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"Speaker For The Dead":
Composition As Speculative Archaeoacoustics

Abstract. This paper presents the theoretical foundations of speculative archaeoacoustics, a methodology of composition in which artistic practice becomes a way of accessing the lost music of the Upper Palaeolithic. It begins by accepting David Graeber and David Wengrow's understanding of prehistory as a dazzling tapestry of investigations and enquiries, before drawing a methodology of affect and creation from the work of Steven Mithen. From here, it critiques two contemporary procedures—one theoretical and one practical—for realising ancient music: to show how lost art must be reclaimed not through the empirical limit but the aesthetic exception. By adapting Alain Badiou's theory of eternal, invariant truths through a satirical tradition that includes science- and theory-fiction, the argument concludes with the demonstration of a procedure through which we may reimagine, discover—and speak—for vanished genius.

Keywords: archaeoacoustics, Badiou, cave art, composition, Palaeolithic, prehistory, science fiction, theory fiction.

I.

"I began with the desire to speak with the dead" (Stephen Greenblatt 1988, 1). To commune with Elizabethans, Tsars, Samurai, bronze-clad charioteers, is one thing. But our stone-age forbears, whose cultures survive only in the barest traces? How would one begin such a communication—backwards in time across unimaginable millennia?

Alain Badiou's (2013b) *Logics of Worlds* argues for the eternal, invariant nature of truths which re-surface at various points in history—even when altogether lost. The philosopher (16–20) uses a comparison between the art of the Chauvet Cave and Picasso to propose a transhistorical truth regarding representation. The eternal nature of such a truth—and, crucially, the non-causal relations between its participants—permit us to invert temporal direction: to move, for instance, from what Badiou terms the "Schoenberg event" (83) back to a speculative appearance of the truth of this manifested in our long-buried past.

This, then, allows for composition as a method for unearthing the music of the Upper Palaeolithic: a speculative archaeoacoustics. It is presented as both an act of theory fiction in the tradition of *Cyclonopedia* (Reza Negarestani 2009) and the CCRU (2017); and a work of science fiction, as proposed by novels such as *Always Coming Home* (Ursula K. Le Guin 1985) and *Speaker for The Dead* (Orson Scott Card 1986), that is, a fiction of sciences such as anthropology and archaeology. Its methodology is built upon the insights of David Graeber and David Wengrow (2021), and expanded through principles extracted from the work of Steven Mithen (2005), and a critique of existing approaches in both theory and practice.

The potential of speculative archaeoacoustics is then demonstrated in the sketch of a creative procedure for recovering a lost classic. By breathing new life into its forgotten master, this work will attempt communication across the ages: to "speak for the dead"—and forge a dialogue between modern audiences and the delights and imaginations of their ancestors.

II.

The foundational text for this project is David Graeber and David Wengrow's (2021) *The Dawn of Everything,* which uses new anthropological and archaeological evidence to rethink the study of prehistory. The importance of doing so can be seen in a cautionary tale from the field of archaeology—that of the discovery of Palaeolithic cave art. The critic Bruno David (2017, 18) recounts the story of how the art of the Cave of Altamira in Cantabrian Spain was found in 1879, depicting this as "a legendary encounter that forced us to rethink what we thought we knew about the history of the human mind." He (21) writes that

> Nothing quite like Altamira's cave paintings had been seen before, intricately carved excavated portable objects notwithstanding. And neither the general public nor the nascent science of archaeology, only newly informed by the kinds of evolutionary thought propounded by Charles Darwin in his *Origin of the Species* (published in 1859, a mere twenty years before the discovery of Altamira's paintings), were yet prepared to recognise that artistic masterworks could have been made by Palaeolithic peoples.

Indeed, so difficult it was for the discipline to believe that a prehistoric society could have produced works of such sophistication that the cave's discoverer was ridiculed for having been taken in by—what it regarded

as—so obviously a hoax (David 22). Rather, as the artworks of Altamira and Chauvet show, Palaeolithic cultures not only equal but in many ways surpass the imaginative capability of we moderns.

