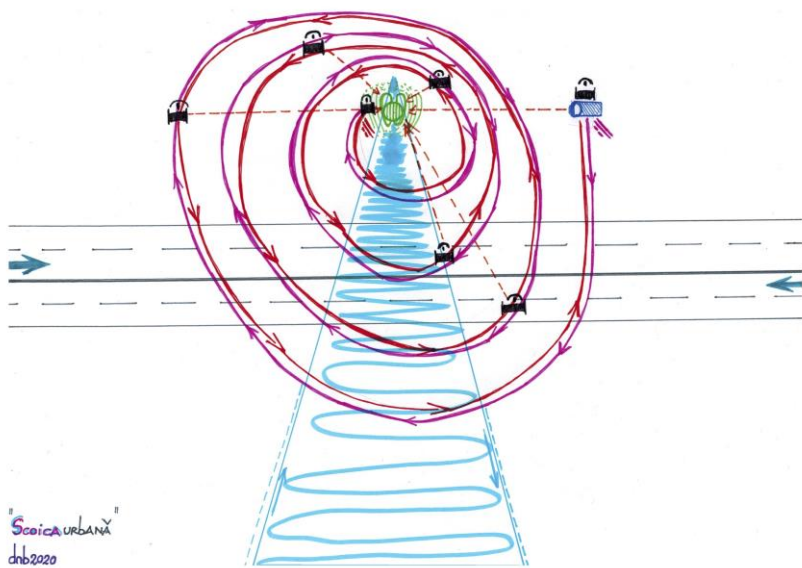


Imaginary gestures of *specta(c)torship*: Darie Nemeș Bota's 'Urban Seashell'¹

Mihai Băcăran



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1. Urban Seashell

I imagine that I am standing on the sidewalk on the Royal Parade in Parkville, Melbourne, Australia. It is the end of summer, life seems to be going towards an old/new and very problematic 'normal' after yet another round of strict COVID19 restrictions (I am grateful that, for the moment, the pandemic seems to be under control here, I am terrified by the 'normality' that we are striving towards).

It is 5 pm and it is rush hour (naturally). In my right hand, approximately one palm from my right ear, I hold an empty pine-apple fruit can (naturally). For 30 seconds I listen in silence. I move the can slowly on an inwards spiral on the same plane with my ears, around my head. I change hands somewhere behind the back of my head, and stop for a few seconds when the can is in line with my left ear. I listen. I continue the spiralling movement, slowly. The can passes in front of my eyes. I stop again when the pineapple can is somewhere behind the right side of my head. I listen. I start imagining a deep sound coming from far away, almost inaudible. It merges with the barely perceptible, reflected and distorted sounds that come from the fruit can, and with the much more prominent traffic noise. When I continue the inward spiral of the can the imagined sound grows in intensity and pitch. I stop again when the can reaches the edge of the field of perception of my left eye. The imagined sound is almost an embodied sensation now; I feel it in my feet. It gets confused with the vibrations of the traffic. I continue the spiral; the can makes one more lap and stops very close to my right eye. The imagined sound rises in pitch and intensity, travelling upwards through my body towards the top of my head. I look with one eye into the can, with the other at the traffic, I avoid looking at the other people on the street. They do not avoid looking at me. I feel awkward. The imagined sound rises all the way to my forehead. It is loud and acute. It almost covers the traffic noise. I continue the spiralling movement until the can covers my left ear. The imagined sound stops. I hear the traffic, I hear the distorted sounds afforded by the can that covers my ear. It feels

like listening to a seashell. I imagine that I am hearing the waves of the sea. I listen for 30 seconds. I put the empty pineapple can in my backpack (naturally) and walk away.

