantic dimensions of the voice expression are mutually exclusive (Dolar 2006: 3). But is this completely true? Is the carnal sonority of the voice completely shut out once a concentration on the meaning takes precedence, once the signifier penetrates into the sonorous body? According to Roland Barthes (Barthes 1977), the “grain of the voice” is something that cannot be completely erased, completely ignored by the signifying process (Barthes 1977). It is the carnal quality of the voice – a crack, the air inhaled or exhaled while talking or singing, the effect of the granulated materiality of the vocal cords, mucus and the oral and nasal cavity vibration – that becomes audible in the very process of *differing* from the perfectly clean textual meaning, from the perfectly blunt cut of the signifier that signs itself into a body. It is this signifier that results in turning the body into a pure textuality, a platform – a carrier of intelligibility, of the legitimacy within/of the Law. So what happens with this carnality of the voice within the performance context? If the performance is going to be understandable only at the point of being representable by a text (within a certain discourse), only if its content is being interpellated by the Other (to which the audience should respond by recognising it in/by the signifier network), cleaned of all of its debts to nature (Creed 1999), then the bodily element – the carnality of the voice, the *sonorous* body – is perceived precisely by being a *difference*, a tension within a seemingly smooth text (Douglas 2007: 4). This tension draws attention, making the body audible and visible within the perception field (making the body intrude into the text, creating a transgressive in-break), turning the performance effect into a performative intervention. Since the voice is so close to the body – it is in fact an effect of the sonorous body – the vocality can be seen as a very much performative dimension of the sound expression (Fisher 2010). The term *performative* here refers to the specific act that *enacts* something

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<sup>3</sup> “A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices. The voice is always the voice of *someone*” (Cavarero 2005: 207).

(else) by its ongoing (Austin 1976, Šuvaković 2005: 454).<sup>4</sup> In other words, the quality of the utterance is performative when it makes a change into an existing order, when it relocates the existing point of perception and/or understanding. Having this in mind, what follows is that the intrusion of the bodily element into a (musical/sonorous) text is a symptom of performativity, which inevitably changes or at least destabilises (even for a moment!) the firm structure of a(n imagination of) purely textual-Symbolic order (Lacan 2006); and if the Symbolic order is destabilised and thus provoked to re-establish itself, the intervention (of the body) proves itself to be the transformative potential of the order (*and* discourse *and* meaning), allowing the possibility of the entrance of alternation, re-signification and change, which can be of immense importance when it comes to the redefining of the dominant discourse and social structure and, consequently, the subjectal position in everyday living.

The question of the performative quality of vocal writing (which basically consists of an inscription of the sonorous body into a text, weaving the textuality in a new way, challenging the existing meanings and producing a dislocated, re-signified, renewed Symbolic order)<sup>5</sup> is especially important when it is written from a marginalised or less easily grasped subjectal position. The position of not being so easily grasped by a signifier (and the Symbolic order) stems from a situation of not having a place within the Symbolic order, of having been described by the words, but not being able to express a particular position with the words, and that is precisely the position of the feminine subject in the phallogocentric Symbolic order.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In Austin (1976), the term *performative* is specifically tied to the spoken language which performatively changes a certain element of the social order; thus, *saying* something actually becomes *doing* something (an often cited example is the answer “yes” which establishes the legal contract of marriage). However, I find Austin’s concept highly potent in the broad field of utterances made either with one’s voice or one’s body/behaviour (see Butler 1990), where a simple act or a vocal performative is not only an act, but actually *enacts* something in the social/cultural discourse, changing or establishing the status of the subject.

<sup>5</sup> The term *vocal writing* would designate the particular way of making an expression in the field of vocal performance (musical or other). It also stresses the way in which a performer imprints his/her body onto the discursive text, creating a specific way of weaving the vocal textuality from the dialogue of the performer’s body and the vocal text (the written or imagined score/performance platform) within a certain discourse.

<sup>6</sup> The term *phallogocentric* is used to denote such an order that privileges the phallic and logocentric mode. Both being oriented around the *presence* (of the phallus or of the spoken word) as a privileged quality (in contrast to absence), they put into mutual play the privilege of the patriarchal order guided by a Word – in fact, the sociocultural Law (the Symbolic!) – which functions as a standard, the code of understanding the culture that makes us recognise ourselves as interpellated subjects and respond to our given (already assigned) positions (Irigaray 1985; Shiach 2002).