It is this truth that *The Dawn of Everything* attempts to set out, albeit primarily in regard to politics and social organisation. In this, Graeber and Wengrow critique accepted notions of what they portray as on the one hand, a Rousseauian fall from grace and innocence and on the other, the Hobbesian notion of prehistoric life as "nasty, brutish and short." The authors maintain that both perspectives are mistaken: each is limited by the givenness of our own, contemporary imaginations in contrast to the boundless potential of our ancestors—which the text shows them to have demonstrated in various expressions across millennia. The book's (107) fundamental thesis is that "from the very beginning, or at least as far back as we can trace such things, human beings were self-consciously experimenting with different social possibilities." Concerning societal organisation, "there is no single pattern. The only consistent phenomenon is the very fact of alteration" (115). The background to this argument is obviously one of pressing intervention in our own political reality, and can be seen as a post-financial crisis response (Graeber's involvement in the Occupy movement is no coincidence) to Jameson's (1998) oft-quoted line that "it is easier to imagine an end of the world than to imagine an end of capitalism." It represents an attempt to break the imaginative deadlock in which revolutionary enterprises become subsumed back into a system that resists all intervention.

Thus the authors (8) ask "how we came to be trapped in such tight conceptual shackles that we can no longer even imagine the possibility of reinventing ourselves?" Contrary to the Altamira sceptics, our ancestors knew things that we cannot even conceive of: most importantly for Graeber and Wengrow, a true satirical perspective on structural relations. They (111) argue that the "institutional flexibility" which we see from archaeological evidence—for instance, the shifting "back and forth between alternative social arrangements, building monuments and then closing them down again, allowing the rise of authoritarian structures during certain times of the year then dismantling them"—enables the capacity to step outside the boundaries of any given structure and reflect; to both make and unmake the political worlds we live in. The imperative here is not so much that we should believe in these capabilities but learn from them. While this dictum concerns social organisation, there is no reason why it would not apply to other aspects of Palaeolithic knowledge—including within the domain of the aesthetic.

III.

However, while we have surviving evidence of social structures and paintings, we do not of the ephemeral art of music. In attempting to recapture this, how might we proceed? We may begin to construct a methodology through a reading of Steven Mithen's *The Singing Neanderthals*. The book makes the case that human language developed from a musical forbear used by our evolutionary ancestors and cousins the Neanderthals. But more important to our present line of argument are the—largely unstated, but nevertheless absolutely crucial—methodological principles that it employs. That is, the ancillary thesis of this work, perhaps more important than its primary one, concerns the use and affirmation of affect and an aesthetic or even religious feeling of the presence—and therefore reality—of these long-vanished individuals. In doing so, Mithen makes the case for an epistemology of the vanished, showing what lies beyond empirical knowledge to be crucial to archaeoacoustic study.

Right at the outset, Mithen (2) frames his critique of the discipline thus: "While archaeologists have put significant effort into examining the intellectual capacities of our ancestors, their emotional lives have remained as neglected as their music." The methodological consequences of this can be seen in a later passage where the author (236) posits the use of music therapy in Neanderthal culture. Significantly, he has no evidence for this: it is nothing more than an unsubstantiated flight of fancy. Or is it? It is no coincidence that immediately following this statement, Mithen (236) asserts that "in ice-age conditions, making decisions was a matter of life or death; and Neanderthal life was full of decision" before referring to an earlier discussion of the work of Robert Frank (1988) and K. Oatley and P. N. Johnson-Laird (1987) which show emotion to be a critical component of rationality. Though Mithen uses this to make the case for Neanderthal culture as a tapestry of affects, there is an implication that justifies the previous passage. Just like Neanderthal hunters, archaeologists need emotion, too, in order to correctly interpret the data—to make the correct decision.

And this means sometimes venturing beyond available evidence into the realm of the unknown—via the aesthetic. Mithen (245) advocates contemporary artworks as windows through which to capture the long-

