

IDEOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION: A FIGURATIVE SEMIOTICS OF MUSICAL DISCOURSE

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Abstract — Résumé

Central to this article is an exploration of the ideologically charged cultural trope 'Music is a Woman'. Focussing on the 'gendered' poststructuralist theories of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, the elusive concepts Woman, Voice, and Body are examined in terms of concealed distortive biases or partialities. To this aid, critical tools relevant to the study of music as a complex ideological form are introduced. These are employed to elucidate the relationship between symbolic (semiotic) musical content and discursive socio-cultural contexts, and to uncover the relative truths inherent both in absolutist and anti-rationalist models of musical

meaning. Offering a case study from the South African art music repertoire, the example chosen for this purpose is 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl'), the first of five songs from Hubert du Plessis's cycle *Die Vrou* ('The Woman'). This text allows for an exceptionally productive exploration of the role of ideology in the figurative construction of musical meaning, uncovering contested points of differentiation and of intersection between music and language.

Key Words: ideology; musicology; hermeneutics; discourse analysis; semiotics; metaphor analysis; J. Kristeva; R. Barthes

A dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it; *naturalizing* and *universalising* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it; *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself. Such 'mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions.

(EAGLETON 1991: 5-6)

1. Introduction

Critical theory by its very nature erodes the legitimising processes that are part of all power formations and discursive mechanisms by means of which the limitations of implicit, unarticulated and unexamined assumptions are naturalised and universalised. In the field of music scholarship, critical theory has had an impact on popular music studies and on early feminist approaches in particular because of their involvement with Marxist and neo-Marxist thought. A more radical disruption of the musicological status quo, however, has been wrought by postmodernist and poststructuralist challenges. Not only has recent interpretation been concentrating on the elusive and ideologically partial core relation between intra- and extra-textual parameters of music, but has also questioned methods of analysis inherent in its own ideologically tainted theoretical cum philosophical contextual framework. As in the broader philosophical discourse on art, the ideology of aesthetic autonomy has come under the most relentless attack.

Some New Musicological approaches have been strongly influenced by the theoretical sentiments of New Historicism, reflecting its tendency towards reductive conceptions of the text. Contextual interpretations of music have rarely allowed either for the sophisticated formulation of social critique or for subtler forms of discourse analysis. Elsewhere in deconstructionist practice the idea has arisen that, historically, discourse constitutes a 'fabric of differences' (cf. DERRIDA 1973: 141). Accordingly, a text is seen as a set of signs in need of the strategy of deconstruction to detect its obscure and ambiguously stated meanings. Deconstruction takes the signs of a text apart and assembles them again in unexpected ways by taking into account those signs that are either absent or 'outside' the text. This is all part of an open-ended textuality in which a text loses any assumed fixed identity, so that it belongs neither to the author nor to the reader, but to language and its infinite possibilities of differentiation. This broadened interpretative thought has found, however, counterpoints in musicological applications where the ideological entailments of representational modes of expression have been dealt with more or less uncritically. While musical texts have been exposed for masking ideologised meaning in the interest of power and domination, such approaches have constructed them as passive collaterals of power, and have demonstrated an inability to distance itself from descriptions of how power operates — and from its own part in this operation.¹

While recognising that all critical thought is perspectivic and that its capacity to illuminate is as limited as that of the paradigms it seeks to oppose, I shall nevertheless endeavour in this article to formulate an interpretative position combining the more playful approaches to the musical text permitted by postmodern inter-

¹ I refer specifically to the well-known and now somewhat dated examples of McClary 1991 and Kramer 1990.

pretation with the analytical 'certainties' of more or less 'reasoned' discourse. I shall not attempt to introduce any comprehensive model of musical meaning.² Rather, I shall focus on two critical tools for theorising the relationship between symbolic (semiotic) musical content and discursive socio-cultural contexts. Finally, I shall examine some contested points of differentiation and of intersection between music and language, exposing the relative truths inherent in both absolutist and anti-rationalist models of musical meaning.