I imagine that I am performing the gestures of *specta(c)torship* required by a piece of 'imaginary music', Darie Nemeş Bota's *Urban Seashell* (original title in Romanian 'Scoica Urbană').¹

2. Imaginary Music

It is probably worth mentioning from the beginning that this will not be an attempt to explain an art^(?)work,² nor to discover its deeper meaning or the artist's/musician's intention. Quite on the contrary, I propose these pages as traces of an (imagined) gesture of *specta(c)torship* that follows impulses inherent in the (imagined) encounter with the work without trying to circumscribe it or to solve it into a stable meaning. In other words, this is a betrayal of sorts rather than a faithful reading, an attempt to follow the directions that the work opens up, while leaving it behind. There is no shortcut to *specta(c)torship*, the spectator interested in the work will have to experience it, to risk performing (and in the last instance to risk *being performed by*) the process of *specta(c)torship* that the work affords and requires.³ The role of the critical reading is not to facilitate this experience but to complicate it, to fold it against itself, to intensify the problematic that it opens up.

¹ The score allows for several possible interpretations, several possible processes of *specta(c)torship*. The imagined experience that I describe here does not exhaust the possibilities of the score.

I have to note that my understanding of the piece is indebted to repeated conversations with the composer Darie Nemeş Bota, yet, nonetheless, the opinions that I express in the following pages do not pretend to account for his aims and intentions when writing the piece. See below.

² 'Art' cannot be properly understood as a stable category, but only as a process that involves a recursive problematization of the definition of 'art.' The superscripted parenthetical question mark is meant as a reminder of this perpetual challenge towards what 'art', 'artwork', 'artist' or indeed 'spectator' could mean, a challenge inherent in what 'art' is and how it functions.

³ A process of *specta(c)torship* which in this particular case might mean learning Romanian language, finding the score, familiarizing oneself with the experimental musical notation employed, practicing one's ability to imagine sounds and finally performing the indications of the score as closely as possible.

Urban Seashell appeared in *Redescoperind Muzica Imaginară (Unearthing Imaginary Music)*, a recent collection of *imaginary music* coordinated by Irinel Anghel.¹ The book is a homage paid to Octavian Nemescu (1940-2020), Romanian avant-garde composer, who coined the term 'muzică imaginară' (*imaginary music*) and started experimenting with the concept and the practice that it engenders in 1975.² For Nemescu *imaginary music* is a musical genre, just like symphonic music, electroacoustic music, opera, or jazz (these are some of Nemescu's examples), characterized by the fact that the music is not exteriorized but emerges only as an inner imaginary experience. A musical experience that is fundamentally anti-spectacular and not accessible for spectators and critics,³ at least not for spectators and critics in the common sense of these terms. Irinel Anghel insists in the introduction to *Unearthing Imaginary Music* that for Nemescu the *imaginary music* is not a free play of the imagination but a guided exercise.⁴ *Imaginary music* has scores (some of them rather complex and accessible only for the highly trained, others easier to grasp and to follow for everyone) and the stakes of the gesture of *specta(c)torship* is to implement the instructions of the score as faithfully as possible - that being said, obviously, there cannot be any limit to possible deviations and misreadings. The significance of Nemescu's *imaginary music* in the context of Romanian avant-garde music as well as its place in the larger trends of experimental musical modernism are discussed by Irinel Anghel in the introduction to *Unearthing Imaginary Music*, and would no doubt constitute noteworthy threads for further exploration. Nonetheless, these concerns will remain outside of the scope of the present article. Our attempt here is merely to interrogate the experience of the spectator with respect to a musical composition that inscribes itself on the trajectories opened up by this concept, specifically we are interested in the process of *specta(c)torship* afforded for by the score of *Urban Seashell*.

¹ Irinel Anghel ed., *Redescoperind Muzica Imaginară* (București: Asociația Jumătatea Plină, 2020).

² Octavian Nemescu, 'Muzica Imaginară,' *Revista Muzica*, 3-4 (2015): 3-29.

³ Nemescu, 'Muzica Imaginară', pp. 3-5.

⁴ Anghel, *Redescoperind Muzica Imaginară*, p.8.

