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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The confluence of feminist scholar Karen Barad’s critical theories (agential realism, posthumanist performativity, posthumanism, new materialism) and Greek-French composer Georges Aperghis’ solo harp work *Fidélité: pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme* (“for female harpist watched by a man”) creates new philosophical interpretations for the relationship between gender and the Western European pedal harp. This dissertation first introduces Barad’s theory of agential realism as a new materialist, feminist intervention on historical and contemporary perspectives of gender—and particularly of women and femininity—in the Western European classical harp tradition. Within this exploration I have coined the term “genderharp” to argue that gender is inseparably entangled, not just within the discourse of, but also the very materiality of the pedal harp; gender is co-produced with harp, harpist, and other material bodies during the processes of configuring musical performances. In response, I use the theatrical setting of Aperghis’ work *Fidélité* as a case study for demonstrating genderharp. The secondary purpose of this dissertation answers the questions of “Is application of agential realism to the music of Georges Aperghis appropriate?” and “Does this application work?” Aperghis’ connection with the French post-structuralists Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, whose theories have influenced new materialist and posthumanist scholars, provides a strong foundation for agential realism as a powerful interpretive tool for investigating (and participating in the creation of) social and musical identities as interrelations of sound and body in performance. Ultimately, these layered explorations of agential realism, genderharp, and *Fidélité* generate a feminist-activist stance towards narratives of gender in the classical harp community, arguing that these narratives, instead of existing at a distance from us, emerge from our bodily practices.
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INTRODUCTION

The illusion that the harp has always been a feminine instrument is erroneous; it would be more correct to say that the pedal harp has long been associated with the female gender, an association that has influenced its repertoire, its design, its performers, and its reception.¹

- Ann Yeung

At the turn of the twentieth century, a woman named Juliette Grandjany asked the French harpist-composer and pedagogue Henriette Renié, “What future is there for a man harpist?” Renié responded, “Very big; there are hardly any.”² The man harpist in the question was Marcel Grandjany, currently recognized as one of the greatest Western classical harp pedagogues in the twentieth century. Renié’s response runs consistently with the history of the Western³ classical pedal harp, which teems with names of European men: Elias Parish Alvars, Robert Nicholas Charles Bochsa, Osian Ellis, Félix Godefroid, Marcel Grandjany, Alphonse Hasselmans, Josef Molnar, Antoine Prumier, Alberto Salvi, Carlos Salzedo, Marcel Tournier, Nicanor Zabaleta, Albert Zabel, and many others. Male harpists, despite their modern scarcity, have occupied positions of prestige and power in the classical harp canon; meanwhile, by relative proportion, multitudes of their female students and colleagues have remained in the shadows of their male counterparts for several hundred years. Moving into the twenty-first century, the topic of gender continues to loom in the rhetoric around Western pedal harp practices, fueling passionate

³ My use of “Western” refers specifically to Western Europe and namely, regions of Western Europe in which the concert pedal harp tradition emerged. These regions consist of modern France and Germany, and to a lesser extent, England and Italy. I henceforth use “Western” and “Western European” interchangeably.
arguments ranging from equality in gender representation to problematic, sexualized depictions of female harpists. In the 2005 New York Times article “Bringing the Harp Down to Earth, Trying to Make It Rock,” music critic Michael White addresses contemporary harpists’ own concerns with the harp’s feminized reputation and Italian harp maker Victor Salvi’s quest to strengthen the sound of and radicalize the public perception of dainty, gilded nineteenth-century harps:

Victor Salvi’s artisans and technicians have spent half a century trying to remedy that problem: making the sound stronger, bigger, but still focused; making changes to the pedal mechanism, to the balance of the frame. And the Salvi employees have undertaken more radical experiments, not least, electric harps for rock and pop performance. At the same time there have been design changes: new, sleeker, sharper-looking models with less decoration, and a lot less gilding. Armed with these, Mr. Salvi turned his attention to the issue of public image. … It is Mr. Salvi himself who has undertaken to change the harp’s reputation. In Marie Antoinette’s day, playing the harp was a discreet tool of seduction, an excuse for young ladies to flash their arms and ankles at young men. But who needs such elaborate excuses anymore? The harp, thought Mr. Salvi, needs a different kind of P. R.⁴

Internationally-acclaimed Welsh harpist Catrin Finch, “the streetwise harpist, raunchily provocative in leather trousers and sweeping hairstyles, playing chic black harps with not a cherub or a flower in sight,” adds that the harp’s gendered stereotypes are “a paradox … because some of the best-known professionals of modern time, people like Ossian [sic] Ellis, have been men. But from the days when Marie Antoinette and her kind sat around in salons and plucked in a gracious, ladylike way, the harp has usually been seen as a feminine instrument. Which is

limiting.” Although White emphasizes ways in which the harp is breaking away from cultural and gendered constraints through new performance practices and modernized representations of harpists and harps, ultimately the arguments around gender and the harp often do not seek to understand feminine stereotypes through the women oppressed by them. In the attempt to address historical gender discrepancies in harp culture, the article ultimately serves as an ode to the men who matter, the men who once decided that harpists should be dainty and female and now have decided to supplant their old P. R. with a new one. The newly “woke” culture of classical harp belies a strange need to negate its past, supplanting a fractured history with women with a stronger, powerful, and edgier aesthetic. What has created this need? Who has created this need? Who has the privilege to create and change these needs?

Responding to the superficial observation of the feminine as “limiting” to the pedal harp’s musical potential, my dissertation explores gender and the harp through the lens of critical and feminist theories and the theatrical solo pedal harp work *Fidélité* (1982) by French-Greek composer Georges Aperghis. I focus on the intersection of agential realism — the theoretical work of feminist theorist and science and technology studies scholar Karen Barad — with ideas about how human and non-human bodies (which I extend to include bodies in musical performance) actively co-produce gender. Borrowing from Danish physicist Niels Bohr’s discoveries in quantum physics, agential realism provides a necessary foundation for shifting rationalist paradigms of ontology and epistemology into materialist ones. Barad orients the production of knowledge, identities, and even material bodies as total entanglements of matter rather than as dichotomies of matter and discourse. This re-orientation also radically overturns the understanding of gender, femininity, women, and womanhood as cultural archetypes or

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5 Ibid.
social constructions. Therefore, using agential realism, I re-interpret musical and theatrical elements of Aperghis’ *Fidélité* to explore how the harp and harpist co-produce gender and the power relations implicated in this entanglement.

Why is critical theory necessary to this project? Existing literature on “women in music”—a category encompassing female performers and composers who have resurfaced due to contemporary research on invaluable archival work—bears an important role in empowering female musicians and mitigating gender inequalities in Western classical music. This “women in music” scholarship, however, often focuses more on advocating for better representation and understanding of historical female musicians rather than actively critiquing the social structures and systems of knowledge and practice that exacerbate ongoing gender disparities in contemporary classical music culture. Taking cues from art historian and theorist Griselda Pollock, I suggest a feminist intervention in the discussion of gender in contemporary classical harp culture. Pollock describes a feminist intervention as involving “much more than adding new materials—women and their history—to existing categories and methods. It has led to wholly new ways of conceptualizing what it is we study and how we do it,”\(^6\) and also that “feminist interventions demand recognition of gender power relations, making visible the mechanisms of male power, the social construction of sexual difference and the role of cultural representations in that construction.”\(^7\) Rather than “adding new materials” to existing feminist writings on gender and the harp, my dissertation uses this earlier scholarship as a departure for exploring different epistemological paradigms that also consider contemporary social landscapes. In 1993 harpist Olga Gross suggested “as today’s harpists question and re-assess those stereotyped

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\(^7\) Ibid., 11.
images, they can choose to change them. With new and interesting attitudes [toward playing the harp] being cultivated, perhaps the stereotypes will become myths.”

In 1998, harpist and scholar Ann Yeung also criticized the rampant and irresponsible gendering of the pedal harp, stating that “harpists are still bound by inherited sexual stereotypes through reinforcement in the media and public expectations. Furthermore, harpists unknowingly propagate the myth of the harp and its femininity by accepting this sexual stereotype as an axiom of existence.”

Both Gross’ and Yeung’s observations about stereotypes and myths of the harp rightly challenge the beliefs that the harp and the feminine shared an essentialist relationship, and both also turn to counter-representations as important responses to the harp’s myth of femininity. Gross justifies the comedian/actor/harpist Harpo Marx as the individual “most responsible for undermining the feminine stereotype of the harp” by “[shattering] the prettified and class-conscious image of the instrument,” while Yeung directs her readers’ attention to harpists in jazz and popular music and concert harpists active in “serious” musical institutions (i.e. top tier symphony orchestras and university faculties).

Rather than using the diversification of representation as social resistance, my interest in gender and the harp pursues a different direction of inquiry: namely, interrogating the epistemologies of “stereotype” and “myth” by considering stereotypes and myths of the gendered harp as performativities rather than as static, cultural emblems. The stakes of my critical theory-based research highlight the necessity of exploring other critical perspectives, and my focus on Barad’s work draws from her specific emphasis on the ethics and

9 Yeung, “Gender, Image, and Reception: The Development and Social History of the Pedal Harp,” 158.
10 Gross, “Gender and the Harp, Part II,” 32.
politics of bodies, which resonate strongly with my politicized interpretation of gender and the female body in harp performance.

I engage agential realism in understanding the problematic gendering in post-eighteenth-century harp culture and the latent effects of this gendering on current harp practices. Agential realism specifically opposes both the human subjectivity of socially constructed knowledge, which often fails to acknowledge the role played by the material world in these constructions, and the immutable, pre-existing properties of material objects, which potentially deny the roles of human and non-human agents in the creation of knowledge. Seeking to correct this imbalance, agential realism instead argues that epistemology and ontology emerge simultaneously and non-linearly. I will adopt this paradigm to argue that the material interaction of the harp and the harpist’s body creates gendered knowledge about and delineates the ontological identities of harp and female harpist. I will also use Aperghis’s theatrical approaches to positioning relationships between the female harpist, harp, stage props, and stage in Fidélité to contextualize agential realism in musical performance.

Though grounded in agential realism, this dissertation’s broad theoretical framework also draws from three intellectual fields in critical theory: posthumanism, new materialism, and gender performativity. While posthumanism broadly emphasizes de-centering the human subject (going “beyond” humanism), new materialism specifically refers to the materialist turn that considers the entangled impact of discourse on material bodies. Finally, gender performativity—the theory that recognized gender as “speech-acts,” not a fixed, essentialized state—facilitates a critique of both biological determinist and social constructivist perspectives that have shaped and continue to shape classical pedal harp performance practices. The coalescing of these three theoretical domains ultimately challenges humanist conversations about empowerment and
identity by requiring concert harpists to confront the pedal harp’s gendered history with the materiality of their own gendered bodies, not with the tools of a dis-embodied human discourse.

From a practitioner/performer’s perspective, I am interested specifically in studying performance strategies, particularly related to uses of the body, that either reinforce or resist hegemonic constructs of female identities. The bodily engagement of theatre, such as through the use of props, characters, and physical expression, offers one possibility for expanding metaphors of gender in sound and music. Within practices of instrumental theatre, many composers (e.g. Aperghis) often use pastiche, fragmented or nonsensical speech or text, and exaggerated gestures in conjunction with music or musical instruments to create pieces of satire or resistance to ongoing political or social controversies. This existing lineage of instrumental theatre as social commentary, along with the genre’s interest in elevating the bodies (human performers, instruments, other technologies) that create music, makes Aperghis’s *Fidélité* a richly layered example for understanding Karen Barad’s ideas in the context of musical performance.

**Literature Review**

The discussion of gender in the history of harp culture and performance remains largely focused on the historical roles and perception of female harpists in the Western European tradition. Several key texts trace the lineage of professional and amateur female harpists, most of whom did not emerge in scholarship until the twentieth century. Roslyn Rensch’s *Harps and Harpists*\(^\text{12}\) provides a necessary overview of the harp’s mechanical and structural development, notable performers, events, and repertoire, providing historical contexts for the harp’s

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sociocultural evolution. Hans Joachim Zingel’s *Harp Music in the Nineteenth Century* offers general information about seminal harpists, mostly male and some female, in the European lineages of classical harpists and practices. As a result, the dominance of such archival, historical scholarship has influenced the majority of texts on gender and the harp. Numerous texts documenting the role of the harp in the social lives of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western European women provide invaluable information; many of these texts intersect with art history or studies of historical artifacts (i.e. furniture or clothes). These range from art curator Sarah Grant’s book on the Princess de Lamballe, musicologist Richard Leppert’s *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Harp*, musicologists Robert Adelson and Jacqueline Letzter’s exploration of the feminized harp in eighteenth-century France in “‘For a Woman When She is Young and Beautiful,’” Maria Christina Cleary’s study of shoes in pedaling practices, and gender and furniture in *Dangerous Liaisons: Fashion and Furniture in* ...

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16 Robert Adelson and Jacqueline Letzer, “‘For a Woman When She is Young and Beautiful’: The Harp in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *History/Herstory: Alternative Musikgeschichten*, eds. Annette Kreutziger-Herr and Katrin Losleben (Köln, Germany: Böhlau Verlag, 2009), 314-335.
the Eighteenth Century. Scholarly works by harpists Ann Yeung, Olga Gross, and Lia Lonnert also focus on cultural, social, and economic practices that have led to the feminization and sexualization of the harp; Lonnert also specifically addresses the history of female harpists and gender disparity in European orchestras. For “women in music” research, a contemporary resurgence of interest in eighteenth and nineteenth-century female harpists has produced articles about Dorette Scheidler-Spohr, Sophia Corri-Dussek, Anne-Marie Steckler Krumpholtz, and Madame de Genlis. Contemporary scholarship by harpists has vigorously attempted to

25 Adelson and Letzer, “‘For a Woman When She is Young and Beautiful,’” 314-335; Rajka Dobronic-Mazzoni, “The Comtesse and Her Wunderkind: Madame de Genlis and Casimir,” The American Harp Journal 16 (Winter 1998): 25-26; Stéphanie Félicité de Genlis, Nouvelle méthode pour apprendre à jouer
study a more diverse body of female harpists to include jazz musicians Alice Coltrane\textsuperscript{26} and Dorothy Ashby\textsuperscript{27} and folk-pop artist Joanna Newsom.\textsuperscript{28}

Yeung’s and Gross’ research contribute the most comprehensive studies on the broad topic of gender and the harp. Gross’ 1992 and 1993 articles exemplify early criticism of the historical feminization of the harp. Focusing on patriarchal cultural and social practices as origins for the “feminine” harp stereotype, Gross also comments on gender inequalities amongst pre-twentieth century professional harpists and oppressive aesthetics, such as mobility-restricting clothing, that were widely accepted and expected of female harpists. She refers, for example, to Carlos Salzedo’s Angelaires, an all-female ensemble that played an important role in advocating for the harp but also associated racialized standards of beauty with the instrument.\textsuperscript{29} Yeung’s thesis (1998), which she has condensed into a series of five articles,\textsuperscript{30} also tackles the subject of gender and the harp by extrapolating gendered relationships between the Western pedal harp and changing social, political, and economic landscapes in nineteenth-century Europe. Although Yeung and Gross often overlap in their uses of source material, Yeung differs in her specific focus on the pedal harp as a figure through which social (gendered) archetypes have flourished.

Both authors, in discussing images of the harp and harpist in twentieth and twenty-first centuries,

\textsuperscript{28} Emma Winston, “‘Being a Woman, Being a Woman’: Gendered Criticism of Joanna Newsom” (MA thesis, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2012).
\textsuperscript{29} Gross, “Gender and the Harp II,” 31.
\textsuperscript{30} See footnote 19.
argue for changes in representation, increased advocacy for the harp, and more expansive programming as solutions to previous centuries’ rigid and specific feminization of the harp. Yet these suggestions, which often point to harpists in cross-over genres—pop, folk, and jazz—as models for breaking stereotypes of the harp, do not quite address the dissonance that might occur when classical harpists confront the pedal harp’s gendered pedagogical and aesthetic lineages. Although increasing diversity in representation lends an important perspective to feminist dialogues in harp studies, I intend to expand the scope of Yeung and Gross’s research by applying theories of posthumanist feminism to the topic of gender and the harp.

My contemporary reading of gender and the harp primarily draws from the work of feminist philosopher and theoretical physicist Karen Barad. I focus especially on the application of her theory of agential realism, which she also calls “posthumanist performativity,”31 to a materialist understanding of female identity and power structures enacted in harp performance practices. Barad first introduced agential realism in her 1997 essay “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction,”32 which she developed into her 2007 book Meeting the Universe Halfway.33 Premised on Barad’s earlier research of Danish physicist Niels Bohr’s work in quantum physics, her essay uses Bohr’s principle of complementarity as a foundational point for building her new materialist philosophy. Bohr argued that the physical measurement of a phenomenon does not resolve a pre-existing uncertainty, but that the measurement itself, upon meeting the phenomenon, creates an

ontological reality. In the context of determining whether light is a wave or a particle, Bohr proposed the double-slit thought experiment (a light beam sent through two slits) to suggest that light exists as both wave and particle, rather than within an either/or condition. The type of measuring apparatus used—either one used to measure particles or one for waves—affects the measuring outcome. Barad uses this example of complementarity to suggest that material ontology is neither fixed nor constructed and that “the nature of the observed phenomenon changes with the corresponding changes in the apparatus.”

Agential realism’s argument for a contingent ontology challenges scientific realism’s belief in matter’s fixity and social constructivism’s opposing belief in matter as a construction of discourse. Realism argues that objects maintain ontology independent of perception, whereas social constructivism asserts that social constructs—enacted and created by human cognitive processes—constitute reality. Agential realism resists both realism and constructivism by insisting on the relational ontology of matter. Instead matter acts on itself and does not require the mediation of human subjectivity to realize it. In other words, the material world continues to proliferate and change even without the discursive interventions of the human; even the human body itself is comprised of organisms that multiply, inhabit, infect, die, and mutate—all of which escapes the limitations of our active, daily consciousness. Although the premise of Barad’s argument relies on quantum physics, her fundamental proposal for the relationality of material ontologies has significant implications for feminist criticisms of gendered identities in the performing arts.