In formulating this interpretative outline, I draw on Johann Visagie's (1994 & 1996) approach to ideologically permeated culture, a theoretical framework which I have thematically explored in a recently completed study on gospel rap and ideology. Called 'The Ideological Topography of Modernity' (henceforth ITM), Visagie's (1994: 6-7) topographical model is designed to give a comprehensive account of the specific forces comprising ideologically determined culture. It endeavours to provide a suitably complex 'map' of such a culture at the level of socio-cultural discourse. This attempt not only sets out to account for relations of domination between social groups, but also seeks to specify cultural discourses of domination — where *goals* or *values* act as agents of conceptual domination. The (Marxist) idea that regards the analysis of ideology as being criticism of distorted thinking is not discarded but deals with the issue on the level of discourse rather than group domination. Defining ideological culture as a complex of interrelated dominating discourses, Visagie believes that they are each characterised by some autonomised norm, value, or goal that dominates other values, norms or goals. Such a selectively privileged norm, he calls a 'hypernorm'.

The critical approach to ideology proposed in this article explores ambiguity of meaning in terms of concealed distortive biases or partialities. Here, the notion of partiality encompasses any attempt indissolubly associated with ideological blindness and its characteristic prejudices to either mask or unmask a musical meaning. Such biases are inherent in the structural aspects of all representational media, but also powerfully direct strategies of interpretation. The ability to expose hypernormative thought may therefore act as a powerful tool not only for the critical analysis of aesthetic forms, but also for the evaluation and critique of theoretical discourse. In this sense, ITM enables one to analyse theoretical frameworks critically in terms of underlying distortive tendencies. The exposure of what Visagie calls *discourse domination* is the first of two such tools whose application is examined in this article.

The second such instrument to be deployed is *the analysis of figurative meaning*. The description of ITM as an attempt to map ideological culture reveals this

² Viljoen 2004a introduces the foundations of an inclusive model of musical meaning, proposing that a semantic study of music may include musical syntax (grammar), musical design (form), as well as musical content (emotional/moral narratives or plots), all of which may be explored in terms of semiotic possibilities for relating to the 'reality' of the ideological world.

model's figurative dimension. Within Visagie's framework, figurative semiotics serves to analyse semiotic structures such as images, symbols, signs, metaphors, models, narratives, etc. in terms of their function in communicating ideologised meaning. When investigating the domain of musical meaning primarily through the analysis of figurative meaning, my selective use of Visagie's critical apparatus allows for informal or intuitive analytical 'translations' of musical meaning in which music is not exempt from configurations of power, and where ideology may operate in all its perverted forms. It has to be noted here that Visagie's ITM has been designed as a philosophical model and was not intended as an interpretative one relevant to musicology. My adaptation of his thought is therefore dependent on the application of his critical apparatus within a specific musicological context. This contextualisation forms both the theoretical strategy and the methodological challenge of this article. Within the overarching conceptual framework of Visagie's theories, my argumentation also draws intensively on the thought of Shepherd & Wicke (1997), as well as on the recent ethno-musicological work of Elizabeth Tolbert (2001).

In accordance with contemporary musicological trends, my position regarding interpretation presupposes that musical meaning can never be reduced to 'immanent' meaning alone. The reason for this is that musical meaning emerges only when music is interpreted within an inclusive socio-cultural and semiotic-hermeneutic framework. On the other hand, musical meaning can never be understood solely within these dimensions. I therefore acknowledge that various aspects of musical experience exist on a purely formal level, while simultaneously merging with and sustaining a broad socio-cultural framework that forms the context within which musical meaning is constructed and perceived. Proceeding from this hypothetical ground, no distinction is made between formalistic and hermeneutic approaches. Rather, any formal musical analysis is seen as part of the 'holistic' hermeneutic process.

My discussion of an analytical case study from the South African art music repertoire will attempt to demonstrate how meaning is performatively constructed by means of the relationships existing among intra-textual parameters, also between a text and its extra-textual contexts, and further, between such as text and the various acts of performance it implies. The example chosen for this purpose is 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl'), the first of five songs from Hubert du Plessis's cycle *Die Vrou* ('The Woman'), a powerful text that provides one with ample material for an exceptionally productive exploration of the role of ideology in the figurative construction of meaning.

In this regard, I shall investigate the ideologically charged cultural trope 'Music is a Woman'. My discussion shall focus on the 'gendered' poststructuralist theories of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, and the elusive concepts Woman, Voice, and Body will be examined in terms of concealed distortive biases or partialities. In such a context, Kristeva's thought is particularly relevant for having re-intro-

duced the body into discourses in the human sciences, as well as for focussing on the significance of the maternal and the pre-oedipal in the constitution of subjectivity. Furthermore, her distinction between what she calls the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic' seem to be of exceptional import for speculations on questions of musical meaning. Kristeva maintains that all signification is composed of these two elements. The semiotic element is the bodily drive as it is discharged in signification, and is associated with the rhythms, tones, and movement of signifying practices. The symbolic element of signification is associated with the grammar and structure of signification. Clearly, both these elements have their analogies in terms of musical signification.

