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– DOCTORAL THESIS –
(abstract)

A philosophical analysis of postmodern music as a cultural phenomenon. Applications on the digital-virtual creation

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ABSTRACT

The desire of a philosophical analysis of the post and digimodern music started after a long participation of the author in the miracle of sonic adventures, starting with the passionate listener to the evolving artizan of computer-assisted music creation. Also, starting with the period before this research adequately begun, I have doubled the experience of musical practice with numerous readings in the specific field, in order to create a theoretical paradigm, both influenced by illustruos figures from the field of the philosophy of contemporary culture (Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Gilbert Simondon, Katherine Hayles, Brian Massumi ş.a.m.d.), as well as personal contributions and new ideas. The musical examples used throughout the thesis were selected after many auditions, in order to emphasize their relevant essence. By the pervasive presence of international bibliography, I tried to develop a future possible exploration platform in the academic Romanian literature on this field, accordingly to the major Western perspectives on philosophy of computer-assisted music, starting with the French post-structuralist and deconstructivism and ending with some resonant names in the field of philosophy of technology and digital media.

Based on these premises, we attribute to post and digimodern music the role of a main contribuitor in emphasizing the connections between *ontos* and *logos*, between *ideal* and *possible*, between *real* and *hiper-real*, between *offline* and *online* as manners of alternative authentification of existence in a matricial reflection, through rendering, reproduction and intensive colonization of the perceptive space.

Postmodernism functioned as an implementation of *fragmentation* and *discontinuity* in the consistency of the expressive plans, thus generating a need for the reevaluation of its ontic, phenomenological and aesthetic-axiological status in a completely new frame, suplimented by the technological devices and hailed as a cultural regime under the *digital modernism* paradigm or, as Alan Kirby named it, *digimodernism.* We will emphasize on the idea that postmodernism, due to all its questioning of traditions and history, could serve as a basis for the *experiment of difference* in music creation, by deploying the processes of *pseudonaturalization*, *virtualization* or *actualization.*

Therefore, we will try in the following, in addition to the short description of the main chapters and sub-chapters of the thesis, to clarify the reader in regards to the exposed ideas

both by conjuring the specific field literature and by proposing some new ideas and critical reflections.

In the first chapter, we will enounce the theoretical principles of postmodern culture, by underlining the music attributes of this period. We will describe from the perspective of deleuzian intensive aesthetics characteristics such as *the shock*, *the nostalgia* and *the formal distorsions of compositional structures* of postmodern music, in order to sustain the idea that music installs itself within a phenomenon as a triumph of intensivity when we cease to simply hear and we begin to listen.

The second part of the chapter, dedicated to digimodernism as a paradigmatic functional extension of postmodernism, we will describe the basic principles and attributes as coined by its originator, the British cultural theorist Alan Kirby. In this chapter, we will also extend a series of considerations in regards to the processes of individuation, based on the ideas of French philosopher Gilbert Simondon in *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (1995), and developed under the personal concepts of *schizospasmia* and *self-replying*. According to the medical definition of the term, spasticity presupposes hypertonic muscular activity, hyperattention and hyperactivity, creating in conjunction with

what Deleuze and Guattari champion as *schizophrenia*, a radical fracture of being: for the schizospasmic there is no clear boundary between self and nature, creator and creation, innerside and outerside, appearance and essence.

Self-replying appears as an attempt to explain how the artificial, as a phenomenological extension which serves for the camouflage of the postmodern void, is a mediator between individuation and trans-individuation, in the transit area of dez-individuation, self-imposed by being as a metaphysical process of resistance to the pressure of a constantly changing world.

By instrumentalizing the copy as a *simulacrum*, *diagramatic icon* or a *rhizome* (Deleuze, 1988), the function of the artificial creates in the musical fields of post and digimodern world a seduction of the technological device which imposes, on a circular mode, a reverse seduction of the creator by the technology. According to Jean Baudrillard, this process becomes ontologically stabilized as *hyper-reality*.

How does postmodernism identify itself in the functional paradigm of digimodernism? The pre and post-iluminist capital cultural is relevant as a postmodern resource

of *cannibalizing tradition* (F. Jameson, 1991), from an eschatonic point of *here and now.*[1]

Digimodernism is originated from this assemblage which re-defines and recapitulates the configuration of the idea of reality, by merging it with the digital media and the artificial intelligence. Consequently, creativity is redefined as well and its musical practices demand an adjusted analysis , according to the digital media functions: of instrumentalization and determination, of ontological differentiation, of reverse axiological modelling, of gnoseological conditioning, of recreation and transliminal pioneering. The digimodern artist is by default created in this platform of technological dependency, resulting in the beforementioned process of transindividuation, when the creator is self-identified by an intentional infusion into the digital microsystem, where the battle between the *iconic authorship* and the diluted one, the post-individual has been won by the latter. This happens simultaneously with the hegemonic rise of the receiver, of the listener, in a celebration of the *rating*, as an axiological system facilitated by the *contributive culture* (Bernard Stiegler, 1998)

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[1] We will explain in the dissertation how this "here and now" are related to the concept of "immanentize the Eschaton" , coined by Eric Voegelin in 1952.

and *self-technologies culture* (Michel Foucault, 1991: 44-48), destined to subjectively regulate the creatve practices and strategies subscribed to the interactions between various kinds of media , between man and machine , between code and intelligent language, between individuation and trans-individuation. If the postmodern artist perceived music as an art of "margins nearby a collapsed center"(T. Mitchell, 1989:45), the digimodern musician is satisfied by their security and he even prefers them to the center , sometimes aspiring to the rapid exposion of those " fifteen minutes of fame " [2], a metaphor for assuming banality and ephemeral condition as basic factors of the *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 2009) and *contributive culture* (Stiegler), which hail the receiver/listener as a master of narratives.