Such an attempt seems rather paradoxical at the first glance since Nemescu argues that there are no spectators for *imaginary music*, but only 'practitioners' - and in doing so tries to underline that the disempowering passivity of the spectator is eliminated in the type of experience that this musical genre proposes.¹ Yet it is not as simple as claiming that the spectator becomes 'active' practitioner in *imaginary music*. Always following the score (even if unfaithfully), the spectator necessarily retains a certain degree of 'passivity' - letting themselves be 'guided' by the score - and this 'passivity' is inherent to what *imaginary music* is: a guided improvisation. Moreover, it is impossible to maintain that the spectator was 'passive' in the first place; the process of listening, the process of looking are instances of world-making, actions in a complex *partition of the sensible*, thus inherently 'active,' or rather rendering absurd any clear distinction between the 'active' and the 'passive.'² I propose to use the term *specta(c)torship* in order to account for the complex interweaving of 'activity' and 'passivity' that characterizes the engagement with *imaginary music*, an interweaving that cannot simply be collapsed into an opposition that would assign passivity to the spectator and activity to the actor/musician/practitioner.³ The parenthetical 'c'

¹ Nemescu, 'Muzica Imaginară', p. 5. We should note the consonance of Nemescu's endeavour towards *practitioners* rather than spectators with larger trends of the modernist avant-garde to promote the active involvement of the public at the expense of what is considered to be the passivity of the spectator.

² See Jacques Rancière, *Le Spectateur Émancipé* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2008), pp. 7-29. By *partition of the sensible*, following Rancière, we mean that specific social positions are associated with specific power structures that constrain the perception of the sensible world (constrains on what can be seen, heard etc., and what remains invisible, inaudible, imperceptible), and thus that problematizing the way one perceives the world is inherently an active political gesture.

³ The playful spelling *specta(c)torship* is inspired by Augusto Boal's term 'spect-actor.' Very much in line with Nemescu's view discussed above, but more directly political, Boal sees the spectator as being passive and proposes theatre forms that would eliminate passivity and provoke political action thus turning the spectator into 'spect-actor' both on the theatre stage and on the 'real' political one. See Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974; London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. xxi. I will use *specta(c)torship* here to refer to a paradoxical interplay of activity and passivity.

is supposed to stand here for the articulation between a necessary (yet impossible) activity and a necessary (yet impossible) passivity that come to be at play in a threefold manner: the active/passive **listening** is conjugated with a set of active/passive **movements** and an active/passive exercise of **imagination**.¹

We will start by observing the always intimate relation between **listening** and **movement**. If music is widely understood as a medium fraught with emotion - often opposed to viscosity that is supposed to have a special affinity with rationality - , that might be (at least in part) because music literally moves you, music moves you into a movement (which can very well be stillness) that is conjugated with the affective flows that produce it and that are produced by it. A movement that at times can coagulate in well established, codified, corporeal rituals such as the stillness of the embodied spectator in the classical concert hall² or the feverish motions of a collective of closely packed intertwined bodies moving to the rhythms of a live rock concert (for example), but also a movement that remains every time an immediate response to the requirements and affordances of the soundscape that is conjugated with. The listener always moves along or against the impulses that emerge in listening, and in doing so it recursively striates the intensive soundscape that affords for its movement. This is simply to say that listening is an embodied experience that conjugates the intensive soundscape with the

¹ The parenthetical 'c' is also supposed to point towards a specific (if imaginary) *crisis of identity* that we will see emerge in the process of *specta(c)torship*.

² Without any pretension that this would be an atemporal constant that is never interrogated, one could speculate regarding the extent to which the formal characteristics and ambitions of western classical music conjugated with the stillness of the spectator attest for an inclination towards a musical experience that strives to reach beyond embodiment, a tradition that is inclined towards abstract patterns that instantiate a 'beyond' of earthly materiality—and Nemescu's *imaginary music* acknowledgedly inscribes itself in this tradition that strives towards immateriality. As Irinel Anghel observes, *imaginary music* is above matter, any translation into exterior sounds is a fall, a fall back into matter. See Anghel, *Redescoperind Muzica Imaginară*, p. 9. We will touch on this problematic here by considering the (im)materiality of sound in *imaginary music*.

intensive movement that is inherent to embodiment, that the movement of the body that is listening is constitutive of the listening gesture and that the listening gesture affords for impulses towards movement.¹ When music is a question of well-defined rhythms, melody and harmony, this is almost self-obvious. But what happens when we (re)discover (along a modernist trajectory) sound in its untamed (im)materiality? What moves and what is being moved? Is there anything different?