Roland Barthes often claimed to be fascinated by the meanings of things that surround us in our everyday lives. He was particularly interested not so much in what things mean, but in *how* things mean — and he often stated that he wanted to challenge the 'innocence' and 'naturalness' of cultural texts which were capable of producing all sorts of supplementary connotations. Tony McNeill (1996: 5ff) posits that it is possible to argue that Barthes's understanding of 'myth' may function as a synonym of 'ideology'. In *Mythologies* (1970), Barthes (1971: 96) interprets myth as the notion of a socially constructed reality that is passed off as 'natural':

Le propre des Mythologies n'est pas politique mais idéologique. Le propre des Mythologies, c'est de prendre systématique en bloc une sorte de monstre que j'ai appelé la 'petite-bourgeoisie' (quitte à en faire un mythe) et de taper inlassablement sur ce bloc...

A central idea in Barthes's *Mythologies* (1970) is the idea of primary or first-order signification and secondary or second-order signification — it is at the level of secondary or second-order signification that myth is to be found. Barthes makes a distinction between *denotation* and *connotation*. Denotation may be described as the 'literal' meaning, while connotation for Barthes is the second-order or 'parasitical' meaning. In my analysis below, the implications for music of Barthes's thesis that objects and events always signify more than themselves, and that they are always caught up in systems of representation which add (potentially ideological) meaning to them will be critically examined.

2. *Music as a Metaphor for 'the Feminine'*

While quoting thinkers as diverse as Plato, Artusi and Hanslick, the feminist musicologist Suzanne Cusick (1999: 477ff) observes that in European thinking about music a centuries-old trope describes its irresistible power as being akin to feminine erotic allure and the carnal power of the female body. This gendered metaphor is not exclusive to theorisation in Western art music. In a recent paper on

African music and gender, Meki Nzewi and Sello Galana (2005: 71-80) point out that in African philosophical and physiological systems, music is originally a woman. This cultural trope is based on a centuries-old linkage between music and the sacredness of the Mother Earth Deity which is its metaphysical dimension. African philosophy of music, however, in a complex way combines 'feminine' and 'masculine' concepts by implicating sentiments about fecundity and birth where fecundity has to do with the products of the mind and birth with ideas given substance via sound and visual impact.

In poststructuralist theory, music's equivocal 'gendered' status is also evident in its association with the emotional, the bodily and the immediate, as opposed to the rational and cognitive character of language. This position is eloquently expressed in poststructuralist characterisations of music as the feminine excess which spills beyond the contained 'masculinity' of language (TOLBERT 2001: 451). Roland Barthes (1977: 188), for instance, assigns a meaning to music that transcends the cognitively referential scope of language. Similarly, Julia Kristeva (1984: 86-89) links music with the non-signifying 'geno-text', thereby associating it with the prelinguistic infantile experience of the maternal voice.

For Kristeva, the body and the chora symbolise femininity as opposed to the masculinity of symbolic order. The body now given a semiotic value that has significance for language and the formation of identity remains accessible only through language. Kristeva introduces the concept of the chora to account for the dynamic relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic. It functions both as an image filling a conceptual need in Kristeva's theory and as a precise technical term borrowed from embryology specifying the actual site in the fetus where signifying begins (PAYNE 1993: 167):

We understand the term »semiotic« in its Greek sense: [Greek word]=distinctive mark, trace, index, precursory sign, proof, engraved or written sign, imprint, trace, figuration. This etymological reminder would be a mere archaeological embellishment (and an unconvincing one at that, since the term ultimately encompasses such disparate meanings), were it not for the fact that the preponderant etymological use of the word, the one that implies a *distinctiveness*, allows us to connect it to a precise modality in the signifying process. This modality is the one Freudian psychoanalysis points to in postulating not only the *facilitation* and the structuring *disposition* of drives, but also the so-called primary processes which displace and condense both energies and their inscription. Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body — always already involved in a semiotic process — by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are »energy« charges as well as »Psychical« marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated.