lost world of a different species of hominid; most strikingly, that of ballet as a wormhole which could lead to Neanderthal art. Such an approach finally blossoms into a daring wager in the work's final pages (277–278): a manifesto for the methodology of the musician rather than that of the archaeologist. Mithen contends, like John Blacking (1973) before him, that the immediacy of the past is with us always: in an encounter both with the biological inheritance of our own bodies, and the aesthetic transactions that these participate in. This is partly correct: but it is wrong to claim that the body offers some kind of originary Rosetta Stone with which to communicate with past artists. For whether rhythm emerges from bipedal evolution, as Mithen (274) and Michael Spitzer (2021, 12) argue, or the heartbeat, as suggested by Ezra B. W. Zubrow and Elizabeth C. Blake (2006, 121), it is the idea of a beginning which is problematic. As Badiou (2013b, 20) attests: "there is no origin." First, it represents a limit—both temporal and imaginative—which is at odds with the enterprise of Mithen's methodology of creation and affect. Second, the experience of the body is never our/its own. It is always—to use Lacanian (2006) terminology—Symbolically mediated, and as such manifests within experience as entirely different things in various historical and cultural contexts. We will look at these ideas further as they are crucial to the discussions of archaeoacoustic theory and Badiou which follow. However, Mithen is entirely right regarding the aesthetic—which is ultimately the bearer of the tension between the subjective and the objective, between the inner world and the noumena that act upon it. As such, the aesthetic deals ever in the overcoming of thresholds, whether these be the Symbolic order's arbitration, impositions of the cynic, the origin, or empiricist prohibition. It is an impossible machine: a portal to the past.

In his conclusion, Mithen (278) incites us to travel through this, for

> words remain quite inadequate to describe the nature of music, and can never diminish its mysterious hold upon our minds and bodies. Hence my final words take the form of a request: listen to music … listen to J. S. Bach's "Prelude in C Major" and think of Australopithecines waking in their treetop nests, or Dave Brubeck's "Unsquare Dance" and think of *Homo ergaster* stamping, clapping, jumping and twirling…. When you next hear a choir perform, close your eyes, ignore the words, and let an image of the past come to mind: perhaps the inhabitants of Atapuerca disposing of their dead, or the Neanderthals of Combe Grenal watching the river ice melt as a new spring arrives. Once you have listened, make your own music and liberate all those hominids that still reside within you.

It is significant that in all of the many suggestions he gives, he does not refer to historically informed performance.

IV.

To answer why this might be, we will consider two existing approaches to the excavation of prehistoric musics—one theoretical and one practical—bearing in mind Graeber and Wengrow's (119) assertion that

> Our early ancestors were not just our cognitive equals, but our intellectual peers, too… They were neither ignorant savages nor wise sons and daughters of nature. They were, as Helena Valero said of the Yanomami, just people, like us; equally perceptive, equally confused.

We begin with the theoretical critique, which concerns *The Origin of Music And Rhythm* by Zubrow and Blake. This article serves to explicate three key issues within the discipline of archaeoacoustics.

First, as examined previously, the use of the concept of origin. The authors (117) state that "at some point in the Upper Palaeolithic, there was a transition from 'non-music' to 'music' that was accompanied by shifts in intent, instrumentality, religion, cognition, education, perception, and causality." They (121) argue the emergence of music clarifies certain aspects of study, writing that

> definitional and processual questions should be clearer for earlier periods because at the beginning of a phenomenon they are simpler and fewer exogenous forces are usually in operation. The difference between "nonexistence" and "existence" stands out in stronger contrasts than do differences of degree within the same phenomenon. Contrasts between likely "pre-music" and "post-music" can be proposed.

This is to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of such a process, which is neither digital nor singular. Graeber and Wengrow (78–80) are absolutely clear on this, reminding us that such accounts function in the same way as creation stories. And while "there's nothing wrong with myths … such insights can only ever be partial because there was no Garden of Eden, and a single Eve never existed" (Graeber and Wengrow 98). Specifically with regard to an origin of music, Gary Tomlinson (2015, 12) has shown how "modern musicking

and language, in a real sense, did not develop at all" but instead "fell out, as belated emergences." Yes, reductive mapping can be highly useful in the study of art: the blunt generality of periodisation, for instance, can assist in historicisation. Focalisers, whether they be texts, ideologies, or approaches to reading, can draw new meanings and insights. But this is to work with surviving artworks, which contain the myriad contradictions and infinities of human expression that may resist those constraints. In the absence of primary sources, such an approach is problematic.