3. Listening and Movement

The experience that *Urban Seashell* proposes conjugates a specific choreography (standing or sitting near a big road, moving the pineapple can around the head) with the cacophony of sounds of a multi-lane road, with the subtle and barely audible distortion of this soundscape as it is reflected from the pineapple can, and with the imaginary sound that exists only in the gesture of *specta(c)torship* - a sound that is not a sound wave, yet that is very real in its (im)materiality. What moves and is being moved in this gesture of *specta(c)torship*?

In order to understand this, we have to turn to Gilles Deleuze's insight in *Difference and Repetition* that the sensibility of the senses refers back to a primary sensibility that *we are*.² In other words, in a philosophical framework predicated on a theory of individuation (that is a framework that accounts for the emergence of the individual out of a dynamic relational space, rather than presupposing the figure of the individual as an unquestioned ground of being) we have to distinguish between sensibility as perception - that is, sensibility referred to the figure of the embodied subject - and sensibility

¹ Of course, this conjunction of *listening* and *movement* is even more complex for the musician/performer whose movements, intimately related with a gesture of listening, directly produce the sound. And the position of the spectator in *Urban Seashell* has to be linked with that of the performer, or the *practitioner*, both in as much as it uses the pineapple can as a rudimentary musical instrument, and in as much as it performs the imaginary inner sounds.

² Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.72-3.

as that which makes us who we (never quite) are - an intensive field that accounts for the emergence of the embodied subjectivity in the first place. We can think about this as a distinction between emotions grounded on perceptions (and that ground the perceptions of the embodied subject) on the one hand, and affects on the other (a distinction that will always have to remain tentative and provisory, rather than a positive hard truth).

With Brian Massumi in the introductory notes to his translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, we will say that affects are prepersonal intensities,¹ intensities that move us into being who we (never quite) are. Unnamable interplays of sensibility, beyond the possibility of being captured and coagulated as *my* sensations, beyond the possibility of being subsumed to signification, subjectification, and the figure of the organism. That is to say, interplays of sensibility that lack meaning and that do not coagulate towards the experience of an 'I'; interplays of sensibility that are not perceived by 'my body', but rather that produce 'my body' and its perceptions. To be alive is to *become* in an intensive affective field, to affect and to be affected towards the being of an embodied individual that never quite comes to be. In other words, to be alive is to be moved into being who you never quite are - hence the impossible passivity of movement. The agent, the embodied individual, is paradoxically nothing but the patient of the movement of its own becoming.² In other words, there are intensive fields, that in their interplay are the abstract (because not subsumed to a figure of representation) yet most concrete (the very possibility of embodied experience) environment in

¹ Brian Massumi, 'Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements,' in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. xvi.

² We draw here on Brian Massumi's understanding of movement with respect to what he calls the *body without image*: 'When a body is in motion, it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation. The range of variations it can be implicated in is not present in any given movement, much less in any position it passes through. In motion, a body is in an immediate, unfolding relation to its own nonpresent potential to vary.' Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 4.

which an embodied subject can come to be. It is with respect to the embodied subject that the intensive fields can be demarcated in an interior and an exterior; can be coagulated in perceptions, movements and emotions. Yet the border between interior and exterior, the very possibility of the body, has to be relentlessly performed¹ - performed at an impersonal level, yet an impersonal level that, paradoxically again, is not outside of the responsibility of the embodied subject.

Thus, it is not that there is a stable embodied 'I' in the world, equal with itself, that comes to hear sounds exterior to it. Rather there are intensive relational fields (and properly speaking 'being' is a problematic term here) that in their mutual interaction excrete the being of an embodied 'I' (not as a one-off *ex nihilo* creation, but as the convoluted history of life) and of its world (what following Gilbert Simondon we should call its *associated milieu*),² and in the very process of doing so, some of these intensities come to coagulate, from the perspective of the embodied subject that they excrete, as sounds that are perceived. In other words, on a large time scale, it is the (im)possibility of sound that models a body into having the complex auditory system that we do (that models the organism) in a lengthy and convoluted interplay between *individuals* and their *associated milieus*. And, of course, the sound in its actuality emerges only once there is this system, once a field of intensities can be coagulated into sounds by this organic apparatus, once an embodied 'I' can hear. Likewise, on a not so large time scale, we will see, what I hear shapes who I am, how I (un)define myself and the world. We always *are* only in *becoming* towards otherness (individually and collectively, at large and small time scales), in *becoming* towards the (im)possible absolute other.