(KRISTEVA 1984: 25)

Shepherd & Wicke (1997: 77ff) point out that Kristeva's thinking on the question of the *chora* is useful for understanding music as a form of human expression and communication which in certain ways lies beyond, and in others within the world of language. Semiotic functions open up to the subject a pre-symbolic kinetic and rhythmic world. The subject is not therefore reduced solely to rational functions and processes.

While Kristeva links symbolical language to masculinity and to rational order, and semiotic language to femininity, she argues that both aspects of language, the feminine and the masculine, are accessible to all individuals irrespective of their sex (WEEDON 1987: 89). The effect of this theoretical strategy is to break with the biological bias of subjectivity. For Kristeva, the feminine element in language appears to be related to music, for it is manifested in symbolical discourse in aspects of language such as rhythm and intonation. The feminine is most prominent in non-rational discourses — such as art and religion which threaten symbolic order and the stability of its meanings.

However, music which is regarded as being an 'extra-linguistic' and therefore 'non-linguistic' cultural form, cannot approximate language, and therefore symbolic order. As Kristeva (1989: 309) herself states, »while music is a system of differences [presumably because the mother's body is already differentiated, 'semiotized'], it is not a system of signs. Its constitutive elements do not have a signified«. For Kristeva, music »is a system of differences that is not a system that means something, as is the case with most of the structures of verbal language« (KRISTEVA 1989: 309). Music therefore has a 'trans-linguistic' status. As a consequence, music is »an empty sign« (KRISTEVA 1989: 309).

Roland Barthes's thinking on music was informed to a considerable extent by Kristeva's theorisation of language. While Barthes's earlier semiological work omits any discussion of music, he turns to music in his later work as the 'unrepresentable' figure par excellence of the text. Yet, for Barthes (1985: 312), music is indeed a signifying text. He is not concerned, however, with music as a signifying system of notes, scales, tones, chords, or rhythms, but rather with what he calls the 'second semiology' of music represented by the »effervescence of the beats« (BARTHES 1985: 31). Barthes is concerned therefore with music as an ecstatic realm of signification lying outside the 'rational' world of linguistic meaning, a world in which music is seen as appealing directly to the body. Music is thus a *field of signification* and not a system of signs, the referent being the body (BARTHES 1985: 308). The body passes into music without any intermediate agent other than the signifier.

For Barthes, therefore, language retains its privileged position in the world of signs, meaning and signification (SHEPHERD & WICKE 1997: 93). In Barthes' theorisation, music appeals to the body in a way that renders it non-linguistic and non-rational. In eluding the rational, music conveys nothing. Quoting Barthes's (1985: 304) precise words, »music speaks, it declaims, it redoubles its voice: *it speaks but says nothing*: because as soon as it is musical, speech — or its instrumental substi-

tute — is no longer linguistic, but corporeal; it only says, and nothing else: my body is put into a state of speech: *quasi parlando*«.

This brief discussion cannot do justice to the wealth and complexity of Kristeva's and Barthes' theorisation of musical meaning. However, when one considers these two poststructuralists' key statements on music as being a unique system of communication, it is clear that, in both cases, there is a radical break with the ideology of autonomy. The ideology of the autonomous work discourages an emphasis on the purely physical experience of music. It perpetuates the illusion of having a rational 'control' over musical experience. Furthermore, as feminist theory (somewhat simplistically) posits, this type of notion is guilty of complicity in the illusions on which social harmony rest (cf. CUSICK 1999: 496). Shepherd & Wicke (1997: 73ff) conclude that poststructuralist thought such as that of Kristeva and Barthes has the effect of legitimising a re-alignment of both the subject and the object of music, radically subverting power relations within the aesthetic experience as *jouissance*, pleasure, and immediate corporeal and kinetic experience.

Returning to Johann Visagie's notion of the hypernorm, however, it may be noted that these anti-rationalist models of musical meaning selectively thematise music's indeterminateness, its 'impreciseness' of meaning, its ambiguity, its contingency, and its ability to generate a-historical transcendental primal energies and pleasures. While this theoretical tactic certainly has an emancipating effect, it has numerous implications for the understanding of music as an 'alternative' (aesthetic) discourse and process of social mediation. As Shepherd & Wicke (1997: 87ff) once more rightly observe, in reproducing a hegemony of language, these poststructuralist explanations of musical meaning ultimately locate music within the pre-symbolic, the pre-linguistic, and the pre-discursive states of being. While remaining useful for an understanding of music in an important way, these explanations do not represent any advance in theorising music as a non-linguistic semi-otic system with its own specific modes of signification, its own specific mediation of sociality, and, within the framework of this article, its own very specific capacity for figuratively constructing interrelationships of power and ideology — ironically, the very interrelationships Roland Barthes considered to be ubiquitous in the realm of the 'second-order sign'; the realm of connotation, and therefore, of myth.