### 3. Feminine Writing in the Field of Sound and Vocal Expression: A(n) (Im)Possibility?

Being at the same time both inside and outside of the language/Symbolic order/Law, trapped within the prescribed forms of description, yet not being able to use that same language to express her specific position of an absence, of a *difference*,<sup>7</sup> the feminine subject shares the paradoxical position of the voice within a Symbolic order, which is not the consequence of her being *essentially* such-and-such, or being essentially different from the male subject. On the contrary, her difference is not a cause, but an effect of a previously existing Symbolic order that assigns a place for the subject before he/she recognises himself/herself within the language (Grosz 1989: 19). In other words, we are not the owners of the discourse – we are produced as subjects within the already existing and prescribed network of positions and relations within the discourse, or the Symbolic order (Grosz 1989: 19). Since that order is phallogocentrically structured, the relation of the masculine and feminine subject is mirrored not in the formula A:B – as being equally different, but as A:-A – as being caught into a *difference*, where a masculine subject occupies the position of a presence, of a standard, and a feminine subject serves as a negativity, as a raw, almost outer cultural element (Irigaray 1985).

The same theses related to the feminine subject position are found in the field of theory of the sound and voice. As Mladen Dolar confirms (Dolar 2006), the voice, being in a state of difference to the textuality, has always been lined with femininity and seen as a potentially senseless play of sensuality which, in its meaninglessness, possesses a threat to the predictive, neat, meaningful order of intelligibility (ibid.: 43; Fisher 2010: 87). The feminine paradoxical position (being inside and outside of the structure) is reflected both in language as an order, and in the field of the sound or vocal expression within which she is in a permanent state of inability to speak intelligibly:

“...the stereotype according to which (...) the woman appears first of all as a body and as an inarticulate voice. She must be beautiful, but she must not speak. What she can do, however, is emit pleasing sounds, asemantic vocalizations, moans of pleasure. (...) The division of logos into a purely feminine phone and purely masculine semantikon, finally, accomplishes and confirms the system” (Cavarero 2005: 107).

<sup>7</sup> Speaking about the difference via the existing linguistic models would only produce that same – phallogocentric – language that shuts her out (Irigaray 1985).

Anyway, what is more frightening than *being seen* as an impossibility in terms of access to writing and expressing ourselves as women (*from* the feminine position, inscribing the difference that rubs against the phallogocentric order, thus making the difference *speak*) is the *actual* thought of the impossibility of expression caused by the outcast position of the feminine subject within the phallogocentric order. To put it simply, being (also) irreparably outside the language, lined with the semiotic, irrational, monstrous, abject (Kristeva 1982; Grosz 1989; Creed 2001), the real question is how a feminine subject could ever intervene into the language and its meanings, how could she ever express herself if her voice is deemed to be an impossibility in regard to its intelligibility and its power of utterance?

But she is also within the language, included in language itself and, more importantly, she is *audible* in her difference: “If I had such a voice, I would not write, I would laugh. And no need of quills so more body. I would not fear being out of breath. I would not come to my aid enlarging myself with a text. *Fort!* (...) If I had such a voice, I would not write, I would fight” (Cixous 2000, 49–51). What Hélène Cixous suggests is a model of *feminine writing* (*écriture féminine*) – a writing that involves (and neither ignores nor excludes) a feminine position in a text, and does so by the inscription of the female body (as the site of a *difference*) into a language/sound/visual or other text. In the field of sound, *feminine writing* would include working with an alternative (*differential*) techniques of a sonorous expression – especially within vocal writing, or vocal expression – since *feminine writing* revolves around the inscription of the body into the text, and the body is, as already explained, deeply intertwined in the problem of the voice, voice production and voice reception. In other words, using the voice as a tool that will enhance the performative quality of *feminine writing* basically includes finding the alternative, dialogical ways of a vocal expression (in contrast to the dominant, phallogocentric, One/Same [Irigaray 1985] *hard* writing of an intelligible letter). This means finding the path of asking the questions that would disturb the machinery of expected vocality, being subversive, transgressive, shifting, resignifying and altering the existing order that manifests itself as much in the field of vocal expression as in verbal or visual expression and elsewhere (Kristeva 1980: 179, 181; Turner 1999). It would not be another language, another writing; it would be a kind of creation of a *differential* writing which weaves itself into the existing order, provoking it to *change*. So it is not the writing against the writing (as in the highly problematic idea of feminine against masculine) – it is about recognising and exercising a dimension already present within a language, within a range of vocal abilities. Or, as Mladen Dolar says: “The secret may be that they [the

logos and the materiality of the voice] are both the same; that there are not two voices, but only the object voice which cleaves and bars the other in an ineradicable ‘extimacy’” (Dolar 2006: 56).