The applicability of agential realism to gender and the harp strengthens through the discussion of (gender) performativity in Barad’s 2003 article “Posthumanist Performativity:  

34 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 106.
Toward an Understanding of How Matters Comes to Matter.” She takes the word “performativity” from feminist theorist Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity. Posthumanist performativity critiques the anthropocentrism of Butler’s performativity, centered on discourse as stabilizing and regulating both gender (Gender Trouble35) and sexuality and the body (Bodies That Matter36). Barad also challenges French post-structuralist philosopher Michel Foucault’s theories of biopower, sexuality, and discourse37 for over-emphasizing the role of discourse in bodily formation. For Barad, both Butler and Foucault limited their theories of bodies to understanding how human culture and institutions “discipline” human bodies, rather than how material bodies can actively regulate and affect each other. Posthumanist performativity proposes a materialist-discursive approach to performativity, arguing that physical realities neither emerge through totally material (as seen in the double-slit experiment) nor totally discursive (e.g. gender performativity) relationships. Instead, these realities emerge through the mutual entanglement of material circumstances and discourses that also shape those circumstances.38 Furthermore, in addition to Barad’s citations of Butler and Foucault, other important theoretical webs that connect agential realism with gender and the harp include STS (science and technology studies) and feminist scholar Donna Haraway’s theory of situated


For example, I locate a relational, material-discursive approach in sociologist Matthew Desmond’s ethnography of poverty and eviction in Milwaukee between 2008-2009. Desmond writes, “Poverty was a relationship, I thought, involving poor and rich people alike. To understand poverty, I needed to understand that relationship.” Desmond argues that poverty and wealth are not just linguistic placeholders for material lack and excess, or the fixed consequences stemming solely from one’s material circumstances. The materialities of poverty and wealth interplay with discourses—economic policies, cultural language, political interventions—and that constant interplay iteratively reproduces realities of poverty and wealth.
knowledges,\textsuperscript{39} French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s rhizome,\textsuperscript{40} feminist writer Adrienne Rich’s politics of location (standpoint theory),\textsuperscript{41} environmental feminist scholar Astrida Neimanis’ posthuman feminist phenomenology\textsuperscript{42} (drawing from the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty\textsuperscript{43}) and feminist phenomenologies.\textsuperscript{44} I will discuss these theoretical applications in more depth in Chapters One, Two, and Four.

The convergence of Barad’s work with the subject of gender and the harp also follows examples of feminist criticism in musicology. Scholars in the field formerly known in the late twentieth-century as “new musicology,” such as Susan McClary, Suzanne Cusick, Caroline Abbate, and Marcia Citron, have addressed structures of gender inequality in music and questioned artistic practices and rhetoric steeped in sexist hegemonies.\textsuperscript{45} McClary and Cusick elucidate an important characteristic of feminist theories of music: music is not a transcendent phenomenon divorced from the bodies that create it. McClary’s 1991 \textit{Feminine Endings}, a seminal feminist musicological text, reads sexual politics in analyses of musical aesthetic and

structures. In “Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen”⁴⁶ she focuses on madness expressed in female operatic characters; madness, as a socially subversive trait, also permits escape from normative codes of musical aesthetics. By demonstrating that the intentional use of female characters dramatizes the sonic policing of deviant (mad) bodies, McClary suggests that the female performing body is agential and affective rather than a passive aesthetic medium. Cusick further elucidates the importance of the body in feminist music criticism in her 1994 essay “Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem.”⁴⁷ She ties the issue of the musical performing body to theories of performativity (Butler) and situated knowledges (Haraway), arguing that a feminist approach to theorizing music is an embodied one. Her particular emphasis on studying “practices of performing bodies” necessitates critical evaluation of ways in which music theory elevates patriarchal structures, which she refers as “practices of the mind.”⁴⁸

These iconic readings of gender, music, and the body preface new waves of scholarship concerned with viewing the performing arts from posthumanist perspectives. Scholarship specifically engaging the work of Karen Barad constitutes a very small percentage of research in the arts; the bulk of this research circulates heavily in Northern Europe, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Diverse applications and methodologies incorporating Baradian or new

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⁴⁶ McClary, 80-111.
⁴⁸ Ibid., 16-17.
materialist theory involve dance,\textsuperscript{49} music composition and performance,\textsuperscript{50} ethno-/musicology,\textsuperscript{51} critical sound studies,\textsuperscript{52} and visual art.\textsuperscript{53} These authors all address broad themes of breaking boundaries of humanist philosophies: de-centering human agency in artistic practices by considering other materialities involved in art-making, performing bodies as interconnected materialities rather than bounded subjectivities, and the intrinsic politics entangled with the materializations of matter.


Parsing these themes in new materialist research leads to the music of Georges Aperghis (born 1945), an inventive and idiosyncratic Greek-born, Paris-based composer of experimental musical theatre. Experimental musical theatre—also known in different variations across Europe and North America as instrumental theatre, théâtre musical, musiktheatre, and teatro musicale—emerged as an influential form of aesthetic revolution and sociopolitical resistance; some of its most famous composers include John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Heiner Goebbels, Luigi Nono, Luciano Berio, R. Murray Schafer, and Mauricio Kagel. Although different styles of musical theatre were already circulating throughout Europe, Kagel takes on particular significance as the (widely regarded) inventor of instrumental theatre (instrumentales theatre).54 Much of Kagel’s unique musical vision reflects his radical leftist political views—instilled by his family and his later resistance to Argentine dictator Juan Domingo Perón’s artistic and intellectual censorship.55 In 1957 Kagel moved to Cologne, Germany, bringing his innovative compositional methods to Europe. Although Georges Aperghis never studied with Kagel, his works have become part of the canon of musical theatre pioneered by Kagel. Self-taught as a composer, Aperghis has produced operas, musical theatre, and concert works, many of which fall into the category of instrumental theatre.

Little scholarship, whether historical, analytical, or cultural, exists on the instrumental theatre works of Aperghis. Much of the available literature on Aperghis is written in French, due to the composer’s active career in France, while other scholars have written in German and Greek. Antoine Gindt, who worked with Aperghis at the Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM),

has compiled *Georges Aperghis, le corps musical*, a catalogue of Aperghis’ work. Several other French and English resources offer invaluable information on Aperghis’ life, his creative output, and intellectual affiliations: Evan J. Rothstein’s “Le théâtre musical d’Aperghis,” Catherine Maximoff’s documentary *Storm Beneath a Skull*, several theses, and a number of interviews with the composer. Aperghis’s website also provides program notes for many of his works, and his biography in *Grove Music Online* provides useful and updated resources for general biographical information. These texts detail highlights of his professional activities, his educational background and artistic affiliations, his best-known works, and his received accolades. With regards to Aperghis’ contributions to the French school of musical theatre, scholars have written on his compositional philosophies behind synthesizing drama and music. Rothstein, for example, analyzes relationships between Aperghis’ musical and dramaturgical styles and impresses on Aperghis’ symbiotic treatment of music and action. Erin Gee studies the fragmented language and non-semantic vocal techniques used in Aperghis’ soprano work *Récitations*; Gee’s analysis influences the understanding of language and narrative in *Fidélité*.

For comprehensive studies on trends in musical theatre, both Salzman and Dési’s *The New Music Theatre* and Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner’s *Composed Theatre* offer contextual insights on Aperghis’ compositional processes, sociopolitical influences on his musical works, and aesthetic trends in experimental music theatre during the late twentieth century.

Aperghis’ music offers a rich source for posthumanist theoretical applications when considering his intellectual relationship to the work of French post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. His friendship with Félix Guattari is documented through interviews and in the text “L’hétérogenèse,” a transcription of a conversation between Guattari, Aperghis, and Gindt in 1991. Aperghis particularly championed the concept of the rhizome and “composed chaos” (taken from Guattari’s idea of ‘chaosmos’); the latter concept refers to the phenomenon of reality created through the constant diverging, proliferating, and intersecting of things-in-chaos. More important, however, is the rhizome, which has served as a model for early posthumanist theories. The rhizome is a Deleuzoguattarian (pertaining to the joint work of Guattari and Deleuze) concept that expressed a lateral distribution of objects and events, as opposed to a more transcendent, vertically hierarchical paradigm that had been dominating Western European philosophies since the era of the Enlightenment. As discussed by philosopher Rosi Braidotti in her article “Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity,”

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63 Salzman and Dési, *The New Music Theatre*.


the implicit heterogeneity of the rhizome shifts the philosophical focus away from any centralized, human subjectivity and instead establishes a non-hierarchical organism that constantly regenerates without clearly delineated origins. How did Aperghis translate the rhizome and other Deleuzoguattarian ideas into his music? Edward Campbell’s study of Aperghis’ *Avis de tempête* (2003) in *Music after Deleuze* and “Music-Becoming-Animal in Works by Grisey, Aperghis, and Levinas” describe Aperghis’ musical work as an “assemblage,” a Deleuzoguattarian term that describes things as laterally connected multiplicities rather than as bounded entities. Viewing a musical work as an assemblage considers the immense variety of materials, such as performers, instruments, spaces, musical quotations, used in the process of creating. Acknowledging material connectivity, in turn, draws each work as large networks of contingency. Campbell’s use of Deleuzoguattarian theory (and Aperghis’ own connection to Guattari’s ideas) brings Aperghis’ music toward a direction of relationality and materiality that adapts well to posthumanist theoretical interpretations. In short, Aperghis’ explicit consideration of the rhizomic form forges a legitimate connection between his compositional style and my application of agential realism.

*Citing Genevieve Lloyd, Braidotti writes, “Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, resting on a Spinozist ontology, makes all living beings, including the human subjects, very much ‘part of nature,’ as Genevieve Lloyd put it (1994).”*


“Assemblage” refers to the multiplicity within entities, such defining a city by its many moving parts rather than defining a city according to fixed parameters. Deleuze and Guattari describe the multiplicity--the parts--as having “neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing, in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows.” Instead their identities emerge through the fluid, affective behavior of other entities, which may either function as constituents of an assemblage or as assemblages themselves.
Beyond critical theory, interpreting Aperghis’ solo harp work *Fidélité* (1982) in relation to the pedal harp and aesthetic trends in the late twentieth century also requires contextual understanding of several key texts and scores. Although Aperghis is widely regarded as an idiosyncratic composer, a comparative understanding of his harp writing allows a more nuanced appreciation and analysis of *Fidélité*. Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza II* (1965)\textsuperscript{72} is one of the first twentieth-century works that implicates the historical gendering of the harp. Harpist Kirsty Whatley addresses the interaction of a feminized aesthetic with Berio’s choice of sonic language;\textsuperscript{73} this idea of gendered sounds that draw from an existing discourse of gendered instruments sets up my own understanding of *Fidélité*. Aperghis’ own sonic and timbral language draws from a rich body of contemporary harp repertoire, detailed in the 2019 compendium *Guide to the Contemporary Harp*.\textsuperscript{74} Other important works to reference alongside *Fidélité* include Mauricio Kagel’s *Sonant* (1960/....), Swiss composer Heinz Holliger’s *Sequenzen über Johannes 1, 32* (1962), Vietnamese-French composer Tôn-Thất Tiết’s *Chu ky III* (1977), Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer’s *The Crown of Ariadne* (1979), and Romanian-French composer Marius Constant’s *Harpalyce* (1980).\textsuperscript{75} These works demonstrate common uses of extended techniques, trends in musical structure, intertextual material, and theatrical

elements that place *Fidélité* in context of developments in harp music during the late twentieth century.

This literature review has revealed the wide range of connections for understanding many facets of gender and the harp. Philosophical movements, such as posthumanism and post-structuralism, have taken root in the arts as a way for scholars and performers to understand the complex processes behind creative works, compositional forms, and performance and pedagogical practices. Discourses in classical music have often perceived music as a transcendent phenomenon that can reveal truths about or betters our experiences as human beings. Yet elevating Western classical music in such a way has resulted in gross injustices against the bodies that make music and against narratives that deviate from canons. Barad’s agential realism demands an ontological and epistemological shift in how we understand material bodies—human, instrument, sound—and the practices of exclusion involved in making knowledge. Including Karen Barad’s work in my study thus acknowledges the complex processes involved in the harp’s gendering and stresses the ethical and political implications of my research. Taking a cross-disciplinary approach and studying Aperghis’s inventive use of the harpist/harp and their gendered embodiments, a subject which remains untouched by harpists, I will provide a unique perspective that expands and unravels historical narratives of harp and gender. Additionally, I will join an active community of scholars interested in understanding how marginalized bodies reclaim power over their expression and perception. By looking at how gendering emerges from a female harpist’s body acting in tandem with the harp, I am arguing that her materiality—that is, the physicality of her fingers, feet, and body—matters in constructing gendered identities. In turn, this idea forms the basis for discovering practices of resistance and awareness for future harpists.
Methodology and Chapter Outline

As stated earlier, this dissertation interprets the work of Karen Barad through Georges Aperghis’ solo harp work *Fidélité: for female harpist watched by a man* for the purpose of exploring the gendering of the pedal harp as a posthumanist performativity. Although I analyze parts of the piece and explain basic components of Aperghis’ compositional style, this dissertation does not take a more conventional trajectory of using the musical work to explain or prove the objective truthfulness of an applied theory (whether musical or critical). Instead the methodological trajectory of my work relies on understanding *Fidélité* through a core concept in agential realism: diffraction.

Diffraction is a wave phenomenon. When a wave, such as light, sound, or water, passes through an aperture, the waves spread into a ripple pattern, or a diffraction. Differently sized apertures create different kinds of ripple patterns. Donna Haraway describes diffraction as "a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear."\(^\text{76}\)

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad takes care to say that she uses diffraction not as a metaphor but as a method for her own research practices. Therefore, diffraction in research looks to passing things through each other and “taking account of marks on bodies”\(^\text{77}\) that occur during the ongoing processes of materialization. Diffraction resists binaries that have become naturalized in human interpretations of the world and insists that matter is performative, not representational, and entangled (intra-active), rather than reflections of separately bounded


\(^{77}\) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 89.
ontologies. Barad also uses diffraction to criticize objectivity as the ability to see at a distance—a concept reinforced by Cartesian rationalism’s spatial separation of epistemology and ontology, of subject and object, and of knower and known. A diffractive methodology responds to limitations in reflexivity (the practice of (self-)reflecting on) and representationalism (reality as mediated through consciousness). Barad critiques reflexivity for taking “for granted the idea that representations reflect (social or natural) reality. That is, reflexivity is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation and that we have a kind of access to representations that we don’t have to the objects themselves. Reflexivity, like reflection, still holds the world at a distance.”78 This methodological shift from reflection to diffraction alters the ways in which my research objects interact with each other and changes my role in the research process.

In a more conventional dissertation research paradigm, I (the researcher) am expected to reveal previously unknown but pre-existing knowledge about gender and the harp. The pieces of this truth exist in uncertainty, waiting for me to resolve them. Under this paradigm, Fidélité acts as the resolution, somehow supposedly demonstrating some truthful insight about gendered performance practices on the harp. This paradigm, however, does not consider that I, as the researcher and as the harpist, implicate my own politics of location and partiality in the process of passing through my research. This paradigm also takes the nature of “gender” for granted, and

78 Ibid., 87; Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters,” 300.

Barad follows Donna Haraway’s use of diffraction in “The Promises of Monsters.” Haraway criticized reflection and refraction for “producing the ‘same’ displaced.” Reflection mirrors the original, and refraction changes direction of the original. In social theory reflexivity, which borrows from the principle of reflection, seeks to acknowledge the role of the researcher/writer, but in doing so, actually reinforces the subject/object dichotomy. Reflexivity establishes that an “us” exists that needs to be interposed on a “them.” Furthermore, reflexivity’s privileging of the the semiotic and the discursive results in a kind of anthropocentrism in research by positioning the researcher as an interpretive mediator of matter.
also creates possible frictions between the composer’s intent and my intent. What if Aperghis was not even thinking about the harp’s gendered history when writing the piece? Is my research then unsound or untruthful? Reflection demands the total lack of contradiction between an object and its reflection, creating rigid boundaries between objects and the ways in which they affect each other. Diffraction, on the other hand, allows for these contradictions by nature of its permeability—what Barad refers as intra-activity. Agential realism defines intra-activity as the inextricably entangled ontologies of things. The imagery of “that man interacted with the dog” and “that man intra-acted with the dog” may look the same, but at an ontological level, “intra-acted” implies that “man” materializes contingently with “dog” through complex layers of discourse and material engagement.\textsuperscript{79} Intra-activity/intra-action, along with diffraction, feature prominently in my methodological process.

Barad’s diffractive methodology positions \textit{Fidélité} as an ontological entanglement that captures discussions about gender and the harp alongside contemporary musical practices, contemporary feminist ideas, and even my own embodied experiences as a harpist. I do not intend to take for granted the fixed linguistic meanings of "woman," “female,” and "harpist," nor do I seek to imbue aesthetic practices with intrinsic cultural and political meanings. Instead I follow Trinh Minh-ha’s assertion that “many of us still hold on to the concept of difference not as a tool of creativity to question multiple forms of repression and dominance, but as a tool of segregation, to exert power on the basis of racial and sexual essences. The apartheid type of difference.”\textsuperscript{80} The goal of my research concerns itself less so with the need to assert difference

\textsuperscript{79} Donna Haraway, \textit{The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness} (Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2011). Haraway describes this contingency through her concept of “companion species.”

through transformative distance (“new identities for the harp”) or to subvert specific stereotypes of femininity through multiplicities of negation. I seek to re-configure the rationalist and reflexive boundaries that create concert performance practices into more indeterminate, open, and challenging spaces of diffractive inquiry. This indeterminacy does not imply an inability for resolution, but instead refers to the limitations of our knowledge. Each resolution made within the indeterminacy must be acknowledged as local and partial. Barad refers to these localized resolutions as “agential cuts,” which are in turn accomplished through a materially entangled relationship between an observational tool (apparatus) and the thing being observed. My research enacts its specific agential cuts by using both agential realism and a single musical work (*Fidélité*) as apparatuses on the relationship between gender and the Western pedal harp. I have also chosen to read these agential cuts through each other (diffractively), rather than against each other (dialectically); the point is not to prove the truth of the matter but to understand what issues and questions may arise within an interaction. I also advocate for critical resistance against the sole use of representation in responding to an array of social injustices. Additionally, challenging the optics of representation shifts one’s attention from musical practices as neutral tools to musical practices as social politics enacted by political bodies. This perspective yields a new materialist re-conceptualization of the harpist and harp in terms of their affective relationship as human and non-human bodies. As a result, I introduce the term *genderharp*—a citational nod to Donna Haraway’s neologism “natureculture”81—to argue for the co-gendering of the harpist and the pedal harp. Gender is not a universal social archetype constructed and enacted by human


Haraway writes, “The world is a knot in motion. Biological and cultural determinism are both instances of misplaced concreteness—i.e., the mistake of, first, taking provisional and local category abstractions like "nature" and ‘culture’ for the world and, second, mistaking potent consequences to be preexisting foundations. There are no pre-constituted subjects and objects, and no single sources, unitary actors, or final ends.”
cultures; gender is a posthuman performativity that implicates a wide field of entangled, material bodies. Therefore, the pedal harp is not a passive object on which human harpists apply their gender politics. The harp actively implicates itself in the gendering of harpists, and the gendered harpists, in turn, also gender their instruments. This is not to say, for example, that the harp and harpist assign femininity to each other, but that the literal, physical interactions between harp and harpist (and other material bodies) actually create identities that then take on gendered meanings over time.