The idea of music as a metaphor for the feminine will now form the basis of an examination of Kristeva's (1989: 309) statement that music is »an empty sign«, as well as Barthes' (1985: 304) notion that music »speaks but says nothing«. A discussion of Hubert du Plessis's 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl') is introduced by brief comments on the cycle as a whole. My speculative theorisation of this text depends on a more or less informal perceptual analysis that lets the music 'speak for itself'. I offer no exhaustive musical analysis, but rather focus selectively on figurative aspects that may be related to the elusive concepts Woman, Voice and Body. This analytical strategy is indicative of a methodological bias that significantly influ-

ences my interpretation of the work. It is one that is justified by my intention to demonstrate the application of the two previously introduced tools for critical appraisal, namely the analysis of figurative meaning and the exposure of discourse domination in this text. While being intertwined with the verbal meaning of the song, the musical parameters of this text reveal its constructed character by resisting any crude notions of metaphorical transference. Rather than sustaining assumptions of unitary conformance between the interacting media, or advocating the primacy of the poetic text, ambiguous musical structures generate meaning beyond anything that is 'said' in this song — even beyond the composer's own 'authorial' intentions.

3. *Music as a Sensuous Temptress*

Hubert du Plessis's song cycle *Die Vrou* was commissioned for the Centenary Festival of the University of Stellenbosch in 1966. It consists of five songs narratively representing different symbolical stages in a women's life: 'Die Meisie' (Elizabeth Eybers), 'Chant d'amour' (Cantique des Cantiques, Solomon), 'De Bruid' (Hendrik Marsman), 'Wiegenlied' (Christian Morgenstern) and 'Die Moeder' (Elizabeth Eybers). As the composer has explained, the use of texts from various languages accentuates the universality of womanhood (AITCHISON 1987: 43).

This ostensibly 'neutral' thematic focus should not blind us to the fact that Du Plessis's choices for the settings of the five songs already reveal certain ideological biases which create asymmetrical relations of power both in the songs individually and in the cycle as a whole. First, it should be noted that the poetic texts comprising *Die Vrou* ('The Woman') construct feminine erotic experience only in relation to the confines of family life — a culturally entrenched idealisation of womanhood that, in consequence of patriarchal ideology, is hardly applicable to the male identity.

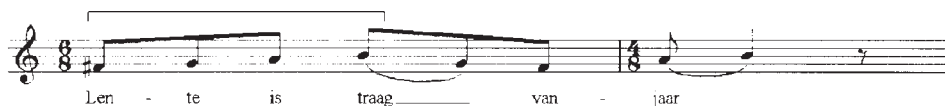
Second, a contextual reading of the two Elizabeth Eybers poems included in the cycle, as well as Hendrik Marsman's 'De Bruid' ('The Bride'), reveals that their portrayals of women suggest a specific distribution of social power that is sustained by a web of metaphors masking asymmetrical gender relations. This finding is confirmed by a wider selection of these poets' work, specifically by Eybers's (1995: 35) poem 'Portret van 'n vrou' ('Portrait of a Woman'), as well as Marsman's (1979: 5 & 7) poems 'Vrouw' ('Woman') and 'Bloei' ('Blossoming'). It is important to note that both poets employ the female Body as a metaphor for the socially powerless, while simultaneously suggesting a feminine poetic 'Voice' that transcends the restrictions and constraints of female — and of male — existence. In Marsman's poems, the eroticised, often scorned female Body is simultaneously sublimated cosmically, while in Eybers's poem 'Portret van 'n vrou' ('Portrait of a Woman'), the religious symbols of the body and the blood are used to metaphori-

cally transform the abused, self-sacrificed female body through the body and blood of Christ.

Proceeding with my analysis of 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl'), I shall first discuss motivic content in the cycle that very specifically communicates socially and culturally constituted concepts and images through so-called 'purely' musical parameters.