In the debut of the second chapter, we advance some phenomenological considerations on the *sonic digital synthesis*, both from the point of view of the complete result, defined as a musical composition, as well as from the point of view of the manipulation, editing, recording and rendering procedures. We have therefore introduced the key concept of *intensive fairy-like sound,* in order to describe the Hi-Fi resolution and

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[2] A famous catchphrase coined by Andy Warhol , 1968: http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/fifteen-minutes-of-fame.html.

technical procedures used in creating and recording a track for increasing its intensive impact in the listeners perception, in a sense close to what Giorgio Agamben wrote in *The Coming Community*: "matter does not remain solely under form, but sourrounds it as a halo"(1993: 2). The depth of this thought can easily be understood if we consider the wide array of sonic effects such as reverb, delay, panning and so on which can turn a simple „bedroom studio" of recording music into a grandeur that may resemble a cathedral sound, for instance.

In the same chapter, we will also introduce a key concept, namely the one of *pseudonaturalization,* meant to offer a paradigmatic pattern to the hyperreal regime of the artificial. By this , we try to underline the impossibility of denying the intensive colonization of the simulacrum and the tendency to preserve the genuine aletheic sense , in order to protect what Walter Benjamin called the *aura* of the work of art, namely its unique and iconic value, which makes it an almost sacred object (1969:14). Starting with postmodern age, the absolutization of this aura became questionable and the iconic hypostasis of the creator became relativized as well, being correlated with the metaphysical level of the "absent self" as described by Lacan (1966) and with the mechanisms of transgression in the trans-individual processes, which try to

force the agencies of the real and their limits through two processes described by Katherine Hayles: *inscription* and *incorporation* (1999). Here we can talk about the second stage of immanent becoming, developing in five levels which we named as follows: on a primary ontological hierarchy, we have the level of being, the level of interrogation, the level of activation and , on the secondary ontological hierarchy, the level of conditioned being and the level of technopoietic organization.

How does pseudo-naturalizaton occurs? By the conjunction of a medium of existence (called *Hyperphysis*) with a process of creation/*poiesis* mediated by technique/*techne* (called *Technopoiesis*). The digital-virtual musical creation may be analysed from the double perspective it has in the relation of form and content with the individual and its medium of creation , in this case the computer being a techne-conditioned mimetic expression of the human brain. Art becomes therefore immanentized in a double form : of a real and hyperreal nature. Thus postmodern and digimodern music is not only a resultant of active nature's mimesis, but also a resultant of second degree *mimesthai* [3], which co-defines

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[3] *Mimesthai* (gr.): the process of imitation, referring to creation both as a product and as an imitation of something as a process of production ,

reality starting from the second degree hyper-real nature towards the actual, immanent one, in other words, by reversing the hylemorphic relation of mimesis, from the metaphysical towards physical.What we call *Hyperphysis*– a virtual and actual nature of pixels, transcoded sounds, FXs– is therefore the main medium of creation for digital musicians. We base our philosophical argumentation on some concepts extracted from the works of Martin Heidegger (1977) and Theodor Adorno (1984).

The third chapter contains some considerations about the nature of *the virtual* and its philosophical meanings, especially focused on the ideas developed by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze in his seminal work *Difference and Repetition* (1968). Our contribution includes some possible answers at the questions "what is real and what is virtual" in human creation, and how do those two intertwine in the realization of an aesthetic frame in the digitized paradigms of arts, as theorized in the works of Pierre Lévy (1995, 1998), Phillipe Quéau (1993), Gilles Gaston Granger (1995) and Gilles Deleuze (1968, 1980, 1996).

according to Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic narrative*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo Ontario, 2006, p. 72.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to some personalized philosophical models of digital music , starting with the *rhizomatic metamodel* , inspired by deleuzian thoughts, continuing with *the dual-chaosmic looping pattern* and finishing with the model of hybrid digital interaction, as the most widely used by musicians , as exemplified by names such as Max Mathews, Udo Kassemets, SensorBand, Goodiepal.

The last chapter contains an analysis of cultural mutations to be identified in the public discourse of post and digimodern music, as it starts with some considerations on the status of the author, refined around the triad *author-actor-auctor*, partly inspired by the theories of Roland Barthes (1968) and Michel Foucault (1987).

As musical creations' mutations are concerned, we will analyze the *sampling* and *collage processes* under the moniker of *transidiomatic writing*, facilitated by the instrumentalizing frame offered by the pseudonaturalization. We consider the copy of music as renaturalizing because it brings back to attention the virtual dimension of an already actualized object, opened to evolutive and creative manipulations.

In the last part of the chapter, we will examine the dynamics of the levels of storing, distributing and recepting musical products, as balanced between the *heterachy* paradigm

(as exemplified by Creative Commons doctrine) and netocracy (the elite of the high-level Internet surveillance agents and media controllers). We propose the term *cryptomnematic info-anarchism* to emphasize the trials and tribulations of contributive culture to free music and art from the copyright strains. Cryptomnemata works as a principle of intentional amnesia or attempt to hide the sources – by the absence of reference, by using pseudonyms and so on– and is encouraged by the largely developing free base of sound loops, music libraries, royalty free samples and so on.

From the simple act of distributing and sharing music on digital supports and formats to the deconstructions through decontextualization and recontextualization, we observe the existence of a true release and renaturalization of the copy in the creative industries in the later years , which, despite the vulgar infusion of pop spirit and the massification of visible music production in many anti-value and decadent forms, displays a truly constructive and positive force as it unfolds the premises of intensifying divergence and unlimiting the combinations which are, at least theoretically, the agents of the noble ideal of free knowledge.

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