The enfolding of agential realism, Aperghis’ *Fidélité*, and the historical relationship between gender, women, and the pedal harp explores the following questions over the next four chapters:

1. What is agential realism? How does agential realism change approaches to “gender” in existing gender and harp studies? What does a genderharp perspective entail? Why does agential realism make sense in research targeting issues of social justice?

2. What are philosophical connections between agential realism and the postmodern compositional style of Georges Aperghis? How do broad ideas in postmodernism and post-structuralism apply to specific characteristics of Aperghis’ music?

3. What elements of postmodern music emerge in *Fidélité*? How does one engage an agential realist analysis of *Fidélité*? How do *Fidélité*’s musical features relate to trends in late twentieth-century harp compositions? How does re-situating Aperghis’ intertextual and semiotic play as ont-epistemologies re-define gendered sound in harp writing?

4. How does the theatricality of *Fidélité* engage philosophical ideas about ontology and gendered embodiment? How does *Fidélité* address a female harpist’s womanhood and the different, partial perspectives engendered by one’s embodied location? How does genderharp—read through *Fidélité*—shift the focus in gender and harp from equitable representations of gender to attending to flows of power enacted by the material configuration of bodies?
I have organized the four chapters into three parts, with each part diffracting paths of inquiry from a theme written in Aperghis' notes on *Fidélité*.  

The first part (Chapter One), subtitled “the relationship between a woman and her instrument,” uses Barad’s book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and its preceding article “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter” to explore an agential realist ontology/onto-epistemology of bodies in context of the gendered history of the harp. I explain fundamental concepts in agential realism, such as “apparatus,” “intra-action,” and “agential cut,” which recur in my analyses throughout the other three chapters. The philosophical implications of these terms (which constitute an entangled ontological and epistemological paradigm) lead to the proposing of genderharp, the entanglement of gender and harp. Entanglements, Barad argues, “are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entanglings entail differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings.”  

Through agential realism, genderharp argues that gender and the harp are entangled, not in that any particular notion of a gendered harp forms a unifying idea about gender and the harp, but that the intra-action of gender and the harp produces certain onto-epistemological striations that demand accountability. Barad’s stakes for agential realism lie in human accountability; our own physical entanglement with the material formation of realities.

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Einarsdóttir translates Aperghis’ program notes for *Fidélité*: “In this piece written for Brigitte Sylvestre, the gesture of the harpist, captured in the action itself of producing sounds, is associated with talking and singing. The piece evokes a ‘moment’ in the life of the female performer, an intimate space where everything could be said. The three main themes of *Fidélité* are closely linked: the relationship of the woman with her instrument (the joy of playing), with music (the confrontation of the performer with the sounds of language) and her own identity or life as a (married) woman. This triangle shapes a world of conflicts.”

makes us extremely accountable to how we move within the world. Although Barad’s call for accountability may have more apparent significance in the sciences (e.g. environmental studies, technology and society), agential realism (through genderharp) can help illuminate economic, political, and social issues in re-evaluating power dynamics that produce and are produced by performance practices.

Part II, subtitled “the relationship between a woman and music,” spans Chapters Two and Three and explores the aesthetic, philosophical, and political inclinations in the music of Georges Aperghis and possible analytical interpretations of Fidélité. I am particularly interested in extrapolating post-structuralist ideas about the music compositional process (some of which Aperghis developed through his friendship with Félix Guattari) and positing those ideas against an agential realist philosophy. For example, the rhizome challenged hierarchical structures and teleological forms that had shaped previous generations of classical music composers. Aperghis was interested in the lateral potential of semantic fragmentation and deconstruction—both in music and language—and the expressivity of bodies. Chapter Two looks at these ideas in relation to trends in post-structuralist theories and also to techniques in film, theatre, visual art, and music. Chapter Three begins by examining these trends and techniques in several notable pieces for/with harp from the 1960s to 1980s. As argued by Whatley, Luciano Berio’s Sequenza II still stands as a musical subversion of both the romantic, ethereal representation of the harp and harpist and the predominant, feminized aesthetic in early twentieth-century harp music. 84 I also look to the use of theatre or theatrical gestures in specific harp pieces as transparent starting points for materialist considerations in performance practices. Chapter Three primarily consists of the following analytical perspectives of Fidélité: understanding the piece’s formal trajectory;

84 Whatley, “Rough Romance.”
the significance of language and the voice used in tandem with the harp; and the relationship between Aperghis’ use of extended techniques and concepts of embodiment.

In Part III (Chapter Four), “the relationship between a woman and her identity as a (married) woman,” discusses Aperghis’ theatrical choices in *Fidélité* in relation to ideas about embodiment and power. The topic of “gender and the harp” has denoted a resistance to feminine stereotyping of the harp by showing that this feminization emerged through social, cultural, and economic factors; the stakes generated by this type of research lie in the intended liberation of both women and harps from these restrictive aesthetic paradigms. The direction of my fourth chapter seeks a new path of inquiry for gender and the harp. I am particularly interested in genderharp perspectives of embodiment and phenomenology—namely, how one’s embodied womanhood (-in-performance) intra-acts with a musical performance. Following Simone de Beauvoir’s monumental declaration, “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman,” 85 I explore the partial perspectives of a harpist occupying her womanhood—how she becomes woman—through the theatrical narrative in *Fidélité*, and how her becoming-woman also specifically entangles with the harp and other components of the piece. Furthermore, the intra-actions of body, womanhood, and musical work do not follow a linear causality; agential realism would argue for the mutual consideration of becoming-woman and the materiality of the female body in understanding the harpist’s womanhood in *Fidélité*. The last section in Part III looks at embodiment and power dynamics in relation to the phrase “watched by a man” from *Fidélité*’s subtitle, “for female harpist watched by a man.” Oriented by Haraway’s theory of situated knowledges and the politics of siting/sighting, 86 “watched by a man” refers to the unequal gaze


Haraway asserts that “boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; ‘objects’ do not preexist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What
of the center on the margin, of subject on object, and the “god trick” of vision on partial perspectives. Therefore, I interpret “watched by a man” as an important apparatus for sitting/sighting different flows of power in genderharp. These flows implicate issues of class and race, which are materially and discursively entangled with gender and therefore inextricable in the discussion of genderharp. In addition to diffracting with identity and power, “watched by a man” comments on hegemonic practices of objectivity in certain branches of classical music hermeneutics. The rhizomatic compositional philosophy of Aperghis in intra-action with my theory of genderharp situates Fidélité in resistance to these disciplinary hegemonies. The final commentary on “watched by man” lies in genderharp as a social aesthetic, mediated by the partial perspectives and material bodies that watch the performers beyond the stage. This observation emphasizes that the gendering of the harp cannot solely be a discussion of human subjectivity, human agency, and human empowerment. Instead, gender and the harp must also speak of permeability of boundaries (intra-connectivity) and the constant turning and re-turning of those boundaries in materializing and marking “gender” onto human and non-human bodies.

**Conclusion**

Aligned with critical, social justice-oriented scholarship, my dissertation seeks to bridge the gap between conversations in feminist theory and deeply embedded gender inequalities in boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Siting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.”

87 Ibid., 587.

Haraway defines the ‘god trick’: “The only position from which objectivity could not possibly be practiced and honored is the standpoint of the master, the Man, the One God, whose Eye produces, appropriates, and orders all difference. No one ever accused the God of monotheism of objectivity, only of indifference. The god trick is self-identical, and we have mistaken that for creativity and knowledge, omniscience even.”
classical music. This goal has involved re-thinking Western European social and cultural constructions of gender that have shaped harpists throughout modern history, as well as critiquing where acts of inclusion have insufficiently probed structural inequalities. Rather than relying solely on a historical or a (musical) analytical approach, my research turns to critical theories to question why and how gender has mattered and still matters in harp performance practices. As musical scholars, we cannot take concepts of gender, femininity, and womanhood for granted, nor are our research methodologies exempt from and outside the active materialization of knowledge and bodies. This understanding of human accountability in research prompts the need for a philosophical awareness of how I talk about gender, harp, and harpists, and facilitates new and important dialogues about the performativity of musical performances.

My dissertation also highlights that the study of gender and the harp is ultimately a study of bodies—bodies that are co-worlded, agential, dynamic, and alive. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty once wrote, “The body is no longer merely an object in the world, under the purview of a separated spirit. It is on the side of the subject; it is our point of view on the world, the place where the spirit takes on a certain physical and historical situation.”

Merleau-Ponty sought to reclaim the body as a reality-making entity, rather than a passive means for conducting experience into reality via consciousness. Extending Merleau-Ponty’s re-positioning of bodies in the world, Karen Barad argues that human and non-human bodies participate in worlding through their intra-activity. Taking cues from agential realism, feminist approaches to harp performance practices must consider the active role of the body in acts of gendering, rather than resigning the body as an object ascribed with gendered identities that are then negotiable through

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the agency of free will. I argue that feminist performance practices cannot remain content with counter-representations or negations. Feminist performance practices must also pursue the intra-actions that produce identities and the trajectories and effects of differences emerging from those identities.

These challenging ideas about bodies gendered in musical performance would not have materialized without my encounter with Aperghis’ *Fidélité*. In addition to its feminist objectives, my research also seeks to produce more knowledge to harpists about Georges Aperghis, a lesser-known composer in North America, and the solo work *Fidélité*. Unlike Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza II*, which has become a part of the North American canon of (contemporary) harp repertoire, *Fidélité* is not widely taught or performed. For many harpists, the wide use of extended techniques, the expressive range in both the instrumental and vocal parts, and the intense intimacy involved in the physical coordination between harp and harpist challenge our disembodied concepts of virtuosity and musicianship. *Fidélité* demands technical and musical courage, discomforts our bodies, and provokes our sociocultural sensibilities; for these reasons, this work deserves to be studied and performed.

As Western European classical music wrestles with the social, political, and economic tensions of contemporary society, discussing how, why, and what kind of music we are making becomes increasingly important. Therefore, reading *Fidélité* through an agential realist, feminist paradigm allows both critical and musical analyses of the work to exceed the restrictive optics of reflection; diffraction leads us to explore the rich possibilities of things meeting halfway. Agential realism also speaks to the accountability and responsibility of human beings in the materialization of realities, and Barad constantly reminds her readers that they do not merely inhabit the world—they, along with co-existing entities, constitute and reconfigure the world.
Although previous harp scholars have already demonstrated the ways in which the pedal harp has been feminized by Western patriarchal social values, my research re-frames this acknowledged relationship between gender and the harp to provide new directions for contemporary harpists (of all genders) to come to terms with their fractured cultural history.
PART I: “The Relationship Between a Woman and Her Instrument”
CHAPTER ONE: GENDERHARP AND AGENTIAL REALISM

In “The Cyborg Manifesto” feminist scholar Donna Haraway writes, "social reality is lived social relations."89 Haraway’s words remind us to acknowledge that the active experientiality of the body constitutes an important role in the making of gender—a social and material reality—and the significance of considering gender as lived relations. Therefore, thinking about the co-gendering of the Western classical harp and harpist starts with critical theories that re-consider the nature of bodies.

What is a body? We often think of “body” as “human body,” but a body denotes more than the confined boundaries of muscle, skin, and bone. In this chapter, I interrogate the gender performativity, not just of human bodies, but also of non-human bodies as well.

Gender performativity is a critical theory first conceptualized by the American gender theorist Judith Butler. Although the term “gender performativity” is most widely associated with her 1990 book Gender Trouble, Butler had already begun troubling concepts of gender a few years prior.90 In 1988 she published the article “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” in which she positions naturalistic perspectives of gender and the body against ideas by French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir. Butler takes Merleau-Ponty’s argument that the body is both “an historical idea” and “a set of possibilities to be continually realized. … The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning,”91 and de

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90 Butler, Gender Trouble.
Beauvoir’s reading of the female body as “a historical situation” and “a manner of doing, dramatizing, and reproducing a historical situation.”

Butler posits that gender does not materialize as a by-product of one’s biological sex, re-enforced by essentialized, innate biological drives. Instead gender is a performance—a series of repeated acts entangled within cultural regulations also confined by historical boundaries. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler replaced this earlier theatrical metaphor of “performing gender” with the term “speech-acts,” which she had borrowed from linguist J. L. Austin and philosopher John Searle. Butler’s “speech-acts” refer to linguistic and behavioral utterances that create social realities, such as gender. In her 1993 book *Bodies that Matter* Butler evokes the prenatal ritual of declaring “it’s a girl/boy” as an utterance that realizes—or in intersex cases, explicitly decides—the gender of a fetus:

Consider the medical interpellation which (the recent emergence of the sonogram notwithstanding) shifts an infant from an “it” to a “she” or a “he,” and in that naming, the girl is “girled,” brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that “girling” of the girl does not end there; on the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout various intervals of time to reenforce or contest this naturalized effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm.

The body’s gender performativity does not imply that gender is “just a construct” or an individual, conscious choice; one cannot simply decide to perform male or female. Gender

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92 Ibid., 521.

Butler explains how performativity can be misconstrued: “The bad reading goes something like this: I can get up in the morning, look in my closet, and decide which gender I want to be today. I can take out a piece of clothing and change my gender, stylize it, and then that evening I can change it again and be something radically other, so that what you get is something like the commodification of gender, and the understanding of taking on a gender as a kind of consumerism. ... [treating] gender deliberately, as if
performativity speaks instead to a larger social phenomenon of re-inscribing hegemonies of heterosexuality and essentializing genders through collective iterations of speech-acts. Performing gender must also implicate the reinforcement and institutionalization of sociocultural practices.

Butler’s theory of gender performativity radically shifts conceptions of gender in relation to bodies (harp, harpist) and allows Karen Barad to interrogate who constitutes performative bodies. First, conversations about gender and the harp often refer only to the cultural, feminine stereotyping of the pedal harp, divorcing a historical femininity from the constant, ongoing materializations of bodies and identities. Butler essentially argues that the cultural is the material—utterances create realities—and therefore, the cultural gendering of the harp also becomes the material gendering of the harp. The concept of the feminine, however, is not just a subjectivity projected onto bodies; “feminine” is actively enacted by bodily relations. Barad further suggests that those bodily relations are not just of human bodies, but that non-human bodies can also create social and material realities.

I introduce the concept of genderharp in lieu of the discursive category “gender and the harp” to argue that the gendering of the harp constitutes more than human sociocultural phenomena, and that performative materializations of gender implicate a holistic entanglement of gender, harp, and harpist. Although Butler’s gender performativity provides a necessary foundation for understanding gender and the body, Barad’s concept of posthumanist performativity and her extended theory of agential realism offer more suitable frameworks for...
addressing the posthumanist concerns of genderharp. Through readings of quantum physics and Continental philosophy, Barad radically interprets key philosophical concepts, such as ontology, epistemology, ethics, causality, and agency, which fundamentally change interpretive approaches to historical, musical, and social knowledge and their relationship with gender. Nevertheless, agential realism does not “solve” the complex problems instigated by the pedal harp’s history with femininity and women, nor does my narrative of the harp’s gendering works or should work seamlessly within other posthumanist and feminist theories. I use agential realism as a tool for investigating “frictions experienced”\(^\text{95}\)—confronting what has been lost in the discourse of gender and the harp, namely: 1) the lack of *performative* accountability to gendered power relations in the classical harp tradition; 2) the inadequacy of representationalism as a response to gendered performance practices; and 3) the overlooking of embodiment in conversations about identity and empowerment. Rather than viewing gender and harp as interactive entities, an agential realist perspective argues that “gender and the harp” is instead *genderharp*—that is, a relational ontology that stabilizes through mutually constitutive material and discursive practices.

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Hollin writes, “Tsing argues that ‘[t]he ability to make one’s research framework apply to greater scales, without changing the research questions, has become a hallmark of modern knowledge’ (p. 38). Tsing is careful not to refer to scalable projects as ‘bad’ and non-scalable projects as ‘good’, but the reference to a ‘plantation’ mentality among those who ‘change scales smoothly without any change in project frames’ has obvious negative connotations. Instead, Tsing draws attention to ‘scales [that] do not nest neatly’ (p. 37), the frictions experienced when moving between scales, and encourages pause over what is lost in the transition between scales; those specific qualities which are valuable precisely because they are not scalable.”
Gendering the Pedal Harp

One of the oldest known instrument types, the harp has existed and continues to exist in diverse forms across cultures. More importantly, recognizing other harp traditions further destabilizes Western Europe’s cultural symbolization of its harp. With respect to gender-instrument relationships, both the Paraguayan harp and Western African kora flourish as male-dominated practices. The kora, in particular, descends from a smaller instrument called a doso ngore commonly used by hunter’s musicians. Sona Jobarteh, widely regarded for breaking boundaries as the first female professional kora player, explains that “men play the kora because the music played on it is tied to male activities, like hunting. … Because women give life, they should not take it away; men should be the ones involved in hunting and associated ceremonies. … In these ceremonies, the kora cannot be detached from its male role either.” The kora’s gendered tradition exemplifies one of many complex gender/musical instrument relationships that exist in cultures around the world.

The assignation of gender to an instrument, such as in the case of the kora or with the Western pedal harp, has often emerged through different functional, aesthetic, ritual, or physical associations with gendered humans or spirits. Ethnomusicologist Veronica Doubleday

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98 My use of “gender” in this section is not restricted to Eurocentric, binaristic gender categories of “male” and “female.” Instead, I am referring to any sociocultural group’s understanding of gender, particularly in consideration of societies that acknowledge the existence of three or more gender identities or normalize gender fluidity.
conjectures several models for understanding gender in both Western and non-Western musical practices.\textsuperscript{99} One is the “basic instrument-human relationship,” in which the interaction of an instrument and a human (usually its player) negotiates gendered identities of the instrument. Doubleday also introduces the “instrument-human-spirit relationship,” which includes the presence of a (usually) gendered spirit alongside a gendered instrument and a gendered human. Although spirits do not feature prominently in the pedal harp tradition, Christian icons, such as the Catholic Virgin Mary or Judaic King David, have affected the gendering of the instrument.