### 3. 1. *Differential Vocal Writing: the Voice as an Agent of the Performative Quality of Feminine Writing*

The struggle to find a vocality performative enough to contain and bring out the *difference* from and within the usual, prescribed and expected vocal writing norms has been a constant feature in the recent history of composing and vocal performing.<sup>8</sup> Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the avant-garde movement has enhanced the interest in widening the concept of vocal expression, focusing on *differential* forms of vocal writing<sup>9</sup> which would challenge the existing boundaries of what was perceived as an intelligible vocal expression – be it singing, reciting poetry or performing in any other way that included vocality (Mabry 2002; Austin Crump 2008). As such, the dada movement explored the field of avant-garde vocal expression, trying to challenge and cause the breakdown of the institutionally constructed discourses of art and artistic expression; futurism worked with the experimental sound techniques inspired by rapidly changing and mechanising societies; and avant-garde vocal expression techniques were also closely tied to cubistic and surrealist ideas, working within the fascination of a dehumanised perspective (cubism) and dream-like dissipating of the accepted and expected social and discursive norms (surrealism) (Austin Crump 2008). This interest in exploring the differential forms of vocal writing continued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and even continuing at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, creating a continual line of using *extended vocal techniques* to express a possibility of a different (*differential*) vocal writing, of the inscribing of a certain difference, writing a different vocal letter, trying to make the silent or not yet explored positions *speak*, to make them *write*, to make them *intervene* into an existing discourse of expression.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> More about the history of experimental, extended and avant-garde vocal techniques applied in classical music repertoires and also in the performing arts can be read in Mabry 2002 and Austin Crump 2008.

<sup>9</sup> *Differential* here refers to: 1) that which is conceived and brought from the point of difference; 2) that which refers to the difference; 3) that which constitutes the difference, or 4) that which functions differently or in regard to difference. *Differential* can also refer to something which produces an effect by the very difference it achieves, that which focuses the difference, or that which is dependent on it (related to it in any way).

<sup>10</sup> Of course, there always remains a question over whether the full interventional potential of a *differential writing* by the means of *extended vocal techniques* can be achieved. In other words, is the interventional potential actually weakened by *extending* the field of vocal expression, making that *extended* part a regular piece

Since *feminine writing* also aims at making differences heard, *extended vocal techniques/extended vocal practices*<sup>11</sup> and the heritage of avant-garde vocal expression techniques have been particularly used and explored as a tool in enhancing the performative quality of *feminine writing* in the field of sound. Working with such different (and *differential*!) techniques as shouting, whispering, crying, laughing, screaming, *glissandi*, altered or eliminated *vibrato*, inhalation, exhalation, vowel morphing, amplified or electronically generated vocal alterations, nonsense syllables or phonemes, humming, tongue clicks or tongue trills, whistling etc. essentially calls for a serious re-thinking of the dominant discourse of expression in the field of sound and, more precisely, vocality, opening a space for different feminine bodies (and their individual positions and subjectal placements) to be heard, thus also opening the issue of exploring the voice as an agent of the performative quality of *feminine writing*.

### 3. 2. Case Studies: Exploring Feminine Writing in the Field of Sound

In searching for case studies relevant to the issue of the performativity of *feminine writing* in the field of vocal sound I concentrated on contemporary performance and experimental vocal praxis within the past 15 years, covering the period of the turn of the century. As there are many female artists and performers present in the contemporary context of vocal performance who explore the field of *extended vocal techniques*, I tried to focus on those especially connected to the *differential* strategies of *feminine writing*. In other words, what drew my attention was not the challenge to the vocal limits of the human body, but the actual *effect* that it has on both the performer's and listener's perceptions of a vocal writing and its intelligibility.