For this conceit enables the authors (120) to map contemporary ideas of progress across the fictional originary divide: between intentionality and non-intentionality; between the arbitrary and the causal. The authors thus provide a schema of pre- and post-music which contrasts, for instance, pre-music non-constructive perception and non-causal modeling with post-music construction and causal modelling. There is no reason as to why this might be the case, that is, other than because of the imposition of modern biases. Mithen's model of the origin of language, for instance, offers an entirely different possibility; in his theory, linguistic evolution constituted a move away from pre-homo sapien holistic, mimetic language towards the arbitrary use of discrete units. Music, then, could have transitioned from meaningful, imitative, causal sound into non-relational signification. Tomlinson (19) maintains that current evidence supports the rejection of "gradual but steadfast progress," appealing instead for "nonlinear histories that forgot straight-line causality in order to accommodate the formative forces [of] … spiralling feedback loops and loops-upon-loops, and burgeoning complexity from simple structures." And so to both Graeber and Wengrow's discussion of myth and Zubrow and Blake's mapping, we should apply Adorno and Horkheimer's (1944, xvi) theses regarding the dialectic of enlightenment: "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology." Not only is there no origin, there is not even an originary process that can be traced from an arbitrary point: for this inevitably turns out to be nothing more than an imagined—mythic—Other constructed against and according to our own historically-determined prejudices.

Together, the concept of origin and the mapping it permits lead to the authors' (123–125) advocacy of historically informed performance. They prescribe that "in attempting to study the origin of music and rhythm using simulation and experimentation, or to recreate prehistoric music, real world demonstrations should be created that demonstrate empirically what is expected to have occurred." This is the centre of a constellation which contains the previous two issues and accounts for principal limitations to the field. For historically informed performance does not return you to the aesthetic event—it bars you from it. We may here appeal to Mark Berry's (2008, 93) argument that "elective 'authenticist' positivism" works by reducing its focus to "a few 'facts,' 'facts in themselves' … to emphasise their one-sided objectivism." In doing so, there is always a hierarchy, a separation, an occlusion, where "many facts are excluded, especially those that might lead one beyond 'in itselfness.'" In this way, the confines of our own imaginations that Graeber and Wengrow identified are not overcome but rather embedded within a type of (itself historically-contingent) instrumental reason. It is not just the origin and its maps, then, but their "illusory excavation" (Berry 102) which must be rejected.

This can be seen in practical attempts to recreate Palaeolithic music that utilises such methods. As a case study, we will examine Anna Friederike Potengowski and Georg Wieland's (2017) *The Edge of Time: Palaeolithic Bone Flutes Of France & Germany,* which works with reconstructions of ancient instruments to depict the music of the Palaeolithic. This is fascinating and significant music, both in itself and as an attempt at unearthing the past. Even so, it embodies the consequences of the disciplinary errors outlined in the theoretical enquiry above. That is, it exists within the limits of historically informed performance: by imposing imaginary boundaries upon the aesthetic infinities of prehistoric art.

For instance, the music is characterised throughout by 21st-century idioms, with familiar notions of gesture, development and tonality—including both centres and their modulation—as well as the use of similarly familiar textures such as regular ostinati and arpeggios. It is not far from the traditional western classical canon; indeed, there is a shock halfway through the album where the musicians offer their performance of John Cage's *Ryoanji* (1985) which—as Mithen suggested—sounds closer to the potential of the Palaeolithic than the those effected by the historically informed practice which sit alongside it. We know that this would not have to be the case. Hunter-gatherer music today—which like the methodology deployed by Potengowski conjures material conditions and technology "available for people 40,000 years ago too"—shows an inventiveness that entirely outstrips that of *The Edge of Time.* Iain Morley (2006, 95) would seem to support Potengowski's procedure, writing that "legitimate parallels to past auditory behaviours can be based on the

pattern of shared constraints" with contemporary hunter-gatherers. But comparing *The Edge of Time* with the examples he goes on to give shows the mistake in this approach: it is unwise to extrapolate from a material constraint in order to construct a creative limit. Among others, Morley gives the examples of the African Pygmies of the equatorial forest (Aka and Mbuti) and the Eskimo of southwest Alaska (Yupik) and Canada (Inuit). The former (Colin M. Turnbull 1993) offer a tradition of dazzling choral polyphony with complex polyrhythms and striking melodies that not only imitate the natural world but interrogate it; while the latter's tradition of throat singing (Mattia Mariani 2006) uses vocal multiphonics to produce thrilling, otherwise inconceivable sounds through the form of a competitive musical game. Living practices such as these lay bare the method's flaws: an empiricist focus upon constraint rather than innovation. Furthermore, Potengowski explains how "we let ideas flow into the music regarding the reasons and occasions our ancestors would have had for playing music, such as the instrumental imitation of natural sounds, keeping memories alive, or musical accompaniment to ritual." But Morley (103) notes that in the above instances of hunter-gatherer art, both communities see themselves as being part of the land, and sound as a physical act within it that can change the world as opposed to (only) imitating it, accompanying it, or being influenced by it. Without making the imaginative leap beyond mere empirical possibility, a void is created in the artwork. What else would it become filled with if not the musicians' historically and socially determined biases?