Other factors that influence the gendering of an instrument or musical practice include the structure and design of the instrument (e.g. inscriptions and carvings associated with “feminine” and “masculine” in a certain cultural group) or parallels between the sound of an instrument and a gender archetype (e.g. loud brass instruments evoke masculinity and therefore are to be played by men). In addition to physical associations with gender, Doubleday also mentions interplays of sexual power as an important site of gendering, such as restricting women to instruments appropriate for domestic spaces, instruments that physically position women for the pleasure of the male gaze, or instruments that subject their female players to subservient or accompaniment roles. Musical practices in many cultures—and particularly in Western Europe—have sprung from broader sociological observations of the regulation and development of technologies. Therefore, Doubleday notes that in studying “male dominance over musical instruments, two particular issues stand out: the manipulation of space as a male domain (especially public space), and the long-entrenched pattern of male control over technology” and “the tendency of existing gender roles to perpetuate unequal power relations.”\textsuperscript{100}


\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 18.
ethnomusicological approach to studying gender and the pedal harp, I will later explore this conflict of gendered power relations between male-dominated attitudes in the classical harp tradition and the feminine stereotyping of the harp. The study of gender and power relates to gender performativity, which bridges my philosophical readings of genderharp with more sociological, historical, or ethnomusicological approaches to gender and the harp.

Bridging “gender and the harp” with genderharp begins with tracing genealogy\textsuperscript{101}—mapping the pedal harp’s social history in Western Europe (primarily regions encompassing modern France, Germany, and Italy). First, the history of the double-action harp does not exist without implicating Western Europe’s social evolution between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Yeung makes this argument by tracing technological, economic, and cultural developments that influenced the gendered identity of the pedal harp. She asserts that the pedal harp’s feminization did not occur \textit{ex nihilo} but rather through the convergence of the harp’s aesthetic and physical development with changing social attitudes about women in Western Europe. During the medieval and Renaissance periods, for example, the non-pedal harp—since the pedal harp in question had not been invented yet—proliferated as the instrument of choice for minstrels and troubadours in Continental Europe. Yeung describes a general lack of clear gender and class disparity of harpists/harpers during this period. By the fifteenth century, however, harpmakers began developing increasingly complex mechanisms on the harp that, when intersected with the evolving social landscape in Western Europe,\textsuperscript{102} began creating new, gendered


The author describes use of genealogy according to Foucault: “The point of a genealogical analysis is to show that a given system of thought (itself uncovered in its essential structures by archaeology, which therefore remains part of Foucault’s historiography) was the result of contingent turns of history, not the outcome of rationally inevitable trends.”

\textsuperscript{102} Yeung, "Gender, Image, and Reception: The Development and Social History of the Pedal Harp," 25.
boundaries around the Western Europe harp tradition. Increased social divisions between men and women resulted in dramatic spatial divisions; women took charge of private life, and men the public. In addition to the gendering of space, Yeung argues that Renaissance and post-Renaissance perceptions of women, initially inspired by mariolatry (veneration of the Virgin Mary) and chivalric social codes during the medieval period, increasingly relied on polarizing biological, psychological, social, and moral differences between male and female genders. As figureheads of the introspective, delicate interior spaces, women turned to musical activity as a socially appropriate pastime. The harp, previously categorized as a bas instrument\textsuperscript{103} during the medieval period, possessed aesthetic sensibilities—particularly its soft, pleasing tone—that catapulted its status as an ideal instrument for women at this sociopolitical juncture. In addition, the difficult technical mastery of increasingly chromatic harps created a reputation of elitism around the instrument.\textsuperscript{104} This elitism, combined with the harp’s religious connotations, encouraged the harp as a symbol of social and spiritual transcendence.

Furthermore, technological developments in harp-making occurred within significant changes in the social, cultural, economic, and political landscapes of England, France, Germany, and Italy. Yeung argues that “the marginalization of the harp and its association with women was due to the increase of chromaticism in music and the construction of the role of women in western European society.”\textsuperscript{105} Following the non-pedal arpa doppia\textsuperscript{106} used by Claudio

Yeung cites re-impositions of the Lex Salica, a sixth-century Salian-Frankish legal code that prohibited women from inheriting land or succeeding the throne, as significant in developing a feminized domestic culture amongst Western European aristocratic women.\textsuperscript{103} In the medieval European musical tradition, bas instruments were considered “soft” and generally played indoors. Bas instruments included lutes, vielles, rebecs, harps, and recorders.\textsuperscript{104} Yeung, “Gender, Image, and Reception,” World Harp Congress Review 6, no. 2 (Spring 1999): 28.\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 25.\textsuperscript{106} The arpa doppia was a category that included double- and triple-strung harps in sixteenth-century Italy. These harps had multiple rows of strings strung parallel to each other.
Monteverdi in *L’Orfeo* and Georg Frederic Händel in *Alexander’s Feast*, the single-action pedal harp emerged in the eighteenth century, and pedaling technology created new and more chromatic possibilities in repertoire. The single-action harp particularly flourished in eighteenth-century France during the *Grand Siècle* and achieved peak popularity amongst French aristocratic women following the arrival of the Austrian princess and harpist Marie Antoinette to the French royal court. Harp makers began creating increasingly lavishly decorated instruments gilded in gold, hand-painted, and elaborately carved. This ornamental practice continues today in harp making:

As the pedal harp became associated with the restrictive stereotype of femininity in the eighteenth century, it became an indicator of status and refinement as well as an emblem of decadence and frivolity. It was valued more for its physical beauty than its musical capabilities, and it became a metaphor for femininity, determining its reception and proscribing its possibilities.

In 1810 French piano and harp maker Sébastian Érard patented the double-action pedal harp, the predecessor to the modern concert pedal harp. The larger size of the double-action pedal harp, along with more complex pedaling mechanisms and greater string tension, created new obstacles for female players. Dorette Scheidler-Spohr, one of the few female professional harpists active during the nineteenth century, famously struggled with the transition from the single-action harp to the double-action harp.

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The advent of the double-action pedal harp introduced new frictions between harp, women, and society. Yeung notes,

The interplay of social perceptions of women, men, musicians, and the harp created a chasm between the reality of the instrument and its symbolism. … Since the harp was associated with women, it was seen as emasculating for men to perform on it. Yet it required the performer to control many pedals and pull with great strength in order to accommodate the musical demands of nineteenth-century music. ¹¹⁰

During the nineteenth century, men dominated the professional double-action pedal harp scene. Critics praised the flamboyant virtuosity of influential male concert harpists, such as Robert Nicholas Charles Bochsa and Elias Parish Alvars,¹¹¹ while women “were instructed to confine their physical exertions when performing.”¹¹² Despite the shift in gender representation and the increased chromatic possibilities from the double-action pedal mechanism, the harp maintained a reputation as an ornament of femininity, passivity, and ethereality. Nineteenth-century


Rensch mentions that “in Frankfurt, hearing Parish Alvars again, Berlioz enthused anew. Parish Alvars was a magician; in his ‘passionate embrace,’ Berlioz wrote, ‘the harp becomes a siren, lovely neck inclined, and wild hair flowing,’ uttering the “music of another world. What other harpist could ever equal that?’ I contrast Berlioz’s description of Parish Alvars with much more passive description of American harpist Ruth Lorraine Close, enclosed in Maxwell’s in memoriam of Close: “A Paris reviewer of Ruth Lorraine Close (1896-1969) noted that she was ‘as good to look at with her picturesque instrument’ as she was to hear.”
orchestration treatises by composers Hector Berlioz\textsuperscript{113} and Nicholai Rimsky-Korsakov\textsuperscript{114} promoted the harp as an instrument of beautiful timbres in symphonic repertoire, with the former even emphasizing the harp’s especially ethereal effects. The harp often appeared in large ensemble works to evoke associations of transfiguration and redemption through acts of female martyrdom, as depicted by the musical language for the characters of Gretchen and Mimi in Franz Liszt’s \textit{Eine Faust-Symphonie} (1857) and Giacomo Puccini’s \textit{La Bohème} (1895), respectively.\textsuperscript{115}

This growing disconnect between the rapidly evolving, masculinized professional world of the harp and its static, feminized aesthetic led to a major crisis of identity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. At this point Yeung changes the emphasis of her research. Her work on the pre-twentieth-century social history of the harp focuses on the (pedal) harp as a point of friction; ideas about gender, social stratification, and aesthetic traditions converged and entangled with harp performance practices. Upon reaching the twentieth century, however, she shifts attention to increased representation of women as professional harpists and its effect on changing perceptions of the harp. She argues that the harp’s feminine reputation enabled the


Berlioz writes, “[The harp] is essentially anti-chromatic; that is to say, successions of semitones are, basically, not possible on it. … Nothing can be more in keeping with ideas of supernatural splendor or of religious rites than the tones of a great number of harps, ingeniously employed. … The strings of the highest octave have a lovely crystalline tone of voluptuous freshness, able to paint pictures of fairy-like delicacy and to whisper delicate secrets with lovely melodies. The \textit{harmonics} of the harp—particularly of many harps in unison—are still more magical.”


Rimsky-Korsakov writes, “In the orchestra, the harp is almost entirely an harmonic or accompanying instrument. … The tender poetic quality of the harp is adapted to every dynamic shade, but it is never a very powerful instrument, and the orchestrator should treat it with respect. … Harmonic notes on the harp have great charm but little resonance, and are only possible played quite softly. Speaking generally, the harp … is more an instrument of colour than expression.”

\textsuperscript{115} Franz Liszt, \textit{A Faust Symphony: In Full Score} (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003); Giacomo Puccini, \textit{La Bohème} (New York, NY: Kalmus, [n.d]).
inclusion of women as harpists—a role disparaged by men—in otherwise all-male orchestras.\textsuperscript{116}

In addition to the diversification of performer demographics, a renewed sonic role in symphonic and operatic repertoire, new compositional techniques established by French-American harpist-composer Carlos Salzedo, forays into the jazz scene, and a steady flow of commissions, expanded the harp’s musical breadth beyond the \textit{salon}.\textsuperscript{117} Ultimately, Yeung’s analysis of the pedal harp’s social history resists the undeniably toxic gendering of the harp, and her advocacy for new social perceptions challenges the preservation of the harp’s traditional, feminized aesthetic. These gendered representations of harps and female harpists may perhaps be rooted in the same misogyny and objectification of women perpetuated by generations of Western European public intellectuals—themselves first inspired by Aristotle’s own attitudes toward women: “Again, as between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject” (1254b12).\textsuperscript{118}

Yeung’s thesis and subsequent articles are some of the first pieces of scholarship to rigorously interrogate the relationship between woman and the harp as not “natural” but rather as


Burgemeister reports, “In the past, the [Vienna Philharmonic] has been forced to temporarily accept a female harpist, Anna Lelkes, because of the shortage of male harpists. When she performed, she was not mentioned in the programme or shown on television. The cameramen were told to focus on the male performers and only Lelkes’ hands made a momentary appearance. When asked about this, a Philharmonic spokeswoman said: ‘Her hands were only shown because the camera angles were different in those days and the harpist is in an awkward position. But you would need to be a technician to understand this.’” Perlez notes that Lelkes was one of the strongest opponents of women joining the orchestra even though she admitted once being told by the Austrian conductor Hans Swarowsky: “Your place is in the kitchen.”


\textsuperscript{118} Aristotle, \textit{Aristotle in 23 Volumes, Vol. 21}, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1944). I mention Aristotle since he is considered to be one of the founders of the Western philosophical tradition.
something *made* through a myriad of factors. The constructed-ness of the woman/harp relationship, however, does not necessarily imply social constructivism. As Yeung demonstrates, the feminization and marginalization of the harp resulted from contingent interactions between technology, society, and politics. Rather than continuing in this vein, she views these historical intersections as products of the past, using them mostly in dialogue with the present to empower creative agency in a postgender world.¹¹⁹ She writes, “the feminine association of the pedal harp is an important part of the harp’s history; it should be acknowledged, but it should not obscure the continuing evolution of that particular image. By examining and questioning ingrained archetypes, harpists can flourish and diversify without sacrificing the rich and varied history of the instrument.”¹²⁰ This statement suggests the capacity for critical distance between then/now or myth/reality, This distance, however, does not address *how* we get from then to now and from myth to reality. Furthermore, creating this distance can erase our awareness of and accountability to the toxic gendering that continues to occur in Western classical harp performance and pedagogical practices. Although the departure from gender might be hopeful step toward gender equality, it does not solve ongoing problems related to gender—in the same way that equal


Yeung writes, “The inclusion of women musicians in orchestras suggested that music could be genderless in performance and reception.” I would like to posit Yeung’s statement against Jane Burgemeister’s commentary on Vienna Philharmonic harpist Anna Lelkes’ own opposition to female musicians in the Vienna Philharmonic (see footnote 116) to highlight that complicated gender politics could remain *despite* growing representations of women. Focusing on the presence of women in orchestras does not address whether or not female musicians advocate for or act in solidarity with each other and/or other historically marginalized demographics. For example, Klemesrud reported in the 1970s that white female musicians in the Los Angeles Philharmonic conflicted with black orchestral musicians over the use of screens in auditions: “some black musicians have advocated the screen method for the Philharmonic, which now has only one black member, W. Sanford Allen, a violinist, who calls himself ‘The Philharmonic's Negro.’ Three of the women are lukewarm to the idea of a screen; the fourth is opposed.”

opportunity does not single-handedly erase the wide range of systemic discrimination that continues to occur in contemporary societies. In response to Yeung’s call to move beyond the harp’s feminine archetypes, I suggest shifting away from thinking of gender as ontologically distinct from the pedal harp and instead toward genderharp—the ontological, epistemological, and ethical entanglements of gender and the harp.

**Re-conceptualizing “Gender and the Harp” as “Genderharp”**

*Knowing is a direct material engagement, a practice of intra-acting with the world as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation. The entangled practices of knowing and being are material practices. The world is not merely an idea that exists in the human mind.*

- Karen Barad

Genderharp distinguishes itself from other readings of gender and the harp through its explicit use of critical theory, namely agential realism and posthumanist performativity. Although agential realism’s background in quantum physics may seem distant from the pedal harp, I have demonstrated that the diverse applicability of agential realism lies in Barad’s emphasis on methodological shifts. She reads Continental philosophies alongside scientific phenomena and theories to challenge existing methodologies, especially practices of representation, reliance on subject/object hierarchies, essentialism/naturalism, and binarism. She also has purposefully embraced and encouraged the transdisciplinarity of agential realism, evident through her substantial discussions of the posthumanist performativity of brittlestars,122

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121 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 232.
the feminist politics of the fetus,\textsuperscript{123} “mestiza consciousness,”\textsuperscript{124} and power relations in a Kolkata jute mill.\textsuperscript{125} Agential realism theorizes about and through science, but its focus on challenging the hegemony of rationalism, which certainly prevails outside of the natural (and social sciences), and re-imagining knowledge, identities, and bodies as entanglements have extremely useful applications in discussing the \textit{co-gendering} of the classical harp and harpist, co-gendering in Western classical music performance practices, and co-gendering in Western approaches to interpreting and teaching classical music.

Why have I chosen agential realism over gender performativity despite the latter’s more immediate applicability to “gender and the harp”? I began this chapter with an introduction to Judith Butler’s work as fundamental to re-thinking the relationship between gender and the body as performative rather than reflective. While gender performativity may have a more transparent relevance to the topic of gender and the harp, Butler limits her focus to the human body as a subjective agent mediating discursive structures created by human language and practices. Despite her insistence that bodies do create realities, she ultimately sequesters gender performativity into a theoretical space for and about the human. In “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” Barad articulates this very aspect of performativity’s limitation—the uncontested representation of the material through the discursive, enacted only through the subjective. Though Butler did not intend for performativity to be about constructivism (rather for it to be a critique of constructivist practices), simple understandings of gender performativity can often lead to the notion that gender is a social construct that can be willfully assembled and disassembled. In response to

\textsuperscript{123} Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 201-204.
\textsuperscript{125} Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 236-237.
these interpretations, Barad argues for a radical departure from human tools of construction—language, representationalism, and the “geometrical optics of reflection”—and turning to matter itself as locus of practice and action. This dynamic movement of matter is what Barad calls a “posthumanist performativity.” No longer referring to just iterative speech-acts by which humans imbue matter with meaning, a posthumanist performativity denotes matter’s ability to make meaning through itself, for it to act and morph beyond interventions of language and culture. Yet Barad does not advocate for a realist account of the world, which still relegates nature as fixed entities and culture as a mediating force. Instead she calls for a more integrated approach that considers:

A robust account of the materialization of all bodies—“human” and “nonhuman”—and the material-discursive practices by which their differential constitutions are marked. This will require an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena, an accounting of “nonhuman” as well as “human” forms of agency, and an understanding of the precise causal nature of productive practices that takes account of the fullness of matter’s implication in its ongoing historicity.  

Barad’s understanding of representation and performativity forges a crossroads for re-thinking the relationships between gender and the harp. While the harp’s gendering has visibly proliferated through cultural symbols and discourse, both gender and posthumanist performativities demonstrate that discourse entangles with, not imposes onto, matter. Matter does not merely reflect and passively embody histories and futures; matter is agential and makes histories and futures. The co-gendering of harp and harpist implies that acts of gendering do not only occur solely through human subjectivity, but that harp and harpist bodies constitute a

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127 Ibid., 810.
relationality to the point of materializing gendered realities. Social realities are, after all, lived. Therefore, genderharp abandons the more conventional approach to harp and gender—how human sociocultural systems have ascribed certain ideas of femininity onto the harp, with the female harpist as an unwitting by-product—in favor of investigating the co-gendering harp and harpist through classical harp performance practices.

In addition to its use of Barad’s theories, genderharp refers to critical ideas in feminist musicology, such as musicologist Suzanne Cusick’s concept of embodied music theory and a theory of musical bodies. Borrowing from Donna Haraway’s theory of situated knowledges, she problematizes the Cartesian mind/body problem in relation to interactions between composer/score and performer:

Thus, we stand to know music more intimately if we know it as a complex conversation of (situated) minds and (situated) bodies. … I think this sort of thinking will eventually be called by the name of whatever discipline gives it a home. Music theory seems one likely place for that home because … music theory has a long tradition of theorizing about the phenomenon that is music. In the modern era, speculation about music has not been the dominant strand of music theory—but it has never quite gone away either. And it is in that philosophy-oriented corner of the discipline that I would expect a theory of musical bodies to flourish.128

Cusick’s scholarly rumination answers an important question for my research: where does genderharp fit as an analytical and musical tool? Where does genderharp fit in the narrative of research on the pedal harp? Genderharp does not try to excavate unknown histories about female harpists or assert a more politically progressive stance on gender, nor does genderharp seek to pit “feminine” against “masculine” when studying harp music and performance culture. Ultimately, genderharp acts as a music theory because it involves, as Cusick says, the mere speculation about

music, and not only how we as humans respond to music. Genderharp speculates the emergence of gendered harps and harpists through the material-discursivity of diverse performance practices, which involves aspects of instrument technique, musical interpretation, historical contextuality, performance culture of the instrument, repertoire, or role of the instrument in small and large ensemble configurations, and comments on gender as a bodily expression—more specifically, a performativity—*not a cultural or social construct*. Furthermore, genderharp asserts the inseparability of gender in understanding the history, aesthetics, and politicization of the pedal harp, and therefore, underscores playing the harp as an ethical act of co-worlding. For a better understanding of this ethical music theory of bodies, genderharp take cues from Barad’s posthumanist performativity and agential realism. With the aid of Barad’s theories, I sketch some alternative pathways for thinking about gender in relation to the harp and more importantly, the performative relationship between gender, bodies, and concert harp performance traditions.

Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will focus on introducing Karen Barad and elaborating on her core ideas, their implications for reading gendered bodies as ethical relations, and finally, setting up specific applications of agential realism and genderharp on Georges Aperghis’ *Fidélité*.

**Karen Barad**

Feminist scholar Karen Barad currently holds the position of Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosopher, and History of Consciousness at University of California at Santa Cruz. Formerly a theoretical physicist, she participates actively in the field of science and technology studies (STS) in dialogue with continental philosopher, poststructuralist theory, feminist theory,
queer/trans theory, and new materialist theory. STS emerged as a discipline during the mid-twentieth century and primarily engages critical (interpretive) studies of science and technology as social institutions or social ramifications of scientific and technological practices and artifacts. Interested in challenging the impenetrable rationalism in scientific experiment paradigms, Barad formed her agential realist theory primarily from Niels Bohr’s theory of complementarity. Bohr, a Danish physicist active in the early and mid-20th century, contributed to early concepts of quantum theory, and his theory of complementarity carried controversial implications against Newtonian (classical) physics and Continental philosophies of rationalism and dualism, particularly those championed by the French philosopher René Descartes.

The theory of complementarity relies heavily on the double slit thought experiment, an experimental paradigm involving directing a physical phenomenon, such as light, toward a wall with two slits that could be opened and closed. During this experiment, light would either express through the slits, depending on their configuration, as a wave or as a particle. Bohr took this outcome to a philosophical level. Rather than arguing that light was either a wave or a particle, he asserted that light was both, and that wave-particle expression was contingent on the nature of the experimental paradigm, or apparatus. This assertion of contingency challenged ideas of the apparatus as an objective extractor and the experimenter as the objective observer; the outcome of an experiment, Bohr argued, was entangled with the materials involved in the experimental process.

Contingency and entanglement confronted two lines of philosophical inquiry: ontology (the nature of being) and epistemology (the nature of knowledge). Bohr’s complementarity challenged Cartesian dualism—the separation of matter (body) and mind, of subject and object—

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as both ontological and epistemological arguments. In a dualist paradigm, the body (Other, object) remains intrinsic, determinate, and fixed, and the mind (Self, subject) possesses the power of knowing and discovering the fixity of the body. The entangled world of quantum physics, for Bohr and Barad, demonstrated the possibility of an alternative ontological paradigm. Barad called this paradigm an “onto-epistemology” to recognize the merging of consciousness and matter into an entangled state. The crux of onto-epistemology lay in its de-privileging of human consciousness, for if the mind itself is an entangled state of being and knowing, it cannot perceive itself *a priori*. This de-centering of the (human) subject offers powerful implications for how we as humans interact with the world and things in and of the world.

Onto-epistemology also challenged other naturalized divisions; widely discussed divisions include nature/culture, human/non-human, and subject/object. In “Posthumanist Performativity” Barad tackles the language/matter divide:

What compels the belief that we have a direct access to cultural representations and their content that we lack toward the things represented? How did language come to be more trustworthy than matter? Why are language and culture granted their own agency and historicity while matter is figured as passive and immutable, or at best inherits a potential for change derivatively from language and culture?¹³⁰

Here, she interrogates the primacy of discourse over matter in creating both social and material realities. In this context, discourse refers to French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse. Foucault described “discourse” as codified language practices that shape human reality—how we talk and write about things eventually changes the way those

¹³⁰ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 801.
things are perceived.\textsuperscript{131} For Foucault tracing discourses reveals power relations (the groups who influence how we talk and write about things) through disseminated knowledge. Gender performativity, for example, emphasizes discourses of gender as the bases for defining gender, and Butler herself later amended her theory of performativity in the book \textit{Bodies that Matter} to better consider role of the material body (i.e. the performativity of sex). She writes, “[I] found that I could not \textit{fix} bodies as simple objects of thought. Not only did bodies tend to indicate a world beyond themselves, but this movement beyond their own boundaries, a movement of boundary itself, appeared to be quite central to what bodies ‘are.’”\textsuperscript{132}

While neither Foucault nor Butler deny that physical bodies play a role in the materialization of discourse, Barad takes issue with Foucault’s focus on the body only as a site inscribed and regulated by power structures:

Foucault does not tell us in what way the biological and the historical are “bound together” such that one is not consecutive to the other. What is it about the materiality of bodies that makes it susceptible to the enactment of biological and historical forces simultaneously? To what degree does the matter of bodies have its own historicity? Are social forces the only ones susceptible to change? Are not biological forces in some sense always already historical ones? Could it be that there is some important sense in which historical forces are always already biological? … For all Foucault’s emphasis on the political anatomy of disciplinary power, he too fails to offer an account of the body’s historicity in which its very materiality plays an active role in the workings of power.\textsuperscript{133}

In response to Foucault and Butler, Barad argues that matter and discourse do not dialogue independently, but rather they are mutually entangled as “material-discursive practices.”

Material-discursive practices consider two things. First, the material world is not mediated by

\textsuperscript{131} Michel Foucault, “The Formation of Objects” in \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 40-49.
\textsuperscript{132} Butler, \textit{Bodies that Matter}, ix.
\textsuperscript{133} Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 809.
discourse. Language is not the only medium that inscribes meanings onto bodies; bodies respond to linguistic and cultural structures, but bodies also inextricably shape those structures and are thus agential. Barad argues that discourse and material bodies emerge together; neither takes ontological precedence over the other. Discursive practices are also material practices, and vice versa.

Barad’s other major criticism of Butler and Foucault’s theories of bodies lies in their failure to acknowledge non-human bodies involved in the materialization of human bodies. Therefore, material-discursive practices also recognize bodies beyond human ones. By de-privileging the primacy of language (and thus human consciousness), material-discursivity highlights the dynamic role of bodies—both human and non-human—in creating realities and shifts the perspective from the body as a distanced subject to the body as a node interconnected with other bodies.

Dialoguing with these ideas by Bohr, Foucault, and Butler, Barad contests the philosophical, academic, and social hegemony of the scientific method, and more broadly, she challenges the concept of a rational, “truthful” objectivity rooted in separability (i.e. of matter/discourse and ontology/epistemology). Yet rejecting this philosophical paradigm extends beyond the radicalization of scientific methodologies. Though grounded in STS and the philosophy-physics of Bohr, agential realism is at its core an interrogation of knowledge systems that have—when confronted with rapid technological, economic, social, and political changes of the twenty-first century—reached limitations in engaging with issues of cyberpolitics, biopolitics and biotechnologies, globalization, capitalism, and ethics, but also queer theory, feminism, and post-colonialism.
What important knowledge would a discussion of these seemingly irrelevant topics even contribute to the discipline of classical harp? These lateral inquiries do not necessarily improve one’s skill as a concert harpist, reveal unknown knowledge about a historical harpist, composer, or method, or even “expand the boundaries of the harp”—a phrase repeatedly claimed by many innovative, contemporary harpists.

As a transdisciplinary study of gender, bodies, and the harp, genderharp uses agential realism to locate rich, active connections between the concert harp/harpists and, for example, capitalism, biopolitics, and post-colonialism, and to pursue a methodological resistance to systems taken for granted—practices grounded in complex histories and subjugated bodies and pedagogical language re-enforcing Western cultural imperialism and exceptionalism. Excavating these connections, however, first requires a rigorous understanding of agential realism and its philosophical impact on the aesthetic and social boundaries of the concert harp tradition.

**Agential Realism**

*Maximal knowledge of a total system does not necessarily include total knowledge of all its parts, not even when these are fully separated from each other and at the moment are not influencing each other at all.*

- Erwin Schrödinger

Barad builds agential realism’s theoretical framework on the following terms:

phenomena, intra-action, agential cut, apparatus, agency, and causality. Phenomenon indicates

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“the primary ontological unit,” “ontologically primitive relations,” and “the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting agencies.” In other words, the “primitive” nature of phenomena does not denote linearities of “micro” to “macro” so much as it describes a base state of indeterminacy. For Barad, phenomena possess the capacity for action prior to establishing ontological stability, the latter of which occurs through intra-actions and agential cuts. The nature of phenomena instead draws our attention to the processes that create perceived wholes that also do not have fixed boundaries. Barad calls these processes “intra-actions” (a neologism used in contrast with “interaction”). More specifically, she defines intra-actions as “the mutual constitution of objects and agencies of observation within phenomena.” Intra-action, contrasted with interaction, describes the movements of matter within indeterminate spaces rather than outside determined ones. Things engage and affect each other mutually; their boundaries are entangled instead of independently constituted. For example, to claim that the river and the ocean are separate entities with independent ecosystems ignores points of confluence that render indeterminate physical boundaries and enacts ecological “trespassing” (e.g. the phenomenon of salmon spawning draws together confluence of ocean and river “boundaries”).

Intra-action’s erasure of ontological separability dramatically re-defines philosophical concepts of agency and causality. Barad initially states, “agency is not something that humans and even nonhumans have to varying degrees. And agency is not a binary proposition, either on or off. … An agential realist understanding of the notion of agency entails a significant reworking of the traditional conception.” She argues further that “agency is about changing

135 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 139.
136 Ibid., 197.
137 Ibid., 172.
possibilities of change entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices in the enactment of a causal structure.”

Matter is agential, not because it possesses the will or consciousness to act, but because it is already constantly (intra-)acting. Attributing agency to matter also affects the nature of causality. Differing from the traditional paradigm of cause and effect, agential realism’s causality does not describe the condition in which one object must temporally and ontologically pre-exist the other to enact a causal relation. Therefore, agential realism’s causality is not about attributing one object as the “cause” and another as the “effect” and therefore placing more significance on the supposedly causal object. Instead causality simply outlines the agential effect of an object on another object; in Barad’s language, causality traces the marks left [by measurement] on bodies. This approach toward causality enables us to track the material genealogy of an object without denying matter’s agency.

Re-thinking the seemingly fundamental concepts of causality and agency profoundly affects some equally fundamental questions about the relationship between gender and the harp. Who has agency in gendering the harp? Conventionally, one might say that the sole responsibility lies in human hands and minds. If we set aside René Descartes’ famous phrase cogito, ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”) to consider Barad’s interpretation of agency, gendering the harp becomes an intra-action—a material-discursive entanglement of ontologically indeterminate things acting upon things. If the human no longer acts as the control center for making realities but instead participates, along with other material bodies, in acts of worlding, then gendering the harp constitutes causal marks on bodies, not cultural acts mediated by humans and human culture. Returning to Yeung’s account of the Western pedal harp’s social history, we

138 Ibid., 178.
must acknowledge that the harp’s technologies and performance practices have been inseparable from human gender and gender politics in the past and present. Anthropologist Anna Tsing has said, “making worlds is not limited humans,”\(^{139}\) to demonstrate that the workings of the world, even the workings of our (humanly) perceivable world, are not always within our (human) control. The increasingly complex interconnectivity and virtualization of the world inevitably changes how we as humans must consider the nature of reality, how realities emerge, and the roles of concepts like causality and agency in these inquiries. Though the harp is certainly a human invention, circulating in human societies and undeniably shaped by human cultures, we must consider the possibility that the making of the harp and its material-social identities is *not limited to* humans. Instead the harp acts as an agential body that negotiates the confluences of many things (each of which in turns constitute other confluences), including but not limited to gender, aesthetics, class, race, politics, economics, environment, globalization, and colonialism.

The co-constitutivity of agential realism ultimately challenges rationalist conceptions of ontology, epistemology, and objectivity in both positionings of social constructivism (belief in reality as mediated and thus relative) and scientific realism (belief in reality as a fundamental and separable essence). Barad introduces the term “onto-epistemology” to describe the entanglement of acts of being with acts of knowing; things only materialize through iterative negotiations of material-discursive boundaries. This total lack of ontological essence and centrality is difficult to grasp considering the pervasiveness of the dichotomous subject/object relations that has shaped much of Western European philosophy, culture, society, politics, and economics. Yet Barad specifically seeks to challenge this dichotomy because of its tendency to marginalize, subjugate, and alienate. A subject/object relationship establishes a center that holds its margins accountable

\(^{139}\) Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 22.
to it, generating power inequalities that often manifest as social injustices. If no center exists, what is objectivity? What might constitute “truth” in a post-truth society, or can the concept of a purely objective truth even exist? Turning to her scientific background, Barad argues that objectivity emerges within acts of measurement, and she identifies two vital players, the “agential cut” and the “apparatus,” in this process of “making” objectivity.

Barad’s case for onto-epistemology and objectivity-within-measurement begins with two controversial thought experiments in the history of quantum physics. In 1935 Albert Einstein and two other physicists published a document (referred to as the EPR paper) arguing that physical attributes of a system, such as spin or momentum, can exist intrinsically because of a lack of disturbance on the system during measurement. For example, measuring the length of a desk with a ruler does not disturb the physical properties of the desk per se. In response to the EPR paper, the Danish physicist Niels Bohr rebutted that Einstein and his colleagues had actually misconstrued the meaning of physical reality. Barad writes, “rather than a question of disturbance, what is at issue for Bohr in our understanding of the nature of physical reality is the objective resolution of the ontological indeterminacy between ‘object’ and ‘agencies of observation.’” Returning to the example of the desk and the ruler, Bohr would argue that the length of the desk, as measured by the ruler, does not exist until the ruler (“agency of observation”) encounters the desk (“object”). In another example—“if a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?”—Bohr might respond that “sound” emerges

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140 The EPR (Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen) paper originally rebutted Werner Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, which stated the impossibility of simultaneously measuring both position and momentum values of a particle. The act of measuring position, for example, would alter the momentum variable, thus yielding different results depending on the experimental arrangement. Heisenberg and Bohr shared the belief that intrinsic values do not exist. Nevertheless, Bohr believed indeterminacy, not uncertainty, was the crucial factor in the outcome of measurements. Therefore, he insisted that the measuring object (apparatus) plays an agential role in resolving the indeterminacy.

141 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 274.
only through the meeting of sound waves and an apparatus (e.g. the human auditory system) that can measure/process those waves. This particular example establishes a particular metaphysical stance by stating that sound is not actually reducible to its physical wave form, but alternatively, that sound is actually an onto-epistemology. Deducing these meanings within entangled material configurations involves the process of an apparatus measuring/observing, or agentially cutting, an intra-action.

In a physical experimental setting (i.e. a laboratory), the apparatus is a measuring tool, an “agency of observation.” Barad, however, argues that an apparatus is more than an epistemological tool because it enacts, participate, affects, and co-creates; the apparatus itself is also onto-epistemological. Therefore, objects themselves emerge alongside the apparatuses used to measure or view them. In the above example, the ruler is the apparatus. Apparatuses also do more than intra-act. They enact agential cuts—active landmarks, e.g. the moment of the ruler measuring the desk—that “resolve” the indeterminacy of phenomena and intra-actions. Therefore, apparatuses also implicate themselves in what Barad calls “a local causal structure” because they affect/cause ontological outcomes and also create “the condition for the possibility of the objective description of material phenomena” \(^{142}\) in the replicability of these outcomes:

Agential cuts are at once ontic and semantic. It is only through specific intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful. In the absence of specific agential intra-actions, these ontic-semantic boundaries are indeterminate. In short, the apparatus specifies an agential cut that enacts a resolution (within the phenomenon) of the semantic, as well as ontic, indeterminacy. Hence apparatuses are boundary-making practices.\(^ {143}\)

\(^{142}\) Ibid., 175.
\(^{143}\) Ibid., 148.
Apparatuses and agential cuts, however, do not render permanent boundaries. The resolution of an agential cut exists simultaneously without denying the possibilities that still exist through intra-actions. To better understand the ontological paradox of the agential cut, Barad employs a famous thought experiment in the annals of quantum physics: Erwin Schrödinger’s cat paradox. Schrödinger essentially posited this paradox to demonstrate that quantum “blurring” (entanglement) cannot translate directly at a macroscopic level. A macroscopic blurring, as described in the cat paradox, would involve the “smearing” of both alive and dead cat parts in the box. Schrödinger was more interested in the black box that produces a resolution—what enacts the cat’s change from entangled state (“superposition of eigenstates”) to a perceivable condition of dead or alive (“one of the possible eigenstates”)? Barad insists that the black box is measurement. In her philosophical nomenclature, an entangled state consists of constantly intra-acting phenomena, and the resolution of that entanglement is the agential cut, made by an apparatus on intra-actions. This agential cut, therefore, renders perceivable realities.

Perceivable realities extend from something as straightforward as an eigenstate to the ambiguities of gender and gendering of bodies. Gender does not simply constitute semantic or discursive issues; instead gender arises through performativities that also implicate real, physical bodies. Agential realism takes the concept of performativity, however, into a material paradigm.

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Schrödinger describes his “cat paradox” in the following way: “A cat is penned up in a steel chamber, along with the following diabolical device (which must be secured against direct interference by the cat): in a Geiger counter there is a tiny bit of radioactive substance, so small, that perhaps in the course of one hour one of the atoms decays, but also, with equal probability, perhaps none if it happens, the counter tube discharges and through a relay releases a hammer which shatters a small flask of hydrodynamic acid. If one has left this entire system to itself for an hour, one would say that the cat still lives if meanwhile no atom has decayed. The first atomic decay would have poisoned it. The $\psi$-function of the entire system would express this by having in it the living and the dead cat (pardon the expression) mixed or smeared out in equal parts.”