In a manner similar to 19th-century song-cycles such as those of Robert Schumann, musical unity is established in du Plessis's *Die Vrou* ('The Woman') via motives rich in symbolic content. The composer (in AITCHISON 1987: 43-47) has explained that four such motives occur throughout the cycle. The first of these is the so-called tetrachord motive (Example 1), a succession of four predominantly ascending conjunct notes, serving to represent universality, while the falling fifths motive symbolises biological fulfilment (Example 2).

Example 1. The Tetrachord Motive (Universality)



Example 2. The Falling Fifths Motive (Biological Fulfilment)



The leap motive represents triumphant ecstasy (Example 3), and the triad motive sorrow (Example 4).

Example 3. The Leap Motive (Triumphant Ecstasy)



Example 4. The Triad Motive (Sorrow)



In 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl'), du Plessis employs three of these motives, namely the universal motive, the falling fifths motive signifying biological fulfilment, and the triad motive which represents sorrow. In describing the awakening of the girl, Elizabeth Eybers's poetry draws on nature's gentle images of spring. These include references to rain, the sun, to impregnation and to blossoming. Any sensitivity to the presence of discourse domination in this text would imply that my interpretation concerns not the 'traditional' relationships of word and tone, but rather elements of an ideological 'contest' between the constituent media components.³ First, however, I shall attempt to focus on the question of how music, as a structural mode of signification, imparts specific meaning in this text.

Introduced as the opening musical gesture of the song, du Plessis's universal motive is set against a tritone sonority. This creates a dissonant effect suggestive of despondence, melancholy, and intense sombreness. Being grounded in the tritone, the harmonic functionality of the universal motive is somewhat obscured. This further contributes to the music's gloomy, abstruse nature. The feeling of melancholy is sustained throughout the song through extremes of register and thin musical textures. Even when the falling fifths motive is heard, signifying biological fulfilment, it is obscured and distorted by the use of dissonance, notably the tritone. The 'sorrow' motive, introduced by a piano interlude before the third stanza of the text, similarly evokes the darker dimensions of womanhood. Even though the last stanza is an outburst of ecstatic musical effects, a shifting between distant keys and a constant use of dissonance maintain an atmosphere of sadness and despondency.

In the light of Kristeva's and Barthes's statements on music's unique nature and its supposed inability to 'speak for itself', this brief discussion of the musical parameters of du Plessis's song 'Die Meisie' ('The Girl') attempts to illustrate some of the ways in which music signifies through figurative-semiotic processes that are inherently structural in nature, yet intersect with conceptual meaning by merging with and sustaining a socio-cultural contextual framework. Du Plessis's musical signification insinuates that Woman is a discursive and performative cultural construct. Employing materials of a strongly symbolic/semiotic nature, the music figuratively constructs a feminine Other that is suggestive of the cultural stereotype of the 'woeful' woman.

In terms of Visagie's idea of discourse domination, it should be noted that this potentially pejorative yet powerfully figurative musical portrayal appears to be in stark contrast with the gentle metaphors of nature in Elizabeth Eybers's poetic text. However, in constructing culturally constituted, performative representations of femininity and of womanhood, both music and word mask relations of power within this 'microcosm' of meaning. Eybers's poetic text is suggestive of the de-

³ Cf. Cook 1998 and Viljoen 2004b & 2004c for analyses of multimedia texts in which models of complementation and contest are worked out in more detail.

pendency, the vulnerability and the subordination of the feminine Other, the awaiting of sexual and biological fulfilment wholly dependent on the intervention of the male agency. Claiming their place as the dominating discourse in this text, Du Plessis's powerful musical metaphors revise the trope of music as a sensuous seductress by emphasising the pain rather than the ecstasy of womanhood.

To read du Plessis's musical setting as a representation that denotes some kind of intersection between music and human beings in an ideologically determined world is to read music as being a domain of socio-cultural knowledge and practice beyond music per se (cf. TOLBERT 2001: 452). This approach stands in strong contrast to Roland Barthes's divide between language, discourse and reality on the one hand, and on the other hand to the unstructured musical realm of rapturous, ecstatic *jouissance* (cf. SHEPHERD & WICKE 1997: 94).