Only when we compare this to the surviving masterworks of Paleolithic peoples can we truly appreciate the shortcomings of such an approach. It is the evidence of the Chauvet Cave which provides us with the ultimate case against an archaeoacoustics of historically informed practice. For in constructing limits—whether these be material, empirical, or creative—rather than infinities, the musicians create the *general,* whereas the cave is *exceptional*. It is simple to offer a general music; impossible to locate the specificity of genius and insight. That is, unless we invert our understanding of these parameters and see—as Badiou (2013a) urges us to—truth as that which is infinite and generic. Take the Cave's remarkable artwork known as the *Panel of Rhinoceroses*. This contains an altogether surprising use of movement and line, which Werner Herzog (2010) has described as a type of "proto-cinema." Its life-like motion reaches across the static, voluminous horses of art—found everywhere from Greek pottery (Swing Painter ca. 530 BC) to the Bayeux Tapestry (ca. 1070) and Théodore Géricault's (1821) *The 1821 Derby at Epsom*—to the innovations of the 20th century: such as, quite incredibly, *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* by Giacomo Balla (1912), made possible—or so we thought!— only through the advent of the camera. In the absence of the *Panel of Rhinoceroses*, an attempt to reconstruct its wonders via the theoretical and practical procedures examined above would not allow us to propose it; it would be lost. The exceptional exists beyond the general. It is not through the recreation of material and cultural limits that one excavates the ingenuity of the forgotten artist, but through the futurist painter who showed the same truth of movement in paint. This must be how a speculative archaeoacoustics proceeds: away from the limit, in search, instead, of the limitless imaginations of the composers of the past—those as remarkable as the artist who dreamed the dancing, quivering animal—over 30,000 years before Balla did his own.

V.

How would such an enterprise proceed? Through the understanding that such exception—though taking place beyond the *general*—is nevertheless *generic*. To do so we must turn to the work of Badiou, who (2013b) argues for a meta-history of invariant truths in which both the Chauvet Cave and its modernist counterparts partake. The crucially non-causal nature of such a relation offers the possibility of moving backwards in time: from artworks we possess to those we have lost. At the opening of *Logics of Worlds,* Badiou (1) claims that the given ideology of our own time is the conviction he names "democratic materialism," the affirmation that "there are only bodies and languages." To this he counters his own "materialist dialectic," the assertion that: "There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths." Regarding the existence of these, he (9) holds that "it is merely a question of describing, through the mediation of some examples, the sufficient effect of truths, to the extent that, once they have appeared, they compose an atemporal meta-history." As William Watkin (2021, 29) explains, "the invariance of exceptions over time and space, spanning disciplines and their conditions" is "such that you can prove that truths exist, by simply giving examples of them." Badiou thus presents primary sources in each domain of the (known) four truth processes of love, science, politics and art.

In this latter, Badiou draws a comparison between two panels from the Chauvet Cave—the *Panel of Horses* and *Panel of Large Engravings*—and Picasso's *Two Horses Dragging a Slaughtered Horse* (1929) and

Man Holding Two Horses (1939) to show the emergence of a truth in both sets. Fundamental to this argument is the absolute difference of the subject matter. The horse of the hunter-gatherer is inaccessible to the modernist painter, and vice-versa: "The objectivity of the animal signifies very little with respect to the complete modification of the context, with a gap of almost thirty thousand years" (17). Like Mithen's mistake in conflating the physical bodies of ourselves and our ancestors, it is incorrect to assume the two horses share anything significant with one another. Rather it is the artworks' "invariant theme, an eternal truth" (18) which unites them. Badiou contends that this regards the fact that "the animal as type (or name) is a clear cut in the formless continuity of sensorial experience" (19). The emergence of this invariance occurs within the artistic practice itself: in "technical consequences," the effect of which is the primacy of the line. Through this, the images affirm the truth that

in painting, the animal is the occasion to signal, through the certainty of the separating line alone, that between the Idea and existence, between the type and the case, I can create, and therefore think, the point that remains indiscernible (19).