145 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 280.
An eigenstate can be simply defined as the state in which a variable (e.g. position) has a stable value. In the case of the cat paradox, Barad uses “dead” and “alive” as examples of stable variables.
by re-orienting ontological and epistemological states. A harpist’s bodily boundaries go beyond the fleshiness of muscle and skin, and a harp’s bodily boundaries beyond a wooden frame. In response, genderharp emphasizes that the gendered bodies of pedal harp and harpist materialize as intra-actions whose boundaries are then resolved through agential cuts. As a result, locating apparatuses becomes increasingly important. Apparatuses cut local causal structures, and in context of discussing gender and the harp, those local causal structures are what gender the harp and harpist. Rather than reflecting or responding to history, culture, society, or physiology, an agential realist perspective of the gendered harp and harpist asserts that the specific feminization of the harp emerges through specific agential cuts made by specific apparatuses in specific material configurations. Therefore, an effective critical response to the pedal harp’s feminine stereotypes relies on actually changing the material configurations that produce those stereotypes. In the context of this dissertation, I have designated performance practices as a form of material configuration. Thus, I have chosen to study the performance practices and compositional structure of Georges Aperghis’ *Fidélité: pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme* for the way in which its unique configuration of bodies cuts concepts of gender onto those very bodies.

**Introducing Fidélité: A Genderharp Case Study**

In the following two chapters, I will introduce the innovative style of composer Georges Aperghis and his work *Fidélité* as a genderharp case study. The same year I first read Karen Barad’s “Posthumanist Performativity,” I encountered a performance of *Fidélité* and was immediately fascinated by several things: the theatrical physicality of its technical demands;
Aperghis’s arresting musical language; and most of all, its tongue-in-cheek subtitle, *pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme* (“for solo female harpist to be watched by a man”). Even without the tools of critical theory, *Fidélité* initially struck me as a piece about bodies and the meaning of those bodies interacting with each other while inhabiting specific space(time)s. Though I could have chosen other theoretical avenues—Butler’s performativity or Deleuze’s assemblage—agential realism’s strong focus on ethics and the entangled accountability of human and non-human bodies seemed most compelling as a lens for reading gender and the harp in our current sociopolitical landscapes. This particular case study of *Fidélité* demonstrates how gender and the harp co-construct through material-discursive practices (harp repertoire and concert performance practices) and the political and, more importantly, the ethical significance of reading performance practice as agential rather than representational.

**Ethico-onto-epistemology: Agential Realism’s “Ethics of Exclusion”**

Indeed, ethics cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is a radical outside to the self."  
- Karen Barad

Barad’s invocation of ethics as part of an agential realist framework underlines important ethical concerns into the study of *Fidélité* and genderharp. In agential realism, ethics does not refer to a humanist ethics that explore a range of moral dilemmas extricating good from bad or right from wrong. As a result, my inquiry into the ethics of gender and the harp does not assign moralistic value judgments to stereotypes of gender. Despite knowing that acute feminization of

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146 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 178.
the pedal harp derives from imbalances of social and economic power in Western Europe, the
gendering of the harp demonstrates a fact of being, not a moralistic debate on determining
“good” or “bad” stereotypes. Therefore, the ethics queried in my reading of gender and the harp
stems from the stakes involved in the mutual gendering of bodies within acts of musical
performance; the entangled, affective relations between material bodies makes those bodies
accountable to the materializations of their actual beings. Gendering the harp becomes ethical
because of contingency, not because of subjective choices about the right or wrong ways to
gender (or not gender) the harp. Stipulating the moral significance of the harp’s gendering, while
important for certain strains of identity politics activism, does not necessarily seek to understand
why different communities might respond differently to the harp’s feminine stereotypes, or how
those stereotypes proliferate or weaken in different environments. Perhaps no singularly “right”
direction exists for the evolution of Western pedal harp’s cultural archetypes, belying the human
reliance on the concept of fundamental moral truth or its scientific cousin, rational objectivity.

Yet what kind of reality exists if objectivity becomes compromised? Barad does not
choose to resort to the anarchy of total relativism. Thus, she has argued that objectivity does exist
but only within local causal structures—what she calls an “exteriority-within”—and is never
dissociable or separable from those structures. This inseparability creates an ethics based on
entanglement; a thing is accountable to another thing because of their mutually affective
relationship. Therefore, Barad describes objectivity as “a matter of accountability to marks on
bodies. Objectivity is based not on an inherent ontological separability, a relation of absolute
exteriority … but on an intra-actively enacted agential separability, a relation of exteriority
within phenomena.”147 Agential realism rejects the idea of spatial separation as the ontological

147 Ibid., 340.
premise for objectivity. Barad calls this kind of distance “absolute exteriority”—attributing the formation of the internal to external forces. Nor does objectivity occur through the distance of “absolute interiority” that supports the foundations of essentialism and determinism. Objectivity does not emerge through the opposition of external and internal, or the distances enacted by the separation of culture and sex, of mind and body, of gender and sex, of the observer and the observed. Instead objectivity occurs through tracing effects enacted by intra-actions (agential separability) and the replicability of agential cuts enacted by apparatuses within phenomena.

Ultimately, Barad’s interpretation of objectivity decentralizes identity (hierarchies of internal or external, questions of what/who) and focuses instead on the inherently ethical process involving how things affect and are affected.

Therefore, agential realism’s onto-epistemology takes on this crucial ethical component—what Barad calls an “ethico-onto-epistemology.” The mutually constitutive ontology and epistemology of matter also implicates the accountabilities involved in making agential cuts. In “(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics,” Hollins and others describe this accountability as an “ethics of exclusion.” To better understand the exclusionary ethics of agential realism, however, we must return to Barad’s interpretation of Niels Bohr’s theory of complementarity. Barad cites Bohr’s example of a person navigating a dark room with a stick:

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148 Ibid., 174-175.
Barad writes, “in my agential realist elaboration, what replaces (Einstein’s favored) spatial separation as the ontological condition for objectivity is agential separability—an agentially enacted ontological separability within the phenomenon.”

149 Ibid., 176.
Barad further elaborates, “it is not that a preexisting entity receives a mark from a separately determinate entity but rather that the marking or specific materializing “effect” identifies the agencies of observation as agentially separable from its “cause” (the “object”) within the phenomenon.”

150 Hollin et al., “(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics,” 235.
Bohr explains complementarity by considering two mutually exclusive ways for a person in a dark room to usefully intra-at with a stick or cane: one possibility is for the person to use the stick to negotiate his way around the room by holding the stick firmly in his hands, in which case the stick is properly understood to be part of the “subject,” or he can instead choose to hold the stick loosely to sense its features, in which case the stick is the “object” of observation.  

The relative positioning of the stick—both subject and object but never acting as both simultaneously—resolves once “a cut is made.” In this case, the holder of the stick decides, through either a tight or loose grip on the stick, what kind of boundary gets cut around the stick. How does ethics fit in this scenario? First, the performativity of boundary-making practices implies someone and/or something is also responsible for making these cuts. Hollin and others write, “a focus on agential cuts is, therefore, generative of particular sets of ethical responsibilities; though matter itself has stability, it is still necessary to be accountable for the cuts that created this stability and grapple not just with the ethical consequences of these cuts, but with the constitutive exclusions that underpin them.”

Secondly, what does Hollin and others’ “ethics of exclusion” mean? The exclusion lies in the epistemological act of (agentially) cutting ontological boundaries. Once a cut is made, matter emerges as a stable, bounded form. Yet this cut does not simply measure what already exists a priori. Agential realism’s rejection of matter as pre-existent to measurement implies that agential cuts literally produce matter. Therefore, the specific material configuration of a single cut creates a specific boundary and excludes others. Yet this exclusion does not deny possibilities of other boundaries; it merely resolves indeterminacies at an individual, local level. If reality vis-à-vis agential realism indeed emerges through these exclusionary cuts, we must consider who/what

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151 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 154.
152 Hollin et al., 237.
makes these cuts, how these cuts occurs, and what these cuts produce. Hollin and others further postulate:

The ethical significance of agential realism, therefore, is not just in extending the idea that things “could have been otherwise” to the ontological realm but in conceptualizing the precise moments at which things congeal “as they are,” by understanding the processes through which particular material properties emerge and other realities are excluded from being.\(^\text{153}\)

Although Barad grounds her conceptualization of ethics in the microscopic phenomena of quantum physics, the important question is: how can we properly apply a theory based on the microscopic onto the macroscopic world? In response to jumping from quantum to classical mechanic scales, Barad writes, “rather it has become increasingly clear that the seemingly self-evidentiary nature of bodily boundaries, including their seeming visual self-evidence, is a result of the repetition of culturally and historically-specific bodily performance. [emphasis added]”\(^\text{154}\) Barad explicitly notes that her co-opting of quantum physical phenomena, such as diffraction and entanglement, does not act as a methodological metaphor when displaced from its scientific context, but in fact, she intends for these terms to literally describe the movement and behavior of both microscopic and macroscopic matter.\(^\text{155}\) Because of and also despite its scientific origins, agential realism’s entangled world of phenomena, apparatuses, intra-actions, and agential cuts provides a necessary, radical divergence from the spatial separation (i.e. reflexivity) and social

\(^{\text{153}}\) Ibid., 237.
\(^{\text{154}}\) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 155.
\(^{\text{155}}\) Ibid., 88.

Barad writes, “I emphasize that my [diffractive] method will *not* entail analogical argumentation. ... In this regard, it is important not to confuse the fact that I am drawing on an optical phenomenon for my inspiration in developing certain aspects of my methodological approach with the nature of the method itself. In particular, calling a method ‘diffractive’ in analogy with the physical phenomenon of diffraction does *not* imply that the method itself is analogical.”
hierarchies (e.g. assumed binaries of human/animal, self/other, male/female) that have created unviable, unequal spaces in contemporary society. Barad’s divergence from other paradigms of Continental ethics and philosophies ultimately grounds new ways of visualizing what bodies are and how bodies materialize identities (such as gender), and the inextricable, ethical stakes of simply being a body.

Conclusion

Evident through this chapter’s discussion of agential realism and its philosophy of ethics, my investigation of gender and the harp avoids arguing for a new identity politic delineated by aesthetic and cultural representation. I do not necessarily—and perhaps controversially—seek to create empowerment narratives for female harpists, nor do I write to champion literal interpretations of gender equality (i.e. more male harpists), diversify stylistic representations of the harp, or advocate for a more sexualized female image\textsuperscript{156} as solutions to centuries of patriarchal violence toward women. This violence continues to fester in professional circles that


In 2004, the Welsh newspaper North Wales Live published a feature on the Welsh harpist Catrin Finch, commenting that “not very long ago harp playing was more often associated with eisteddfodau [a Welsh literary and music festival] and background music than sultry album covers and leather basques. Thanks to Catrin [Finch], that's all changing. ‘My image is sexed up in a way that the elderly side of my fans can like as well,’ [Finch] says. ‘As a musician these days it’s difficult to keep out of that ‘sex’ thing because sex sells. Obviously I'm flattered if people fancy me and if you've got something, you may as well give it to them. … I'm not about to appear in the sea in a wet t-shirt.’”

I am not seeking to criticize the aesthetic decisions Finch made during the early years of her career. Her radically “sexy” look has modernized the public’s gendered perception of harpists and has broadened the appeal of the pedal harp for many audiences. Nevertheless, one must also consider the possibility that Finch’s (and other harpists’) efforts to re-work their professional images are more complexly related to a music career’s neoliberal demands and may not necessarily stem from the desire to combat inequalities embedded in social and cultural institutional practices.
participate in the Western classical pedal harp tradition, and aesthetic transformations of individual expression do not sufficiently respond to structural practices of inequality within these circles. In response, I use agential realism’s materialist, feminist philosophy to dissect these inequalities and to interrogate how material bodies affect each other rather than “get[ting] caught up in the geometrical optics of reflection where […] the epistemological gets bounced back and forth, but nothing more is seen.” Barad’s theoretical framework enables discussion of a historical artifact—the feminized harp archetype—beyond epistemological questions of how we as classical harp performers and teachers discuss its representation. As a result, agential realism allows us to view ourselves as bodies actively engaged with other bodies (instrument, musical works, spaces) and to recognize those engagements as creating material-discursive realities to which we are accountable. Though one might consider the topic of gender and the harp to be a historical or cultural study, I have chosen to take a philosophical approach in the effort to show that the harp’s fractured history with gender, in particularly with women, is not only of the past; this history is entangled with the present, blurring the distance between past and present.

PART II: “The Relationship Between a Woman and Music”
CHAPTER TWO: READING GEORGES APERGHIS
THROUGH CRITICAL THEORIES

This chapter reviews the compositional background of Georges Aperghis, contextualizes his work with trends in postmodern classical music and postmodernism in film and theatre, and explores the relationship between Aperghis’ compositional philosophy with broad ideas in postmodernist and post-structuralist intellectual movements. Following these discussions, I bridge the previous chapter’s explanation of agential realism with Aperghis’ use of rhizome/assemblage theory by French post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. As aforementioned in Chapter One, agential realism and posthumanist performativity also partly work in dialogue with the post-structuralist philosophers Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, and thus the connection between Aperghis’ and agential realism’ relationships with post-structuralism warrants an extensive examination. Finally, Aperghis’ use of rhizome and assemblage theories provides an important nexus for my reading of an agential realist theory of music, which introduces interpretive perspectives I will use in relation to my analysis of Fidélité in Chapter Three.

Georges Aperghis

Aperghis’s works have enjoyed the most success in Europe, and growing attention in North America to the idiosyncratic composer’s output have occurred in more recent years.158 His

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158 Grant Chu Covell, “Georges Aperghis and Die Hamletmaschine,” La Folia, June 2004, accessed October 12, 2019. http://www.lafolia.com/georges-aperghis-and-die-hamletmaschine/. In 2004 a critic wrote, “Georges Aperghis is relatively unknown in English-speaking North America.” Fifteen years later, Aperghis’ music has become part of the “contemporary music” canon, though mainly for percussionists and vocalists. This surge in popularity is indisputably a product to the
music has found the warmest welcome in North American singers and percussionists through his works *Récitations* (1977-1978)\(^ {159}\) and *Le corps à corps* (1978).\(^ {160}\) Born in 1945 in Athens, Greece to a sculptor and a painter, Aperghis did not pursue formal musical training until he moved to Paris in 1963. He describes himself as a self-taught composer, citing French electronic music composers Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer, and fellow Greek composer Iannis Xenakis as early compositional influences.

In the aftermath of World War II, Paris incubated France’s growing body of experimental art forms, from French New Wave film (e.g. the works of directors Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut) to the pop-art style of *nouveau réalisme* to *musique concrète* and Pierre Boulez’s compositional method of integral serialism. New literary trends in France also challenged older approaches to story-writing and re-conceptualized the novel. In the antinovel tradition, writers experimented with dialogue, character development, and narration to subvert conventional plot expectations. The *nouveau roman*, a literary genre attributed to the French writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, often placed objects, not humans, as the center of its stories to challenge “the ambiguous relationship of objectivity and subjectivity.”\(^ {161}\) Beyond fostering these experimental forms of the arts and literature, Paris also attracted some of the most prominent theoretical voices in the twentieth century that shaped the postmodernist and post-structuralist advent of the digital age. The advent of accessible, high-speed internet, social media, media-sharing platforms (i.e. YouTube, Spotify), and the overall shift to digitized media (Aperghis’ public and free distribution of his self-published works on his personal website) has enabled non-European performers to interface with him and his works more easily. My own exposure to Fidélité was facilitated by YouTube, the online availability of the score, and access to many of his other published scores through international library networks available through access to the internet. The very process of discovering Aperghis’s music is a postmodern phenomenon.


intellectual movements—Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida. Paris in the 1960s flourished with imaginative artistic and intellectual ideas, and it was in this moment of Paris’ cultural history that Aperghis began his musical journey. After encountering serialism and Pierre Boulez at Le Domain musical concerts, Aperghis discovered the music of Xenakis, which influenced Aperghis’ first composition Kryptogramma (1970). Kryptogramma’s exploration of sonic and rhythmic densities is perhaps the most explicit compositional relationship between Aperghis and Xenakis.

Aperghis’s foray into theatre emerged in his second catalogued work, La Tragique histoire du nécromancien Hieronimo et de son miroir (1971), premiered in 1971 at the Festival d’Avignon in Avignon, France. Based on sixteenth-century writer Thomas Kyd’s The Spanish Tragedy, Aperghis scored La Tragique histoire du nécromancien Hieronimo et de son miroir for puppets, female comedian/actress, mezzo-soprano, lute (or guitar), cello, and magnetic tape; this idiosyncratic style of instrumentation follows that of select works by Mauricio Kagel (e.g. Match (1964), Dressur (1977)) as well by John Cage (e.g. Sounds of Venice (1959), Water Walk (1959)).

In 1976 Aperghis and his wife Édith Scob (the actress who premiered Aperghis’s La Tragique histoire du nécromancien Hieronimo et de son miroir) founded the pillar of his early

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162 Founded by the French modernist composer Pierre Boulez in 1954, Le Domain musical was a concert society that promoted works by contemporary composer. Its first concert featured works by noted Modernists—Luigi Nono, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Igor Stravinsky, and Anton Webern—and in subsequent concerts, the society also featured music by Luciano Berio, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage, Mauricio Kagel, Bruno Maderna, and many others. Following Boulez’s resignation in 1967, his student Gilbert Amy assumed leadership of Le Domain musical until it dissolved in 1973.


career: L’Atelier Théâtre et Musique (ATEM). Initially located in the Parisian suburb of Bagnolet (1976-1991), then at the Theatre des Amandiers in Nanterre (1991-1997), ATEM focused on the creation of experimental musical theatre, and enabled Aperghis to develop his unique compositional style incorporating instrumental music, voice, language, theatre, art, satire/comedy, philosophy, and social critique. During his ATEM years (1976-1997), Aperghis completed one of his most famous works, *Récitations*, amongst other musical theatre pieces—*Jojo* (1990), *Sextuor: L’Origine des espèces* (1992), and *Commentaires* (1996-1997).\(^{165}\) Several other noteworthy, non-theatre pieces composed during the ATEM period include the oratorio *Vesper* (1971), *Le corps à corps* for solo percussion (1978), and the opera *Tristes tropiques* (1990-1995, after the anthropological text by Claude Lévi-Strauss).\(^{166}\)

Following his departure from ATEM, Aperghis has forayed in incorporating commentaries on technology and contemporary political issues into his theatrical works. *Migrants* (2016-2017), for example, explores the controversies surrounding immigrant communities in Europe; he describes the piece as looking “for ways to express the disappearances we are currently experiencing” and that he “want[s] to give a face not only to the drowned corpses which wash up on Europe's shores, but to the scores of the living wandering through Europe without an identity, no longer officially recognisable as alive.”\(^{167}\) Meanwhile, his “Machine Trilogy”—*Machinations* (2000), *Tourbillons* (2004), *Luna Park* (2011)—and the

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more recent *Thinking Things* (2018) move towards experimenting with relationships between human and non-human performers.\(^{168}\) *Luna Park*, in addition to implementing Aperghis’ fragmented approach to structure (the interaction of fragments establish form and narrative), also relies on the mutual reliance of human and machine bodies in making of sound and visuals; the use of motion sensor technology, for example, allows performers to actually produce sounds using hand gestures (with the assistance of specially-equipped gloves).\(^{169}\) *Tourbillons* (the 2004 version with visual media by Daniel Lévy) is a work for female voice that explores a woman’s loneliness by staging projections of the singer’s face onto two screens. In this piece, Aperghis focuses on the semantic tension that occurs when audience members are confronted by exaggerated fragments (via phonemes) and the visual exaggeration of the performer’s body (made possible through the two screens).