While my reading of du Plessis's text is also in contrast with Kristeva's basically 'non-denotative' model of musical meaning, it cannot be denied that the suggestion that there might be a link between the sounds of music and the somatic pathways of the body in some respects do circumvent the world of objects and the world of language. In theorising about a world of sound 'outside' of language and conceptuality, the work of Kristeva and Barthes tests the limits of a semiology of language and approaches the brink of a semiology of music. Shepherd & Wicke (1997: 97) rightfully observe that, in different ways, Kristeva and Barthes attempted to confront the tyranny of language, without being able however to fully escape its influence, and then ending up by reproducing that tyranny in different ways. Music when seen as a primordial 'speech' without conceptual meaning then has a meta-discursive, ideological character whose essential feature is a presumably unmediated sonic presence that proves its transcendental, universal nature experientially. This ideology upholds not only the existence of an a-historical transcendent music, but, as Tolbert (2001: 453) argues, also the hegemony of an a-historical, transcendent language.

4. *Music as the Voice of Reason*

Using the recently published intercultural and interdisciplinary work of the ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Tolbert (2001) as a point of departure, in the final section of this article I would like to hypothesise that the controversial nature of music's meaning is merely symptomatic of its position between the metaphorical and empirical understandings of what is meant by 'voice'. The juncture between voice as a sonorous entity and Voice as a trope of agency, identity, and social power has an important parallel in the one between music and language. In Tolbert's (2001: 453ff) words, to 'have a voice' is to speak through language; to 'be' a voice is quintessentially musical. Thus, music's enigma stems from it being 'not language', yet 'having a voice'.

In music, Voice as an important index of presence exists both in its sensuous materialisation and in its exploration of formal patterns and structures that simultaneously invoke vocal power and reveal its constructed character. The musical Voice, either as emitted from a human throat or by proxy via a musical instrument, indexes the ability to disrupt the authorial voice, to invoke multiple and contradictory voices, or, as in poststructuralist interpretation, to obliterate the reasoned voices of language altogether.

Ironically, Hubert du Plessis (in AITCHISON 1987: 45) has stressed the point that his song-cycle *Die Vrou* ('The Woman') is a joyful work, and that sorrow is never directly expressed. There are no recordings of this composition available commercially. The recording used for my analysis was broadcast by the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and was recorded by the artists Hanna van Niekerk (soprano) and Heinrich van der Mescht (piano). Regarding the composer's statement concerning the nature of this work, their artistic rendition may be experienced as an example of the disruption of the 'authorial' voice. Although there are passages overflowing with enraptured musical effects, the interpretation only briefly bursts into ecstatic euphoria, projecting instead despondency and profound sombreness throughout. From the perspective of my interpretative position, I do not view this 'disruption' of compositional intention as a reification of music as an irrational, unmediated medium. Rather, I interpret it as an intimate correlation with the figurative implications of the text, 'highlighting' those performative aspects of meaning that the composer ultimately cannot control. In terms of my interpretative framework, this artistic 'refiguration' of the text in itself opens up questions of discourse domination, and as a consequence questions about figurative musical meaning.

These considerations problematise the strict opposition between cognition and affect underlying most Westernised models of emotion and meaning. But one of the questions needing further reflection concerns the role of emotion in the construction of extra-musical meaning. As Tolbert (2001: 456) observes, for the most part, musicological and ethnomusicological approaches pay little attention to the phenomenological experience of palpable or embodied vocality which is the contested point of differentiation between music and language.

Meanings embedded in musical structures do not consist entirely of references to socio-cultural contexts, nor are they located solely in any psychological response to structural patterns, or in any physiological reaction to musical affects. Tolbert (2001: 455) argues that the main positions in the debate about musical meaning, however, oversimplify the communicational complexity and interpretative density of concrete musical experience. Absolutist positions on musical meaning are typically falsified by the ubiquitous intertwining of music and conceptuality. Recent philosophical and anthropological work problematises the validity of Western models of meaning and the previously mentioned binary oppositions between affect and cognition in cross-cultural contexts.

While music is not language, it is also never a merely passive object of human perception. Besides its 'external' contextual social component, music — like all art — also has an internal aesthetic sociality, that is, a *pro nobis* quality representing a specific kind of inter-subjectivity that differs from but is situated within other societal forms of intercourse and communication. It is therefore profoundly conceptual in nature.

Within the musicological arena, the central ideas of post-structuralism and postmodernism continue to be deployed and debated. In this article, I have examined Johann Visagie's conceptual semiology and his notion of discourse domination in their roles as providing the necessary implements for a critical review of the relations of power and meaning in music, and for revealing the relative truths inherent both in absolutist and anti-rationalist, referentialist positions.