Despite the entire divergence of the horses captured by these painters, their representation converges them upon the same animal—the idea of the Horse (20).

This leads Badiou (33–34) to propose several features of truths. The following three concern our current argument.

1. Produced in a measurable or counted empirical time, a truth is nevertheless eternal, to the extent that, grasped from any other point of time or any other particular world, the fact that it constitutes an exception remains fully intelligible.

2. Though generally inscribed in a particular language, or relying on this language for the isolation of the objects that it uses or (re)produces, a truth is translinguistic, insofar as the general form of thought that gives access to it is separable from every specifiable language.

[…]

7. A truth is both infinite and generic. It is a radical exception as well as an elevation of anonymous existence to the Idea.

One should not see Picasso as a consequence of the Chauvet Cave—indeed, it had not yet been discovered when the later painter created his figures—but instead both as participants within a truth regarding the nature of representation and the Idea. Furthermore, a truth is both "a radical exception" and "elevation of anonymous existence to the Idea": a generic exception. Even in the absence of Chauvet, *it would be possible to reconstruct its art through the truth in Picasso alone.* We may thus combine principles from Mithen's methodology with Badiou's meta-historical topography to propose an alternative to the disciplinary weaknesses observed earlier. That it is not from the general that we should proceed—from bodies and languages—but from their exception: truths.

VI.

Having grasped a truth such as this, how would one use it to re-animate the lost work of Palaeolithic composers? Is it possible to move from the genericity of exception to its appearing in a world? At this point, more than anything, it is tempting to begin to impose limits: to construct the edges and laws of the situation in which this truth may have emerged. A simple thought experiment is required to remind us this is inadvisable. Suppose Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1874) had been lost to time, and we were—30,000 years from now, say—attempting to extrapolate a Wagnerian opera, even from its remaining contemporaries. To propose such a concept with all its impossible excesses and innovations would be unthinkable under the conditions set out by the previously examined theoretical and practical approaches. It would be lost forever. To think excess and innovation—their generic exception—this must be our task.

Yet exceptions depend upon specifics. We saw before how the vacuums in a historically informed practice of archaeoacoustics become filled with contemporary bias: with unknown knowns unconsciously replicated. And so—in travelling into the past, it is absolutely vital to regain the satirical perspective that Graeber and Wengrow identify—a truth that we, too, have access to, through a popular tradition that reaches from Star Trek to Johnathan Swift to Aristophanes and on, ever further into time. Such a function allows us to use the overcoming of our prejudices as the detail that they would bar, leveraging limit against limit. In doing so, the

tension between the accessible, invariant truth and its appearing via the unknowable potential of an entirely other world becomes itself a creative tool.

Satire opens up speculative archaeoacoustics to two final contextualisations. First, that of the theory fiction of the CCRU (2017), Nick Land (2011) and Reza Negarestani (2009), where philosophy and fiction radically commingle, with each becoming part of the other to vindicate its excesses. Fiction may take on difficult, extensive philosophical digression; philosophy may take on the formal structures of fiction and the delights of un-justified imagination within its methodological tools. Second, the tradition of anthropological science fiction such as Ursula Le Guin's (1986) *Always Coming Home,* which takes the form of an "archaeology of the future"; or Orson Scott Card's (1986) *Speaker For The Dead*, which treats anthropological science in the same manner that the genre engages with mathematics, physics, cosmology and tech. These texts and their traditions deal with creating new perspectives on what it means to be human outside the dominant Symbolic order—the first step on any imaginative route to the Palaeolithic.

VII.

Having outlined the theoretical basis for a speculative archaeoacoustics, I will conclude with a brief sketch of how it might operate in practice. This builds upon my related writings in composition and musicology concerning truth and its manifestation, and is of course only one of an infinity of possible routes into the past. Nevertheless, I hope the structure of the procedure might be useful to others.

First, we must locate an invariant truth. For this, I offer my recent work regarding the truth of paradox (White 2021): in which I argue that Badiou's (78–89) positioning of Berg and Webern as the local antimony which embodies the truth of the "Schoenberg event" represents a fundamental misreading. Rather, as shown by Richard Kurth (2001), the music of Schoenberg constitutes Hegelian *Aufhebung* not as synthesis—but as suspension. This is to understand how tonality remains as a latent possibility: through the tension between subjective negation and the weight of history. I hold this represents the invariant truth of paradox. That two mutually exclusive things may coexist, and indeed, contain one another. Schoenberg and Berg offer the ultimate modernist realisation of this—what I have termed *a contingent dialectic* (White 2021).