The first work in the trilogy, *Machinations*, scored for four female singers, introduced Aperghis’ interest in visual technologies. In *Machinations* he creates lively interactions between the singers, computer screens with which the singers interact, and a computer (operated by a man) that interferes with and controls both the women’s voices and their screens. As Aperghis would further develop in *Tourbillons* and *Luna Park*, the intersection of technology and music in *Machinations* does not simply refer a dialogue between the two at a distance—pitting man against machine. Instead, Aperghis thinks about the very real entanglements between technology

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and the production of bodies, a phenomenon that has increasing relevance in a contemporary
society constantly surveilled by both governments and corporations via diverse technologies.
Finally, his most recent work *Thinking Things* reflects on the blurred relationships between
robots and humans and the “musical poetic peculiar to electronics;” again, he draws on literal
blurrings by having performers wear robotic extensions, transforming the parameters of human
sensory modalities¹⁷⁰

These four pieces represent an important turn in Aperghis’ contemporary corpus toward
posthumanism, an intellectual movement that considers the role of the non-human either in,
outside of, or beyond the human. His attention to the entanglement of the human and non-human
and aspects of his existing compositional style that have been conducive to this entanglement are
vital in relating his music to agential realism, a theory particularly interested in the non-human.

Although Aperghis’ musical theatre often relies on human voices and gestures to
rigorously examine both the sonic and expressive possibilities of the human body, privileging the
human in musical encounters—whether with technology or interaction with a score—ignores the
fecundity of viewing the human as relations and within relationships with other humans and non-
human bodies. Aperghis’ relational approach to bodies and music, however, is as much
philosophical as it is compositional. Therefore, an effective understanding of his compositional
philosophy also requires an understanding of the critical theories that have shaped his musical
language. Later in this chapter, I will briefly discuss Edward Campbell’s analysis of Aperghis’
music through the Deleuzoguattarian concepts of the assemblage and the rhizome. Aperghis’

on/thinking-things.

“Aperghis arranges a huge robotic puzzle on stage: a robot with disconnected, scattered parts. But
this robot is not the replica of a human. In Aperghis’ stage world, humans have robotic aspects and robots
possess human features.”
primary biographer Evan Rothstein has also written (in French) comprehensive analyses of
Aperghis’ compositional style in context of rhizome theory, and to a lesser extent, of some ideas
by another French post-structuralist philosopher Roland Barthes.\(^{171}\)

More recently, the composer Jason Buchanan has very briefly related sociologist Bruno
Latour’s Actor-Network theory (ANT) to the relational structuring of performers and sound in
*Luna Park*. Latour’s ANT, which Buchanan borrows as a “useful analytical tool to map and
attempt to explain relationships and interactions between both human and non-human actors,
explores how material-semiotic networks are formed, hold together, or fall apart,”\(^{172}\) is
commonly included in posthumanist dialogues. ANT argues that social and natural worlds
consist of networks of agents that create realities through relations; like agential realism, ANT
emerged in and has had the most immediate relevance in science and technology studies.
Buchanan’s reference to ANT creates an extremely important scholarly connection for reading
Aperghis beyond Deleuze and Guattari and through the lens of contemporary posthumanist
theories.

Despite the topical relevance of posthumanist ideas in Aperghis’ more recent,
technology-themed works, the influence of Deleuze and Guattari on earlier compositions, such as
*Fidélité*, still creates important theoretical precedence for an agential realist approach to
Aperghis’ compositional style. In the next section, I will discuss trends in postmodern theory,
postmodern art and music, and post-structuralist theory that offer insights on the style and ethos
of Aperghis’ late twentieth-century works. It is important to note, however, that Aperghis’ own
music may not fall strictly into any of these trends; a more productive endeavor maps the effects
of aesthetic commonalities rather than the certainty of a categorical label.

Aesthetic Trends in Postmodernism and Post-structuralism

The word “postmodern” comes from the 1979 book by the French philosopher and theorist Jean-François Lyotard in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Lyotard demonstrates several key postmodern ideas in this text, namely the dissolution of the “grand narrative” and the diffusion of universalism, both which constituted a significant portion of modernism’s foundation. Postmodernism coincided with several large social phenomena, such as rapidly advancing post-war technologies, scientific research, and computerization, the dawning of the informatics age, the mass production and consumption of popular culture, late capitalism, and the gradual cessation of pre-twenty-first-century Western European colonialist empires. Postmodernism evolved in the face of an increasingly complex world, in which technology, media, and capitalism have erased contact with the “real” and substituted reality with imitations of reality. These imitations, or what the philosopher Jean Baudrillard called “simulacra,” proliferate to the point of ceasing to refer to a natural reality. This break between simulacra and their referents then defines how reality supposedly exists in the postmodern condition. Another main feature of postmodernism lies in the disruption of truth-narratives; rather than defining one grand narrative, “truth” constitutes multiple perspectives.

In visual art, postmodernism’s resistance of universalism and essential truth influenced a broad range of styles, from the ironic pop art of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol to the feminist performance art of Marina Abramović. Postmodernism in film challenged the truthiness

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and continuity of narratives, producing works such as the Woody Allen’s pastiche mockumentary *Zelig* (1983), David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986), and the Wachowskis’ *The Matrix* (1999). In *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies*, Susan Hayward defines the postmodern aesthetic as either pastiche or parody:

> Whether mainstream or oppositional, the postmodern aesthetic relies on four tightly interrelated sets of concepts: simulation, which is either parody or pastiche; prefabrication; intertextuality and bricolage. What separates the two tendencies is that the oppositional postmodern aesthetic experiments with these concepts and innovates through subverting their codes, whereas the mainstream postmodern aesthetic merely replicates them. Hence the need for two distinguishing terms for the first concept, simulation: “parody” and “pastiche.” Parody is the domain of oppositional art. Pastiche pertains to the symptomatic in that it imitates previous genres and styles, but, unlike parody, its imitation is not ironic and is therefore not subversive. In its uninventiveness, pastiche is but a shadow of its former thing (parody). Postmodern art culls from already existing images and objects and either repeats or reinvents them as the same.

Though Hayward’s contextualizes her definition of the postmodern aesthetic in cinema, the characteristics remain consistent across other visual and performing arts. Postmodern theatrical works, for example, also emphasize pastiche or parody, fragmentation, multi-linear perspectives, and skepticism of history, teleology, and truth-narratives. Other common techniques might include more prominent use of the virtual and electronic technologies (a key differential factor of postmodernism) engaging in self-reflexivity through auto-ethnographies (e.g. Caryl Churchill’s

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Postmodernism in Western classical music, however, often refers to stylistic trends that responded to modernism, and postmodern classical music, while encompassing a gamut of compositional signifiers, captures more of a sensibility than defines any sort of genre. This sensibility can therefore traverse genres and temporal boundaries, particularly when one applies a postmodern perspective to or finds postmodernist tendencies in a work of music written prior to the late twentieth century. Music theorist Jonathan Kramer, who has written extensively on perspectives and aesthetics of postmodern Western classical music (not to be confused with postmodernism as a critical theory), opines that “the postmodern attitude” through the presence of the following (including but not limited to): irony, discontinuity (in form, tonality, style), blurring of art and popular musics, intertextuality, referentiality, multiplicity, and fragmentation. Kramer suggests that the postmodern attitude is decidedly a rejection of

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Intertextuality is a theoretical concept widely associated with Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and French feminist theorist Julia Kristeva. Kristeva initially conceived of “intertextuality” through Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism, which argued that language, particularly speech, is comprised of multiplicitities, rather than derived from a single source. Kristeva’s intertextuality described text “as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity.” Therefore, intertextuality subverts the notion of single authorship by insisting that all texts emerge through each other. Beyond language, intertextuality can describe other phenomena as “text,” such as musical scores, technologies, and even political and economic structures.

modernism (i.e. anti-modernism) but rather an extension of modernism in music that readily implicates diverse technologies and listeners in processes of creating and performing music.

Although Aperghis certainly falls within the category of “postmodern composers” categorizing his works based on checking off Kramer’s definitive list of what constitutes “postmodern classical music” only accomplishes defining his music, not exploring what his music does. Aperghis himself is extremely interested in the social and political possibilities of musical theatre—as seen in his work Migrants—which often inspires an equally social and political, rather than strictly musical, interest in his music.

While I acknowledge the importance of contextualizing the postmodernist sensibilities in Fidélité’s musical style (i.e. irony, fragmentation, discontinuity), this kind of musical analysis fixates on a hermetic interpretation of classical music but does not necessarily engage in any explicit social or cultural critique. Because the objective of my dissertation lies in critiquing the formation of gendered bodies, I have found aspects of post-structuralism, a philosophical movement overlapping with postmodernism, to be more useful for studying Fidélité. Perhaps not so coincidentally, Aperghis was also deeply inspired by post-structuralism, particularly the collaborative works of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and developed specific compositional approaches based on Deleuzoguattarian theories. Furthermore, because of post-structuralism’s significant role in Aperghis’ compositional philosophy and its partial influence (via theorists Judith Butler and Michel Foucault) on agential realism, I will also explain some key takeaways of post-structuralism and its impact on Aperghis’ music.

Often considered a branch of postmodernism, post-structuralism was an intellectual movement that emerged in mid-twentieth-century France and has since influenced contemporary ideas in posthumanism, feminism, queer theory, and post-colonialism. Like the “post-” in post-
modernism, the “post-“ in post-structuralism indicates moving beyond, but not a rejection of structuralism, per se.\textsuperscript{180} Post-structuralists were broadly interested in re-framing the idea that human behavior subscribed to set of inherent, universal structures, such as in society and language. Instead of pre-existing and defining human societies, structures were considered to be fragile, unstable, and constantly negotiated by systems of knowledge (discourse). In addition to their general critiques of structure, theorists often categorized as post-structuralists often contested the presumption of binaries in natural opposition, which challenged concepts of naturalism (nature/culture), gender (male/female), and rationalism (body/mind). Key figures in the post-structuralist movement include Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Judith Butler.

The heart of post-structuralism, like that of post-modernism, lay in contesting the uncontestable agency of the individual, the hegemony of universalism, and grand narratives, and the philosophical nature of truth. In film and theatre, for example, post-structuralist ideas shifted the totality of auteurism, a theory that viewed the director as possessing a god-like, creative power behind a film. Hayward refers to some examples of post-structuralism’s influence on cinema through the introduction of the “textual subject—that is, subject positions within the textual process, including that of the spectator and the auteur—and the text as a series of signs producing meanings.”\textsuperscript{181} In the context of auteur theory, a post-structuralist perspective de-centers the director, re-situating him/her/they as a textual subject within an intertextuality; rather

\textsuperscript{180} The basic idea of structuralism is that underlying structures shape behavior and meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky were key figures in structural linguistics (both believing that language structures determined human speech, not vice versa), and Claude Lévi-Strauss championed structuralist perspectives in anthropology. The philosopher Michel Foucault often appears alongside other structuralists, but his ideas do not necessarily fit neatly into either structuralism or post-structuralism; his works often behave as pivots between structuralism and post-structuralism.

\textsuperscript{181} Hayward, 25-26.
than constructing the film, the director is instead mutually woven within the film and between actors, screenplay, lighting, set design, and audience. Despite its origins in film studies, auteur theory plays a role in the discussion of Aperghis in relation to his music and performances of his music. In Chapter Four, I will specifically interrogate Jason Buchanan’s positioning of Aperghis as an auteur, which endows a kind of omnipotence in the composer’s interpretation and staging of works.

As demonstrated in auteur theory, thinking about post-structuralism in context of the arts and classical music demands some rigorous epistemological criticisms of accepted narratives in human phenomena, such language, race, class, gender, and the flows of power inevitable in discursive structurations. If underlying logical structures cannot explain human behavior, what alternative paradigms exist? How did some post-structuralists, though acknowledgably limited as Western philosophers responding to Western philosophy and society, re-imagine ways for human beings to interface with a world without a fundamental essence? Derrida’s deconstructionism, in response to movements like structuralism, suggests that texts have no inherent, logical meaning but can be dismantled to reveal endless layers of relations. Foucault’s biopower and use of genealogy questions the ways in which we accept and embody institutional knowledge, and Baudrillard’s simulation/simulacra theory re-situated our relationship with history and historical

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182 Buchanan, 55-57.
183 A more consistently post-structuralist interpretation of the auteur would be Hayward’s “textual subjects” or in Barad’s theory, as “intra-actions” of phenomena.

Harcourt explains, “Post-structuralism builds on the notion that meanings are derived from relations of difference, that these are largely subconscious, and that they form a structure. But it emphasizes the gaps and ambiguities in the structure of meanings. … Poststructuralism resists, then, the fourth tenet [of structuralism]: structures of meanings are not universal, and do not reflect ontological truths about humans or society. Poststructuralists focus on those gaps and ambiguities in the system of meaning and find meaning there. The inquiry is, in essence, flipped on its head: the idea is not to find regularity, but instead to probe what the ‘discovered regularity’ could possibly mean.”
artifacts. Butler’s performativity radically shifted our understanding of gender, and Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblage and rhizome theories interrogated the hierarchical ontologies of “center” and “margin.”

In summary, post-structuralists, like post-modernists, created theories that sought to destabilize the very idea of essence, such as the concepts of universal archetypes and signs that shape human society, the reduction of human behavior to biological and physiological phenomena, or even more broadly, the very notion that anything can exist within or solely in relation to itself. In Western classical music, post-structuralism has appeared in the form of deconstructionist methodologies, such as in experimental notation styles as deconstructions of the classical score,185 or musical analysis that deconstructs Western classical harmonic language (e.g. diminished chords as “unstable”) or implicit relationships between text and sound, such as Susan McClary’s dissection of weak “feminine endings” in music.186 Aperghis joins many other late twentieth-century/early twenty-first century composers, such as (but not limited to) Earle Brown, John Zorn, and Christian Marclay,187 who used graphic or collaborative notational systems and wide ranges of improvisatory events to disrupt the material structures of music composition. While post-modern attitudes in classical music have generated a varied aesthetic compositional language in response to the epistemological hegemonies that had shaped the very

185 Christoph Cox, Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 62.
   Cox argues, “Shattering the temporal logic of the traditional score, graphic scores are no longer virtual containers of sound that preserve register, or record a sonic form or event that precedes them or prescribe a determinate performance that follows from them.”
186 McClary, Feminine Endings, 10-11.
   Some score examples of non-traditional Western notational systems include Earle Brown’s December 1952 (1952), Christian Marclay’s sound project/art installation Graffiti Composition (1996), and John Zorn’s improvisatory “game piece” compositions (e.g. Hockey (1978)).
identity of “classical music,” applying specific post-structuralist theories in classical music adds another layer of addressing the fragile, unstable structurations behind those hegemonies.

Although the stylistic characteristics of Aperghis’ music certainly fall within the boundaries of the postmodern classical music sensibility, his compositions often do not simply confound musical ideologies, but they also interrogate the formation of those ideologies. For example, the deconstruction of language and text in his musical theatre works does not only dissolve traditional forms of linguistic narrative, but the deconstruction ultimately serves to reconstruct the means by which narrative takes form. The intertextuality of pastiche, collage, and bricolage—in addition to confounding the notion of an original work—addresses the citationality of texts and that a text, such as a musical work, only consists of iterative relations with other texts. Aperghis also uses fragmentation to disrupt formal structures contingent on linear development. The juxtaposition of fragments as the underlining structure of a piece creates unexpected meanings from friction and difference rather than meanings that rely on fragments mediated by a pre-existing structure. Finally, his common practice of fusing performer and character demonstrate the displacements of both performer’s and character’s historicities; historicity is not fixed and perpetually traceable from an origin. For example, in Fidélité the female harpist as “female harpist” shifts the performer’s enactment of a certain historicity (the history and tradition of female pedal harpists) to a commentary on that historicity as an actively performative phenomenon.

While strands of post-structuralist theory may have found their way into Aperghis’ music in light of broad intellectual, cultural, and artistic trends during the late twentieth century, one cannot ignore his mutually impactful friendship with the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari (highlighted in the interview excerpt below). Guattari, widely known for his
scholarly collaborations with another French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, first discovered Aperghis’ music at ATEM in 1976:\(^{188}\):

Flore Garcin-Marrou: Votre travail a-t-il été influencé directement par Guattari? (Was your work directly influenced by Guattari?)

Georges Aperghis: Au début, non. Comme je l’ai dit, je travaille intuitivement. Il était difficile pour moi d’être tout à fait conscient des questions que pouvait soulever ma musique. Guattari, lui, de l’extérieur, relevait dans mes spectacles des points communs avec sa philosophie. C’est ce qui a créé notre rencontre. Le fait que Guattari s’intéresse à mes spectacles m’a conforté: j’y ai trouvé des appuis philosophiques, psychanalytiques. Ce qui était au stade d’embryon dans mes pièces a pris de l’ampleur, après la lecture de Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure, car ce livre m’a donné des armes plus théoriques. Un compositeur n’a pas besoin de trouver une justification intellectuelle, mais il ne peut être qu’heureux quand il trouve des compagnons de route. Il est bon de ne pas se sentir complètement seul dans l’époque assez difficile que nous vivons aujourd’hui… Avec Guattari, c’était du compagnonnage, qui me donnait du courage. Je pense que pour Guattari, c’était la même chose: c’est pour cette raison qu’il sortait beaucoup. Il était à l’affût d’appuis ou de compagnonnages possibles avec ce que faisaient les gens. C’est quelqu’un qui a compté beaucoup, et qui compte encore aujourd’hui. En 1992, j’ai composé Ritournelles, hommage après sa mort, inspiré des conversations que j’avais eu avec lui.

(At first, no. Like I’ve said, I compose intuitively. It was difficult for me to be totally conscious of the questions that my music raised. Guattari, from his outside perspective, pointed out similarities between my performances and his philosophy. This is what led to our first meeting. The fact that Guattari was interested in my work was affirming: I had philosophical, psychoanalytical support [for my concepts]. After reading [Guattari and Deleuze’s] Kafka, I found more theoretical tools for developing what had been only an embryonic idea in my works. Although a composer does not need to find intellectual validation, he is happier when he finds fellow travelers. It is good to not feel completely alone in these difficult times in which we live… Guattari’s friendship gave me courage, and I think he felt the same, which is why he often came out [to events]. He was always looking for possible support or solidarity in the other people’s works. He was a significant individual, and still is one. In 1992, I composed Ritournelles, inspired by our conversations, in memory of him.)\(^{189}\)

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\(^{188}\) Aperghis, “Organiser le chaos,” 40.