¹ See in this sense Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp.128-41. While Butler's argument is concerned with the performativity of gender, it can be nonetheless followed in thinking about other instances of performing the organic body.

² For Simondon's understanding of becoming (of *individuation*) as a dynamic of the couple *individual-milieu* see Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (1958; Grenoble: Éditions Jérôme Millon, 2013), pp. 24-25.

Emotions, on the other hand, are not affects while, of course, being nothing but affects:¹ emotions are affects referred to the figure of the embodied thinking subject, affects but only in as much as they participate in constructing the triplet organism, signification, subjectification (that is, affects in as much as they are cancelled towards recognition and representation). Emotions are assemblages of intensities in as much as they contour the subject as a solution to the intensive affective problematic, a solution that is nonetheless always deferred and differed: vectors towards the subject, towards the identity with itself of the embodied individual. Music that operates with well-defined rhythms, melody and harmony operates with emotions, it evokes the figure of the embodied subject and coagulates the affective fields around it, thus moving the subject towards being itself, towards constructing itself by recognizing itself (by recognizing stable relations, rapports) in the sound patterns that it is presented with, in the relations that define rhythms, melody, harmony. To be sure, a construction of the subject that always borders deconstruction - in music one only recognizes oneself as the unfathomable other.

In a system of thought grounded in representation - such as the one that we unavoidably operate in (and against) - , itself dependent on recognition (both very visual figures), the consistency of the object with itself and the consistency of the subject with itself are strictly interdependent.² Nonetheless, with sound something strange happens, the object of experience, in its ephemerality is never quite *itself*, can never be grasped in itself. Even recorded and replayed, the sound object is re-performed, but not retained as such. The identity in sound has to emerge as a vector, as an impulse, as a direction, and cannot be captured as a thing in itself, identity has to be performed by the listener by recognizing dynamic patterns. Every time anew.³ Recognition is problematized as an ever-

¹ We are extrapolating here from Deleuze's formulation of the relation between intensities and that which is perceived, see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 144, 230-1.

² See Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 133. And, more generally for the critique of representation, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 129-67.

³ We could tentatively propose that this is the challenge that in the domain of the visual was brought about by modernist experiments in visual abstraction.

evolving dynamic that never quite achieves its goal, there is an exercise of memory and imagination always involved in recognizing sound patterns, not only in relating the sound heard now with sounds previously heard (that is very similar with what happens in visual recognition), but in relating the sound with itself (with the imaginary (im)possibility that orients its emergence) across a constitutive temporal gap. And, in as much as subject and object are mutually dependent in recognition, the embodied subject identical with itself comes to be necessarily problematized in the same movement. Clear rhythm, melody and harmony are vectors that organize difference (sound in its (im)materiality) in patterns that function towards the coagulation of identity (never quite reaching it), towards the subject contouring itself in moving towards itself in emotion (in affectivity that coagulates in patterns grounded in the figure of the embodied subject as the future anterior of emotion).

When the process of *specta(c)torship* engages with (and it is engaged by) sound in its (im)materiality, beyond recognizable patterns, chances are that emotions might fail to coagulate, but also that the embodied subject is (de)constructed, destabilized towards its outside by failing to operate the recognition that grounds thought as representation. That which is moved into moving, the embodied thinking subject, the spectator in its corporeality comes to be concretized as a question mark rather than as the identity with itself of a 'human' body. A very concrete and embodied question mark, in as much as it is contoured in negative by the possibility of sound, yet without a principle of identity that would allow one to say 'I' without doubting it. A thinking subject already inscribed on a line of flight away from itself. The question that emerges is: what are the conditions under which the process of *specta(c)torship* comes to engage (and be engaged by) sound in its (im)materiality (beyond recognizable patterns)?

It is upon this destabilization of embodied identity that *Urban Seashell* introduces the problematic of *imagination* (asking the spectator to perform the imaginary sound upon the background of the distorted traffic noise) and this is highly

relevant in our framework borrowed from Deleuze's critique of representation.