Having located this, we must reassemble it through the satire of archaeoacoustic science theory fiction: to proceed without limit to the imagination; without the false consciousness of "origin" and the fallacies it implies; by using narrative detail as a satirical, dialectical aikido move that leverages our own biases against them; and remembering that twenty-first-century equipment and procedures are (paradoxically) essential for us to reclaim the lost past by situating us and our archaeological quarry as contemporaries. Through this, we may share in the modernity of our ancestors while overcoming the ideological partisanship of our own, reconstructing—through an invariant truth in which all may participate—a forgotten masterwork of the Upper Palaeolithic.

COMPOSITION ONE

To be performed June 2024 by .abeceda [new music ensemble] at the .abeceda Contemporary Music Festival in Bled, Slovenia.

The composer—a musician grappling with the internalisation of music: from the group to the individual; from the external to the internal world.

The world—a culture of arbitrary language and symbolic intent, complete with an art of religious significance where an object can stand for something else. The composer's lost enactment of the truth of paradox is to draw music within these domains, from the domain of a group practice to that of individual contemplation; or, in another language, from the domain of the hymn to the domain of the relic.

The truth—paradox. Specifically, the work deploys the following contingent dialectics: plurality and immanence, which concerns the one and the many; atmosphere and integrality, a rethinking of the causal relations between the centre and the periphery and between cause and effect.

The technical realisation of these—the truth of the Symbolic as a means of overcoming the limits of the individual. While for Schoenberg this takes place via a score-text, for our Upper Palaeolithic composer it concerns the creation of an internal landscape which functions as a multidimensional world of information. The presence of nature is not imitated, but, as in the art of the Chauvet Cave, Picasso, Balla, Schoenberg, the African Pygmies

and the Inuit, its transformation within the Symbolic is necessary for the intervention into that same world. Nature—not as object to be imitated—but as a speaking Subject. This sees the landscape—not as a collection of sounds, but of Symbols—as a rich heritage of Ideas—a text—as the dwellers of the Chauvet Cave once understood how a horse may become a Horse.

This will be supported through external apparatuses: prose-as-score—a novel, even, why not?— which members of the ensemble are to read while separately exploring a landscape—each committing to memory the impression of the combination of these—to be interpreted and performed according to a specific process. It is deliberately multi-dimensional: containing impossible, irreconcilable demands—containing technical paradoxes—contingent dialectics.

In this, the landscape will be used to hold and organise conflicting impulses and so reconcile them. Crucially, distance and perspective that arise from moving through the landscape change the text as opposed to the reader's relationship to it. That is, the landscape is a world to be explored, but the exploration of this becomes data *rather than the* interpretation of data. *This implies a rich polyphony of material realised upon each individual instrument—like an individual artist appropriating the art of the group—realised separately; then combined in the plurality of an ensemble; only to become again singular in the fulfilment of the artwork—and which in these oppositions may affirm an invariant truth of music: the paradox between the individual and the group—which is, in turn, an invariant truth of the human: the contradiction between freedom and organisation, between the individual and society, between you and I—one that today, as Graeber and Wengrow affirm, is as pressing and relevant as ever.*

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Speaker For The Dead: kompozicija kaip spekuliatyvi archeoakustika

Santrauka

Straipsnyje pristatomi teoriniai spekuliatyviosios archeoakustikos pagrindai. Spekuliatyvioji archeoakustika apibrėžiama kaip kompozicinė metodika, kurią taikant meninė praktika tampa būdu pasiekti prarastą vėlyvojo paleolito muziką.