In the vast range of important strategies of *feminine writing* in challenging the constructed – and expected – discursive and textual order in the field of sound, three of them seem especially prominent: 1) working with the dissipation of a verbal textuality, but keeping the musical discourse intact; 2) working with the dissipation of a musical

of a vocal expression range? Or is it just the opposite – that the extensions keep reminding the listener of the constructed nature of the boundaries of a regular vocal discourse? Where is the actual borderline between *regular* and *extended* vocal expression and does it change with the longer exposure of a listener to it (see also Austin Crump 2008)? Is the cut made by the effect of an *extended vocal technique* only temporary, given that it can only be exercised in a performance context which makes clear the demarcation line between the actual living and art (and does it always do so)? These are certainly important questions that should be investigated further, but to do so here would be to exceed the given length of the paper. However, these topics surely draw attention to the complexity of the theoretical problem of *differential writing* in art, and in general.

<sup>11</sup> Both terms are used in Austin Crump 2008.

textuality, but keeping the verbal discourse intact; and 3) working with the dissipation of both verbal and musical textualities/discourses or using some other, hybrid technique of working with these platforms.

This actually draws attention to the fact that the verbal text and musical-sound platform are still mostly seen as the main, distinguishable elements of a vocal performance. It is almost as if the necessity of a spoken/sung language still cannot be escaped, for there is still a clear need to work with the verbal language, as if it is a symptom of a firm Symbolic order that needs to be reworked, revised and subverted by the *feminine writing* potential (Pellegrini 2001).

It is precisely this context that is seen in the strategy of working with the verbal component of a vocal performance in order to produce *feminine writing*. In other words, what happens in these cases is a kind of dissipating of the verbal-intelligible linguistic component in the vocal expression, while keeping the musical discursive intelligibility intact. Examples of these strategies can be found in Anna Homler's (1948) sound and visual installations *Pharmacia Poetica* (1987)<sup>12</sup> and *Ele'Luku* (1995),<sup>13</sup> and also in Catherine Jauniaux's (1955) *The Dancers Under the Hill*<sup>14</sup> and *Kebadaya* from her solo album *Fluvial* (1983).<sup>15</sup> They demonstrate working with imagined language<sup>16</sup> or with illogically structured syllables, sometimes paired with unconventional techniques of vocal expression, such as sharply formed vocals, different references to singing techniques taken from the traditional music repertoire,<sup>17</sup> multi-layered voices, and so on. But although this strategy can be seen as revolutionary, subversive, transformative, as a kind of poetic language that sets the listener's perception free from the conventions of a language order and its repressions (Butler 1989),<sup>18</sup> there remains the issue of the potential to

<sup>12</sup> More can be found at <http://annahomler.com/portfolio/pharmacia-poetica/>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Full audio can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eq194e4BnMY>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Audio can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnUkCyByZIM>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Full audio at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Y3SH5\\_QIk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5Y3SH5_QIk), accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> In a text published in LA Weekly, John Payne says: "Anna Homler (...) sings, in an invented language that 'nobody knows but everyone understands'..." (Payne 1996).

<sup>17</sup> "In all of her work, Homler creates a persona who expresses herself in a newly invented language that appears to be rife with tradition, ritual, ceremony, and culture of its own. The language is couched in lyrical and somewhat exotic melodies sung with a pure vocal style sans vibrato, which gives the work an ambience of authentic folk tradition" (Suzuki 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Compare the theses explained in Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (Kristeva 1982).

slip into a fantasy of drowning in some encircled, separate linguistics which would, in the end, affirm its disconnection from the dominant phallogocentric linguistic order, instead of making an intervention into it, instead of finding a way to open up a dialogue with the firm order of its relations, which would provoke a necessary destabilisation by offering something else from *within*, not from *outside* such an established language. In other words, the transformative, altering, performative quality of *feminine writing* that can enable a feminine subject and body to be *heard* would be hard to attain if *feminine writing* has accepted its already assigned position<sup>19</sup> – of a place which is silent (unable to intelligibly, actively, visibly and audibly express itself within the language), of a place which is lined with irrationality (incomprehensibility in speaking/singing), monstrosity (the indistinguishable flow of a body and a rhythm in speaking/singing) and weakness. In that sense, Homler and Jauniaux's vocal writing can also be called a *utopian feminine writing* or even a *semiotic feminine writing*<sup>20</sup> which certainly offers, if their essentialist interpretation is avoided, an appealing and rather present strategy of *feminine writing*. For this strategy see also performances of Shelley Hirsch (1952), who explores similar possibilities of the dissipation of a verbal language.<sup>21</sup>