4. Imagination

In Deleuze's account, the possibility of thinking beyond representation relies on a chain of disturbances of the faculties of thought (the theory of the faculties in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* is a reworking of the Kantian model). If for Kant the possibility of thinking is underlined by a harmonious interplay of the faculties, for Deleuze the harmonious interplay collapses the intensive affective space into representation, while thinking properly speaking, thinking against thought, thinking towards the new and the unthinkable, is a disturbance of the harmony of the faculties.¹ In the first instance, for Deleuze, we are forced to think by a fundamental encounter with intensive flows that cannot be subsumed to recognition, that is, by an encounter with affective flows that cannot be rendered back either to the figure of an object or to emotions that would contour the embodied subject. This is what Deleuze calls the *sentiendum* that which cannot be empirically perceived (because it cannot be recognized, it remains inaccessible for the subject), but which is the basis of all perception. And it is the *sentiendum* that, slipping away from recognition, provokes a crisis in which imagination faces its own limit, the *imaginandum*, the unimaginable which grounds the possibility of any imagination. Likewise, memory is disturbed and confronted with the *memorandum* the empty form of time which cannot be recalled but that at the same time is the immemorial that affords for the possibility of any memory, and further, in its turn, cognition is forced to think its limit, the *cogitandum*, the unthinkable, that which cannot fit in the system of knowledge as representation, yet that which grounds the genesis of representation.² And what is (de)constructed together with the system of representation in this disturbance of the harmony of the faculties is necessarily the embodied thinking subject.

¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 134-7, 145-6.

² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 139-41.

The process of *specta(c)torship* that *Urban Seashell* opens up suggests that we will have to amend Deleuze's chain of disturbances by proposing that the *sentientum* can come to be a disturbance, can come to be that germ that provokes thinking in thought (de)constructing the system of representation and the embodied subject with it, only upon the ground of the performed *imaginandum* - performing the unimaginable limit of imagination. Sound can slip beyond recognition (into acting upon the subject as a destabilizing affect) only at the point where the *imagination* is folded against itself. The (unnamable) unimaginable limit of imagination would be touched here by the impossible gesture of re-imagining absurdly¹ the dynamic of the affective fields that produce embodied subjectivity (the very embodied subjectivity that is in the process of thinking them), re-imagining, that is, the performance of our own embodied identity in its intertwined becoming with its *associated milieu* (in this case, specifically, with the given soundscape). The affective disturbance that could come to be the *sentientum* would be perceived and cancelled in emotion or (mis)recognition that confirms the subject and the object (instead of problematizing it) except if one is already the (active) patient of the *imaginandum* that affords for the (de)construction of subjectivity:

I imagine that I am standing on the sidewalk on the Royal Parade in Parkville, Melbourne, Australia. The music that I am hearing through my headphones moves me, and is moved by me with every breath, with every step, with every moment of stillness. The rhythm, the melody, the harmony (harmony, that is, at least for me, at least for the culture that I am part of), the relations that I unconsciously recognize between the sounds, precipitate me, in emotion, towards who I (never quite) am. There are patterns that I can recognize, that I cannot exactly retain, but that function as vectors towards the reassuring comfort of recognition. Recognizing myself and recognizing the

¹ That is, disharmoniously, since according to one possible etymology of absurdity the root 'absurdus' originally means (among others) 'out of tune.' See for example the etymology accepted by the Oxford English Dictionary (<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/792?redirectedFrom=absurd#eid>, accessed 17.03.2021).