Aptariamõs teorijos pamatinis tekstas yra Davido Graeberio ir Davido Wengrowo knyga *The Dawn of Everything* ("Visa ko aušra", 2021), kurioje, remiantis naujais antropologiniais ir archeologiniais įrodymais, permąstomos priešistorės studijos. Joje atskleidžiama, kad mūsų protėviai žinojo dalykus, kurių šiandien net negalime įsivaizduoti: svarbiausia, jie gebėjo satyriškai pažvelgti į struktūrinius santykius. Autorių politinis imperatyvas – mokytis iš jų; ir nėra priežasčių, kodėl tai negalėtų būti taikoma kitiems paleolito žinių aspektams, įskaitant meną. O Stiveno Mitheno knygos *The Singing Neanderthals* ("Dainuojantys neandertaliečiai", 2005) antroje tezėje apie afektą ir estetiką yra siūloma metodika, kaip tai atkurti.

Toliau straipsnyje svarstomos metodikos taikymo galimybės ir kritikuojami du esami požiūriai į praeities muzikos tyrinėjimą – teorinį ir praktinį. Pirmasis yra susijęs su Ezra'o Zubrowo ir Elizabeth C. Blake knyga *The Origin of Music And Rhythm* ("Muzikos ir ritmo kilmė", 2006), kurioje aiškinami trys pagrindiniai archeoakustikos disciplinos klausimai: pirma, kilmės sąvokos vartojimas; antra, šiuolaikinių pažangos idėjų atvaizdavimas per šią fiktyvią kilmės perskyrą; ir trečia, iš jų išplaukiantis istoriškai pagrįstõs atlikimo praktikos propagavimas. Tai pastebima Annos Friederike Potengowski ir Georgo Wielando Wagnerio albume "The Edge of Time" ("Laiko pakraštys", 2017). Nors muzika įspūdinga ir reikšminga, ji vis dėlto įkūnija anksčiau aptartoje teorinėje studijoje įvardytų disciplininių klaidų pasekmes: estetinei begalybei primetamos įsivaizduojamos ribos. Palyginimas su Chauvet'o urvu rodo, kad konstruodami ribas (nesvarbu, kokios jos – materialios, empirinės ar kūrybinės), o ne begalybes, muzikantai kuria tai, kas bendra, o urvo atvejis yra išskirtinis.

Pastarasis atvejis gali būti deramai traktuojamas tik supratus, kad tokia išimtis, nors ir vykstanti už bendrumo ribų, vis dėlto yra bendrinė. Alainas Badiou (2013b) teigia, kad egzistuoja invariantiškų tiesų metaistorija, kurioje dalyvauja ir Chauvet'o urvas, ir Picasso. Tokio santykio nepriežastinis pobūdis suteikia galimybę judėti laiku atgal: nuo tų meno kūrinių, kuriuos dar turime, iki tų, kuriuos jau praradome. Tiesa yra ir "radikali išimtis", ir "anoniminės egzistencijos iškėlimas į Idėją" (Badiou 2013b, 34): bendroji išimtis. Net ir nesant Chauvet'o, jo meną būtų galima rekonstruoti vien per Picasso tiesą. Taigi galime sujungti Mitheno metodologijos principus su Badiou metaistorine topografija ir pasiūlyti alternatyvą anksčiau pastebėtiems disciplininiams trūkumams – turėtume remtis ne bendraisiais dalykais (kūnais ir kalbomis), bet jų išimtimis, t. y. tiesomis.

Vis dėlto išimtys priklauso nuo specifikos. Kuriant jas būtina susigrąžinti satyrinę perspektyvą, kurią Graeberis ir Wengrowas įvardijo priešistorinėse kultūrose. Tai mums leidžia prietarų įveikimą panaudoti kaip detalę, atsveriančią iš jų kylantį ribotumą. Satyra atveria spekuliatyviąją archeoakustiką dviem galutinėms kontekstualizacijoms: tai Kibernetinės kultūros tyrimų padalinio (CCRU 2017), Nicko Lando (2011) ir Rezos Negarestani (2009) teorinė fantastika; antropologinė mokslinė fantastika, kaip antai Ursulos K. Le Guin *Always Coming Home* ("Visada grįžtant namo", 1985) ir Orsono Scotto Cardo *Speaker For The Dead* ("Kalbėtojas mirusiesiems", 1986).

Pateikus teorinį spekuliatyviosios archeoakustikos pagrindą, straipsnis baigiamas trumpu eskizu, kaip spekuliatyvioji archeoakustika galėtų veikti praktiškai: invariantiškos tiesos ieškojimas ir jos rekonstrukcija per archeoakustinę mokslinę teorinę fantastiką padėtų susigrąžinti pamirštą vėlyvojo paleolito meistrų kūrybą.