A different kind of strategy of verbal language/discourse dissipation in a vocal performance is found in the work of Meredith Monk (1942). Differing from the *utopian* and *semiotic* strategies previously explained, Monk puts a calculated, prepared idea of a linguistic dissipation in motion, deconstructing both the intelligible linguistic platform and the lining of *feminine writing* to a kind of irrational, spontaneous, flowing-in-its-way writing; this is also an important strategy in the project of deconstructing the idea that to speak from the feminine position is to be close to irrationality and inability to express that position in language. By actually working with the language, referring to it and not escaping from it, deconstructing it in the exact process of a vocal performance, Monk points out the possibility of *feminine writing* acting from a post-linguistic position, offering a way of shedding light on its own transformability, on its own evolution to a *differential* writing which is certainly close to the feminine position of speech (Cixous 1976, 1991; Irigaray 1985; Lacan 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Assigned by the phallogocentrically structured language/Symbolic (Irigaray 1985).

<sup>20</sup> See Kristeva's concept of *semiotic*, which refers to the intrusion of a bodily, carnal flow of rhythms, pulsations and inconsistencies that are incompatible with the symbolic dimension of a language, but that are at the same time vital for renewing, subverting, altering and transforming the overall linguistic system (Kristeva 1982, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> An example is the video entitled *Shelley Hirsch sings* which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPAezNFXOOA>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

This form of *feminine writing* could be called *deconstructive feminine writing*, with an example such as *Impermanence Part I* (2008).<sup>22</sup>

The other kind of *feminine writing*, in which the strategy is to work with the dissipation of intelligibility of a musical material (at the same time retaining the linguistic meaning), usually uses the full range of human vocal possibilities, relying heavily on *extended vocal techniques*. It almost plays with the concept of the *monstrous feminine* (Creed 2001), at some moments mocking it, inverting the stereotype of the madwoman by fully preserving the linguistic meaning, thus enabling the *differential writing* performed from a feminine position (thus becoming *feminine writing*) to mix, to interfere with(in) the intelligible (phallogocentric!) language. Faced with the constant announcement of a collapse that nonetheless never happens (because of the firm structure of the linguistic referential points), it places the linguistic order (and all its relations) into a constant tension, a continual intervention that is hard to endure, leaving a permanent mark on what was thought to be an intangible structure, and at the same time redefining the notion of the impossibility of a feminine body to be *heard*. Here this body screams, breathes, howls, moans, yells, shouts, whispers, but in a way that allows it to be *understood*, which is the crucial point that refers to its interventional potential. Excellent examples of this *intense feminine writing* are the works and performances of Romina Daniele (1985) and Diamanda Galás (1955) (Jarman-Ivens 2011).<sup>23</sup>

There are also many strategies of *feminine writing* in the field of sound and vocal expression that can fall into the category of *hybrid feminine writing*, that either work with the destabilization of both the linguistic and musical platforms of an expression (Yoko Ono [1933],<sup>24</sup> Ami Yoshida [1976]<sup>25</sup>) or with the cyborgization of one's own feminine voice (La Barbara [1947]).<sup>26</sup> These strategies underline the idea of the general crisis of the subject (and consequently, a crisis of the phallogocentric linguistic system as a whole) (Haraway 1991; Kember 2003); there are also a vast number of other strategies of *feminine writing* that point to the relevance of this kind of writing

<sup>22</sup> The audio can be heard at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kjJle\\_NmRs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kjJle_NmRs), accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> The examples are <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG2tDoEQAmQ>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015 (Romina Daniele's performance in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia, 2008) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cchf2QH63bI>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015 (Diamanda Galás, *O Death*).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, one of her performances here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdZ9weP5i68>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> The whole audio of her album *Tiger Thrush* (2003) is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF4QszdBvI0>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> The example of this kind of voice cyborgization can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opfTWzP3HPU>, accessed 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2015.

in the field of sound, vocality and performance. This *feminine vocal writing* also stresses the continual need for reworking, reinterpreting, re-signifying and reinventing the discursive and linguistic structure from the feminine subjectal position, creating a space for a feminine subject to be *differentially* heard.