world around me. Yet, not quite. I am happy and I am sad with this music, I become full of energy, even angry, and turn contemplative with this music.¹ But for the moment I'm just taking the headphones off. I let the sounds of the traffic envelop me - this unpleasant murmur thick with intriguing modernist connotations (musical and extra-musical), as well as with the memory and the presentiment of (not less modern) catastrophes (think world wars, colonization, environmental crisis). There is sound but there is barely any structure that I could recognize anymore: a dynamic of noise (with its connotations) that I become together with towards who I (never quite) am. There is a soundscape and I am confirmed and problematized by its dynamic. 'I' comes to name the intensive dynamic of the couple *individual-associated milieu – listener – sound environment* in our case - rather than a clearly defined 'human' subject. I am in as much as I am shaped by these intensive fields that I come to perceive as sounds (that come to be sounds in as much as I am listening to them), I am the critical problems that this field of noise comes to be, its breathtaking (literally) promises and menaces. I take the empty fruit can out of my backpack and start subtly modulating this noise, moving it, being moved by it, performing the choreography requested by the score, towards (not quite) being myself. With the distorted reflections afforded for by the pineapple can I am moved by sounds that do not quite fit in my world. I can still get away with it though... I know that these sounds are merely reflections, distortions, abnormalities, absurdities, I know they are not 'real.' But then I^(?) start to imagine, to imagine sounds that will never be, to confuse them with the promises and the menaces of the traffic noise, with the voices and the faces on the street, with the barely audible distortions that are reflected from the pineapple can. And this is the point where an unbreachable *cesura* emerges in

¹ The claim is not that all music that operates with rhythm, melody and harmony is necessarily eliciting an emotional response, but that there is a certain intrinsic propensity towards emotion in the relations that define rhythm, melody and harmony. It is a completely different discussion if this propensity is indeed actualized and under which conditions, also a different question if and how rhythm, melody and harmony can be played against themselves, frustrating or delaying emotion.

recognition, and consequently in the system of *representation*. Not that I^(?) am not aware of what is 'real' and what I^(?) am imagining, but on the contrary because an unthinkable awareness emerges: the awareness of a limit of imagination that affords for the (de)construction of the 'real,' if by 'real' we mean actual (that which exists and can be perceived, recognized). An awareness of that 'real' which cannot be imagined, yet that is the very possibility of imagination starts to disturb the coherence of my^(?) representations, an unthinkable awareness of that 'real' which makes the actual possible,¹ of that 'real' that is the *virtual* unimaginable limit of imagination - the limit that affords for the coagulation of my^(?) world in its actuality (including my^(?) embodied subjectivity), the coagulation of the Nature that I^(?) live in and together with (where Nature will have to be understood as the *associated milieu* as it appears in representation). The imagined sound that raises in pitch and volume as it traverses the body, as it contours and fills the body with an (im)material intensity, appears as a glitch in the very material intertwined becoming of the body and its associated milieu, a glitch in the intertwined becoming of the listening subject and the sound waves that shape it into being who it (never quite) is. An (im)material glitch of materiality that for a brief moment allows the sound to appear as pure affect, as unrecognizable intensity, and thus to act as a line of flight beyond the unity and identity with itself of the thinking subject. What cannot be imagined, while being the very possibility of any imagination, is precisely the 'glitching', the emergence of the (im) that permeates materiality and makes it possible.

This line of flight afforded for by the experience that *Urban Seashell* proposes has to be understood as the (de)construction of the embodied thinking subject and of its Nature. The sounds act (against themselves) as intensive differences that disturb the sensibility that I^(?) (never quite) am, as pointers towards the imperceptible intensity that makes

¹ We are following Simondon and Deleuze here. For Simondon the 'real' is the *pre-individual being*, thus strictly speaking something prior to space and time and prior to the possibility of being thought, and that gives rise to being and thought (Simondon, *L'Individuation*, pp.26-7). For Deleuze the *virtual* is 'real' without being actual (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 208-9), that dimension of the 'real' that affords for the (im)possibility of actual being.

perception possible, and the whole individuating dynamic of the couple *individual-associated milieu* comes to be disturbed. And this line of flight happens in the paradoxical interplay of activity/passivity in the conjugation of listening (opening oneself up towards the intensive dynamic inherent in a soundscape), movement (being moved into who one never quite is, being performed by this intensive dynamic that in its turn is striated by one's movement) and imagination (absurdly folding imagination against itself by imaginarily modulating the intensive dynamic of one's becoming, and thus glimpsing the unreachable limit of imagination as the impossible yet necessary germ of thinking beyond representation).