After having carefully considered the pros and cons of the insights offered by these opposing ideologies, I conclude by stating that music not only has an intermediary quality, but that it is also a powerfully *inter-mediating* phenomenon. Furthermore, the juncture between music and language has rather sobering implications for the poststructuralist debate on musical meaning. Understood as an entailment of the voice/vocality opposition, music's femininity is not pure, but may be said to harbour a 'masculine' component. As Tolbert (2001: 463) finds, musical form is dependent on abstract structure and form, and is imbued with a syntax that authenticates its 'language-like', rational basis. Similarly, language harbours a feminine 'musical' identity whose prosodic, emotional and social aspects cannot be ignored in order for it to function as the marker of the truly cognitive and rational. This implies that a profound interdependence of social and material 'voices' underlies all musical and linguistic representation, and that this interdependence provides a 'reasoned' framework for accommodating a broad spectrum of music/language ideologies.

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Sažetak

IDEOLOGIJA I INTERPRETACIJA: FIGURATIVNA SEMIOTIKA GLAZBENOG DISKURSA

Kritička teorija po svojoj vlastitoj prirodi razara legitimizirajuće procese udomaćene u svim tvorbama moći i diskurzivnim mehanizmima s pomoću kojih su ograničenja impliciranih pretpostavki zamaskirana kao »naturalizirana« i »univerzalizirana«. Područje recentne muzikološke znanosti kritička teorija dodiruje primjenom marksističke i neomarksističke misli. Međutim, radikalniji raskid s ustaljenim modelima u disciplini napravili su postmodernistički i poststrukturalistički izazovi. Dok su ovi pristupi rasvijetlili glazbene tekstove kao one koji »skrivaju« ideologizirano značenje u interesu moći i dominacije, takvi su pristupi pokazali svoju nemoć u vlastitom distanciranju od opisivanja toga kako moć funkcionira te u razotkrivanju vlastita sudjelovanja u tom funkcioniranju. Posljedično, kontekstualne interpretacije glazbe gotovo nikad nisu dopustile niti sofisticiranije formuliranje društvene kritike niti finije oblike analize diskursa.

Priznajući da kritička misao u cjelini ima vlastitu perspektivu i da je njezina sposobnost osvjetljavanja isto tako ograničena kao i sposobnosti paradigma kojima se nastoji suprotstaviti, ipak ću pokušati u ovome članku formulirati interpretativnu poziciju, kombinirajući zaigranije pristupe glazbenom tekstu što ih postmoderna interpretacija dopušta u odnosu na analitičke »izvjesnosti« manje ili više »rasudnoga« diskursa. U tu svrhu uredotočit ću se na dva kritička oruđa kako bih se teorijski pozabavila odnosom između simboličkog (semiotičkog) glazbenog sadržaja i diskurzivnih društveno-kulturnih konteksta. U formuliranju ovog interpretativnog nacrtu oslanjam se na pristup Johanna Visagiea ideološki prožetoj kulturi iz 1994. i 1996. Izlaganje onoga što Visagie naziva *diskurzivnom dominacijom* (*discourse domination*) prvo je od dva takva oruđa čija se primjena ispituje u ovom članku. Drugi takav upotrijebljeni instrument je *analiza figurativnog značenja*.

U mojoj raspravi središnje mjesto zauzima istraživanje ideološki opterećenog kulturnog izraza »Glazba kao žena«. Usredotočivši se na »rodom prožete« poststrukturalističke teorije Julije Kristeve i Rolanda Barthesa, izmičući pojmovi Žena, Glas i Tijelo ispituju se u terminima skrivenih iskrivljujućih sklonosti i pristranosti. U tu svrhu prije spomenuta kritička oruđa koriste se da bi se osvijetlilo odnos između simboličkog (semiotičkog) glazbenog sadržaja i diskurzivnih društveno-kulturnih konteksta te da bi se razotkrilo relativne istine inherentne i u apsolutičkim i u antiracionalističkim modelima glazbenog značenja.

Nudeći ogledni slučaj iz južnoafričkog glazbenoumjetničkog repertoara, za ovu je svrhu izabran primjer 'Die Meisie' (Djevojka), prve od pet pjesama Huberta du Plessisa iz njegova ciklusa *Die Vrou* (Žena). Ovaj tekst dopušta iznimno produktivno istraživanje uloge ideologije u figurativnoj konstrukciji glazbenog značenja, otkrivajući osporavane točke diferencijacije i sjecišta između glazbe i jezika.