#### 4. Instead of a Conclusion: She Can Do It

In her interpretation of Dick Higgins' *Danger Music* No. 17, Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje (1973)<sup>27</sup> offers a rather unusual tactic: instead of performing it live, she comes onto the stage on which there is only a chair and a table with a music player on it; she sits on the chair and plays the audio recording of her performance of Higgins' fluxus piece, all the time remaining quiet and still. When the recording is over, she stops the tape, grabs the music player and goes off stage.

Although the performance is probably open to different interpretations, what she presents here can be read as the representation of the exact position of a feminine subject within the phallogocentrically structured language. The seemingly powerless and motionless body is exhibited, unheard and mute, screaming from inside, not having control over it, not able to express herself without just repeating the words of an already existing order, without just going back into the closed circle of fulfilling the assigned position of a woman as it should function within the mentioned order. We see her, seeing what we have already been told about her. She sits there, being nothing else than what she has been taught to be. The language, the expression betrays her. Being let down, she is in a state of *floating* (Barthes 1998: 20).

But is she so powerless? Is such a reading just the effect of a phallogocentrically structured language, of a known Symbolic order (Lacan 2006)? Or is there something *else*, something *more* (Lacan 1999: 74)?

By figuring out the position that is assigned to her in the present linguistic/Symbolic order, by *working with it* (neither denying it nor reconciling with it) through developing specific and new – *differential* – ways of writing (from) her feminine position, the feminine subject *is* able to start a dialogue, both with the other subjects within the order and with the order itself. Paradoxically, she can have control over her position precisely by knowing that position well and by

<sup>27</sup> This performance took place at the Henie Onstad Art Centre in Høvikodden, Norway, in October 2010. The full video can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5YaAgjXiYo>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2015.

using its specificities to make a movement, an alteration, a transformation. She can produce her own writing by interweaving her voice – her specific position – into the present discourse (Cixous 1976; Irigaray 1985).

Just as Maja Ratkje did in her performance, she can think it over, go onto the stage, and make a difference with her own body.

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### Драѓана Сїојановић

## УПИС ЖЕНСКОГ ТЕЛА У ПОЉЕ ЗВУКА: ГЛАС КАО ОРУЂЕ ЖЕНСКОГ ПИСМА

### (Резиме)

На прелазу из двадесетог у двадесет први век подручја музикологије и студија перформанса сусрећу се с новим теоријским поступцима истраживања, концентрисаним пре свега на стратегије реинтерпретације и ревизије претходно развијаних дискурса унутар датих дисциплина. Штавише, доскорањи дисциплинарни приступ трансформише се најпре у мултидисциплинарни, а потом и у интердисциплинарни, отварајући надаље пут трансдисциплинарни теоријским перспективама. Такође, развијене методе дискурзивних и текстуалних анализа звука довеле су до интензивних расправа на тему концепта *писма* као специфичног начина уписивања индивидуалне позиције извођачког субјекта у музичко-текстуални дискурс. У подручју во-

калног извођаштва и вокалне експресије посебну пажњу привлачи феномен гласа, који извире из тензионог пресека телесне (карнално, *звучеће* тело) и текстуалне димензије (солидификација гласа у *ӣекс̄ӣ* отворен дискурзивном читању). Иако се чини да се телесна и текстуална компонента вокалне експресије међусобно искључују, константно присутан материјални остатак тела у гласу који се тара о дискурзивни/културални текст указује на ону тачку из које глас говори *разликом*.

Важност ове тезе посебно се указује у подручју теоријског истраживања говора *разлике* које је уско повезано с питањем теоретизације *женског̄ ӣисма*. Појам *женско ӣисмо* односи се на вид *диференцијалног̄ ӣисма* које истражује начине уписа женског тела у подручје изражавања. Иако је увек-већ уписана у предвиђено, немо место унутар дискурса фалогоцентричног Симболичког, жена ипак *говори* (уписује се у текст), што је посебно интересантно пратити унутар поља звука, или, још конкретније, у контексту вокално-експресивних стратегија у домену уметничко-звучног перформанса. Користећи ресигнификацијски потенцијал *женског̄ ӣисма* вокални перформанс се трансформише у перформатив, а различите студије случаја савремених уметница перформанса изнете у раду указују на широк интервентни потенцијал извођења и примене стратегија *женског̄ ӣисма* у пољу звука.

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