But, of course, I^(?) am only imagining all this, I^(?) am still to have the courage to perform the slightly awkward indications of the score. I^(?) am imagining a gesture of *specta(c)torship* that might never happen, that always already happened in as much as I^(?) am imagining it. And I^(?) imagine a blurry presentiment instead of conclusion (any strong theoretical conclusion must always be a blurry presentiment): the necessity of an (always erroneous) gesture of *specta(c)torship* in order to navigate the crisis that the intertwined individuation of the couple *individual-associated milieu* currently faces: the environmental crisis that we ourselves are. That is, the necessity of (de)constructing one's embodied identity in thinking beyond/before representation, the necessity of hearing absurd imagined waves conjugated with the traffic noise - not in order to eliminate representation but in order to account for its emergence and to play it against itself, to account for its consequences. I^(?) understand Nemescu's insistence that the *imaginary music* is anti-spectacular as an incentive to think and to perform the folding of *spectare*¹ against itself, as this folding of representation against itself that we tried to unpack in this article. And consequently, still following Nemescu, I understand this *anti-spectacularity* as a 'fight of the subject against itself'² -

¹ *Spectare*, the latin etymological root of *spectacle*, meaning 'to view, watch, behold.' See the entry for 'spectacle' in 'Online Etymology Dictionary,' <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=spectacle>, accessed 12.03.2021.

² Nemescu, 'Muzica Imaginară,' p. 4.

although, admittedly the meaning that we give this phrase here is quite far from the one that it has in Nemescu's text.¹ It is a 'fight of the subject against itself' that is intertwined with a certain (de)construction of Nature, a (de)construction of the world as representation. A (de)construction that could very well also take as one of its forms the practice, imagined by Nemescu, of (mis)reading Nature as a score for *imaginary music*: with *imaginary music* visual, gustative, olfactory, tactile sensations can be synaesthetically perceived as *imagined sounds*, thus all sense organs becoming musical instruments for a musical piece whose score is Nature itself.² (Mis)understanding Nature towards an intensive relational environment (an *associated milieu* that is an integral part of who I^(?) (never quite) am) by preforming it as an *imaginary soundscape*. A Nature, we would say, (de)constructed towards the relational fields of imagined sounds, towards *imaginary music*, a Nature that attests in its (de)construction to the dynamics of the *affective intensive* fields that cannot be sensed yet cannot but be sensed - in as much as these affects irrupt on an already destabilized intensive field of imagination that tends towards its unattainable limits (towards that which cannot be imagined yet that which is the possibility of every imagination).

SUMMARY

Mihai Băcăran

Imaginary gestures of *specta(c)torship*: Darie Nemeș Bota's 'Urban Seashell'

This article considers the process of *specta(c)torship* afforded for by Darie Nemeș Bota's *imaginary music* score *Urban Seashell*, recently published in the collection *Redescoperind*

¹ For Nemescu 'the fight of the subject against itself' is meant to underline that *imaginary music* is an inner ritual that can be directed at purifying and improving oneself. For us here 'the fight of the subject against itself' means the striving to leave oneself behind in a practice that following Deleuze and Guattari we could call a *body without organs*.

² Nemescu, 'Muzica Imaginară,' pp. 3-4.

Muzica Imaginară (2020, edited by Irinel Anghel). *Urban Seashell* asks the spectator to perform a series of simple movements on a sidewalk near a busy road, movements that modulate the sound experience of the traffic noise. At the same time, the spectator is asked to imagine a sound and develop it in their imagination according to the indications of the score. I take the (im)materiality of the resulting musical experience, the conjunction of 'real' and imagined sounds, as the starting point for theoretical considerations into the consequences of this performative experience of *specta(c)torship*.

After briefly considering the meaning of *imaginary music* for Octavian Nemescu, the avant-garde composer who proposed this practice in the mid '70s, the article explores the paradoxical conjunction of active/passive listening, movement, and imagination that *Urban Seashell*, as a work of *imaginary music*, opens up for the spectator. Building on insights from Gilles Deleuze's philosophy, I explore a possible understanding of imagination - as it emerges from the experience that *Urban Seashell* proposes - that allows us to glimpse the (de)construction of embodied subjectivity and of its *associated milieu* (in the understanding that Gilbert Simondon gives to this term) as the fundamental stakes of the process of *specta(c)torship* that *Urban Seashell* offers.