\(^{189}\) Translation by Noël Wan.
In *Music After Deleuze*\(^ {190} \) and “Music-Becoming-Animal in Works by Grisey, Aperghis, and Levinas,”\(^ {191} \) contemporary music scholar Edward Campbell traces the relationships between Aperghis’ compositional style (particularly in *Avis de tempête* (2004)) and Deleuzoguattarian concepts, such as the assemblage. Campbell defines the assemblage as “composed of all kinds of heterogeneous elements, drawn from a variety of milieus, which are distinctive parameters or dimensions of a phenomenon.”\(^ {192} \) This interpretation of the assemblage seems to refer to: 1) the intertextuality commonly found in postmodern classical music and particularly the tendency for postmodern composers to reference to a wide range of literary, musical, and cultural material; and 2) heterogeneity replacing hierarchical continuities in the structure of the piece. Campbell takes the intertextuality of the assemblage beyond the musical score and into actual performances and performance practices. He argues that heterogeneous elements of a musical theatre assemblage include “developments in vocal writing, experimental approaches to narrative and text, plurality of interpretation, mobile elements, multiple stages, lighting, multimedia, electronic sound, dance, new musical idioms, variable instrument forces, and so on.”\(^ {193} \) Campbell also writes:

[Aperghis’ compositional process] has its origins variably in improvisation, in elements that are deterritorialized from a previously composed piece, from aspects of scenography pertaining perhaps to staging, lighting or technological possibilities, from a text, or from all of these at once, and this is then worked on and fixed in more or less definitive form during an intensive period of rehearsal. … No order of events is fixed at the outset, since these are assembled in the course of rehearsals through explorations a great number of possible juxtapositions of materials until the pieces emerges. The texts that are used may be original, taken from elsewhere or a mix of the two, in existing language or composed of sounds that belong to no known human language, in paragraphs, sentences, words or merely phonemes. A “Deleuzian ‘patchwork’” is formed through variation of a restricted

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\(^{190} \) Edward Campbell, *Music after Deleuze*, 52-59.


\(^{192} \) Campbell, *Music after Deleuze*, 52.

\(^{193} \) Ibid., 52-53.
number of elements, including the kinds of sounds, words and objects that are often rejected as lacking in value, and Aperghis likes to misappropriate objects, ideas, texts, language, sounds, images and the rest, deterritorializing them from their ordinary contexts and watching as they reterritorialize in new and unexpected ways.\footnote{Ibid., 54.}

The assemblage, developed by Deleuze and Guattari in their book \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, describes an ontological model predicated on relations between things.\footnote{Thomas Nail, “What is an Assemblage?,” \textit{SubStance} 46, no.1 (2017), 24-25, accessed September 24, 2019, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/650026/pdf.} While the parameters of the model are extremely complex, at a rudimentary level, an assemblage comprises non-abstract, heterogeneous phenomena (i.e. language, human bodies, roads, molecules) that arrange themselves in \textit{contingent relation} to each other.

Likewise, as Campbell indicates, Aperghis constantly de-territorializes compositional elements within his works, or perhaps I might even conjecture that the actual components of his works are actively de-territorializing within their performances. *Fidélité* particularly demonstrates the de-territorialization of the female harpist from her historically-specific position by having her perform a jarring, “unfeminine” sonic language; she then re-territorializes from the role of cultural archetype/symbol to a performer-character negotiating her femininity through her gestures, voice, and musical performance.

By co-opting elements of Deleuzoguattarian theory, Aperghis creates a distinct compositional approach that encourages lateral movement and development, a complex relationality between human and non-human players, and the departure from direct representation in textual references. Instead of emphasizing formal, harmonic, or mathematical structures—such as defined many musical movements in twentieth-century Western classical music (e.g. serialism, minimalism, some types of aleatoric/indeterminate music)—a rhizomatic approach understands the musical work as both part of and itself constituting an extremely expansive, de-centered network of relations and explores the significance of those relations.

This does not imply that rhizomatic compositions must be totally un-structured, or that indeterminate works involving a performer’s intervention are relational and therefore rhizomatic. I would argue that a rhizomatic work considers itself in a constant state of becoming and thus cannot exist *sui generis*. In the case of *Fidélité*, the musical work relies on its players (female harpist, harpist, male actor) and their genealogies; the meaning of the work and even its sounds are totally entangled with the meanings of the performers.

This process differs from, for example, a polyvalent work like Morton Feldman’s *Intermission 6*, which requires the performer to organize the piece but whose sounds are meant to
exist intrinsically, or what Feldman referred as “sounds themselves.”198 In the context of current dialogues in sound studies, philosopher and media theorist Christoph Cox’s work on the posthumanism, sonic naturalism, and the sonix flux199 would perhaps be sympathetic to Feldman’s conceptualization of “sound themselves,” yet Cox’s quasi-realist conceptualization of sound as a vitalized, material power, rather than a perpetual entanglement of matter and discourse, has received criticisms from sound scholars Annie Goh and Marie Thompson for its “white aurality” (Thompson) and its disregard for positionality (Goh).200

My reading of Fidélité, however, conflicts with Cox’s sonic flux and Feldman’s “sounds themselves” because Fidélité is a musical work created and bounded both by the materialities of sounds and bodies, not to mention the social codes explicitly enacted through its performances. Therefore, for the sake of taking a posthumanist and feminist stance, I advocate that rhizomatic behavior of sound and performers in Fidélité illustrates heterogeneity as entangled partialities rather than using heterogeneity to justify the separable autonomy of objects.

198 Catherine Costello Hirata, “The Sounds of the Sounds Themselves: Analyzing the Early Music of Morton Feldman,” Perspectives of New Music 34, no. 1 (1996): 6-27, accessed February 2, 2020, doi: 10.2307/833482; Morton Feldman, “Autobiography/Autobiographie,” in Morton Feldman Essays, ed. Walter Zimmerman (Cologne, Germany: Beginner Press, 1985), 38. Hirata speaks of struggling to understand Feldman’s idea of playing sounds as “the sounds themselves” and divorced from the compositional rhetoric (e.g. functional harmony) that many Western classical musicians are trained to hear pitch relations. I bring up this tangential point to say that perhaps sound cannot exist on itself and that perhaps, especially in an open-form work, the context of the performer and the performer’s ear inextricably influences the way indeterminacies become resolved. The difference between Feldman’s “sounds themselves” and Aperghis’ disconnected sonic fragments lies in the latter’s belief that fragments take on meaning in encounter and the former’s desire to discover a kind of essential nature to sounds.


Aperghis’ rhizomatic logic ultimately creates what I call a “becoming-music”—a music that is constantly in the state of (re)-genesis, disrupts the teleology of the score, and invites multiplicity in the compositional process. Because Aperghis resists the arboreal logic of binarism and linear hierarchies, his works are actually difficult to effectively interpret through, for example, the lens of modernism and instead thrive in theories that emphasize relational ontology. These theories include but are not limited to Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, and Barad’s agential realism. Even though Aperghis’ music has a unique relationship with Deleuzoguattarian theory, a rhizomatic logic also embraces the possibility of the rhizome breaking off and growing into different directions from its own fragmented parts. In a truly rhizomatic manner, one idea branches out and blossoms into another without the need to refer to a root/origin. My own reading of gender in *Fidélité* responds better to reading Aperghis’ rhizome, not hermetically, but *through* agential realism and other feminist theories of embodiment and gender. As a result, this methodological perspective legitimizes an agential realist reading of Aperghis’s compositional practices.

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201 Aperghis, “Organiser le chaos,” 42.

Aperghis describes his rhizomatic method of composition: “J’ai composé avec, à l’esprit, cette logique rhizomatique. Au XIXe siècle, la musique était une arborescence, avec un tronc, des racines, des branches, des feuilles et des fleurs. C’était un développement qui partait d’un début (les racines) et qui s’acheminait jusqu’à la naissance des pommes. Avec le rhizome, la musique est un bout de mauvaise herbe qui mange une autre mauvaise herbe. Elle suit une horizontalité cassée, traversée de transversalités, de devenirs qui se développent en parallèle et viennent à se croiser: tel homme peut avoir un devenir-chien, tel autre, un devenir-arbre.”

(I composed in this spirit of a rhizomatic logic. In the nineteenth century, music was like a tree, with a trunk, roots, branches, leaves, and flowers. This structure emerges from the roots, which in turn grows and develops the tree to fruit. With a rhizome, however, music is a weed that eats another weed. It follows a non-linear horizontal path, crossing disciplines, becoming—paralleling and intersecting, insomuch as a person can be a becoming-animal or a becoming-tree. [Translation by Noël Wan])
Toward an Agential Realist Theory of Music

Returning to Barad’s dilemma of jumping from the microscopic to the macroscopic, thinking about music and music-making in context of theories that have emerged outside of music cannot simply rely on metaphorical analogues and homologies. Identifying apparatuses in works by Georges Aperghis goes beyond human perceptions of what constitutes an apparatus and requires an initial questioning of why we have even chosen to assign “apparatus” to a certain object. Therefore, agential realism demands a process of peeling apart layers folded within each other, rather than a linear understanding of causality that defines a clear beginning/cause and end/effect. Subsequently, developing an agential realist theory of music tosses aside musical function and form in favoring of considering: 1) the material bodies implicated within a musical phenomena; and 2) the intra-connectivity of those bodies. As a commentary on realism, agential realism would also resist essentializing, naturalizing, or even vitalizing musical phenomena, particularly in discourses of sound (e.g. sonic naturalism) but also extending to ideas in Western classical music that rely on the possibilities of scientific objectivity (i.e. “pure” consonance, “perfect” acoustics) and material-discursive separability. Finally, re-conceptualizing music-making as emerging through the apparatus/agential cut paradigm emphasizes the ethics and accountability present in all acts of materialization.

When used as an interpretive tool for performers, an agential realist approach does not simply perceive and analyze musical phenomena—especially the score—objectively; that is, with the assumption that critical distance can reveal truth. This perspective does not refer to the contemporary debate between advocates for contextual/historically sensitive performance.

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practices versus the empowerment or creativity of subjective interpretation. An agential realist perspective insists on the implication of everything in making material-discursive realities, insomuch that even this dissertation actively participates in, rather than observing and describing, the material-discursive production of its subject matter (gender and the harp). Furthermore, agential realism specifically responds to the cultural-linguistic-semiotic turns by insisting on the return to the material.203

In her thesis on the Swedish composer Marie Samuelsson, Elin Hermansson imagines the concept of “posthumanist aesthetics”—her reading of an agential realist theory of music—which shares many of the observations I have drawn from the music of Georges Aperghis. Hermansson writes:

Thus, just as posthumanism proclaims a decentring of the human, and a refusal of complete objectivity in science, so does an agential realist account of music insist on the creative process to be shared between the composer, performer and listener (and corporeality) in an intersubjective experience of the musical event—an experience which can come through as both similar and dissimilar between the agents depending on their differing musical life experiences.204

Likewise, my conceptualization of an agential realist theory of music also entails a marked attention toward the affective nature of bodies (“bodies” encompassing more than the human body) instead of focusing on the impact of culture on bodies. The physicality of Aperghis’s

203 Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 801.

   Barad introduces her essay with this powerful criticism: “Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every “thing”—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation. The ubiquitous puns on “matter” do not, alas, mark a rethinking of the key concepts (materiality and signification) and the relationship between them. Rather, it seems to be symptomatic of the extent to which matters of “fact” (so to speak) have been replaced with matters of signification (no scare quotes here). Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters. There is an important sense in which the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter.”

204 Hermansson, “A Posthumanist Aesthetics of Physicality in Music” 36.
music-theatre, particularly his use of objects, musicians/actors, and space, facilitates a more direct view of how material bodies behave through each other. In the solo percussion work *Le corps à corps* (1978), Aperghis implicates the performer’s body in the music, in that the percussionist must act as “simultaneously the narrator and the protagonist of an epic [story]. The struggle depicted in the story reflects that of the musician with his instrument and with his own breath.”

205 *Fidélité*, written five years later, commits to a similar idea for the harpist’s body in relation to the harp.

Beyond bodies, however, lies another important characteristic of Aperghis’s compositional style: fragmentation. He notes, “I don’t see any connection between things. That doesn’t interest me. I believe more in small fragments, pieces of life, that randomly come into contact.”

206 Although this statement seems to contradict the premise of connectivity in, for example, actor-network theory or the rhizome, I interpret Aperghis’ words as decrying inherent connections between things. Therefore, his fragments only connect when they meet; they do not meet because they are meant to connect. This belief in the absence of pre-existing connections corresponds with Barad’s idea of exteriority-within, which argues that meaning does not transcend matter. Meaning only emerges through contact—diffractive patterns (of interference), the intra-action of phenomena, the active role of the apparatus, and the presence of an agential cut. Therefore, when thinking about agential realism in musical analysis, one must re-consider the piece, not as a whole made of intentional parts, but as a becoming emerging through the

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“Le percussionniste est à la fois le narrateur d’une histoire épique et le personnage central de la pièce. Dans le combat singulier de la fiction se reflète celui du musicien avec l’instrument et avec son propre souffle.”

collision of phenomena. Instead of reflecting on how the parts serve a larger thematic or formal meaning (top-down), reading music within an agential realist paradigm turns our attention to how the processes of contact create ontological boundaries (bottom-up).

Lastly, reading Aperghis’ music through agential realism requires a shift in how we understand the role of agency in musical contexts. Aperghis’ music theatre does more than represent an idea or reflect a *zeitgeist*, and his rhizomatic networks are not so much constitutive (of boundaried things in interaction) as they are agentially generative. What does this mean? In contrast with Buchanan’s adoption of Actor-Network Theory,\(^\text{207}\) which describes the intertwining of separate agents/actors across vast networks, agential realism insists on the total inseparability of agencies. Things do not act on each other; rather they act only through and within each other (i.e. as “exteriorities-within”). With this concept in mind, we can think of material bodies—composer, performer, score, instrument, stage, researcher, technologies—and more abstract ones—harmony, form, sonic structure, gender, beauty, aesthetics—as mutually entangled, agential fragments rather than spatially-separated objects positioned in dialogue, in reaction, or even in collaboration.

This paradigm shift in perceiving the formation, interpretation, and performance of music leads to Aperghis’s solo harp piece *Fidélité: pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme*. I view this work as a case study for a posthumanist performative/agential realist theory of music, focusing specifically on problematic aesthetics and narratives of power emerging from the Western pedal harp’s complicated history with gender. As a result, the following section will engage two main paths of inquiry: music and theatre. First, I examine *Fidélité* as a postmodern

\(^{207}\) Buchanan, 51-52.

Buchanan briefly connects his analysis of Aperghis’ *Luna Park* with Actor-Network Theory, citing the increasingly blurred, mutual relationships between technology and human actors in *Luna Park* as a confrontation of those relationships in reality.
artifact, tracing its musical genealogies through a critical analysis of the work. The designation of “artifact” is an agential cut that situates boundaries (e.g. musical characteristics specific to a time period, an aesthetic sensibility, and/or a disciplinary model), creating a point from which to interrogate the intertextuality of *Fidélité* and the performativity of sound. Furthermore, I explore ways in which material aspects of the harpist’s body and the harp’s body contribute to the expressive direction of the piece, challenging both the musical score’s status and the composer’s vision as self-contained ideals.
CHAPTER THREE: FIDÉLITÉ, A GENDERHARP CASE STUDY

At the beginning:
The harp and the set-up for the performance must be centered under a bright spotlight (also focusing on the harp’s pedals and the harpist’s feet)

After some time:
An older man, dignified and well-dressed, holds the harpist by the wrist.
This gesture of imprisonment must be elegant.
The harpist is dressed in black, simple yet elegant.
He does not release her wrist until she has been placed—with his help—on the harp chair.
He sits afar off in another chair.
He will pretend to listen and sit expressionlessly (indecipherably) throughout the entire piece.
He will never look directly at her.

She begins.

When she appears to have finished, he will wait a bit until he is certain (that she has finished), then he will rise from his seat and approach her. He will help her out of her chair and grab her by the wrist. They will leave the stage the same way they had entered.208

- Georges Aperghis

Published in 1982, Fidélité is the final work in Tryptique, a set of two solo works and one chamber work written for French harpist Brigitte Sylvestre and her husband, percussionist Gaston Sylvestre. Brigitte Sylvestre premiered the harp solo (Fidélité) at the Festival d’Avignon on July 25, 1983. Like many of the experimental composers of the mid- and late-twentieth century,209 Aperghis often composed in collaboration with specific performers, creating highly

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208 Translated by Noël Wan; Georges Aperghis, Fidélité: pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme (Paris, France: Salabert, 1982), front matter.
209 Well-known composer-performer collaborations in twentieth century Western classical music include Cathy Berberian and Luciano Berio, David Tudor and John Cage, and Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears. Notable harpists who worked closely with twentieth-century composers include Francis Pierre (Luciano
individualized works inflected with context. With this in mind, the Sylvestres’ *Triptyque* is, conceptually, a collaborative love story—a compositional homage to their marriage. *Triptyque* begins with *Coup de foudre* (“Love at first sight”) for percussion and electronics, followed by a harp and percussion duet *Compagnie* (“Companionship”) and ending with *Fidélité* (“Loyalty”) for solo harp. Aperghis’s compositional approach to *Fidélité* consists of both the collaborative process between himself and Brigitte Sylvestre and many other layers of aesthetic influences. In the first half of this chapter, I explore these layers, ranging from how *Fidélité* fits into Aperghis’ compositional style to how the piece also participates in a body of quasi-theatrical late twentieth-century harp repertoire. Following this discussion, I will relate the previous two chapters’ materials on critical theories to a musical analysis of *Fidélité*.

**Fidélité’s Aesthetic Influences**

Though Aperghis is widely regarded for his idiosyncratic style, one can still trace aesthetic trends of the European experimental music scene of the mid- and late twentieth century in his music. Besides known references to Iannis Xenakis and Pierre Schaeffer as compositional influences, Aperghis’s music also recalls the instrumental theatre of Mauricio Kagel, the theatrical absurdity of American composer La Monte Young (e.g. *Compositions 1960*), the intermediality of the Fluxus artistic movement, the confluence of street, stage, and politics in

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Berio, Marius Constant, Tôn-Thất Tiêt), Ursula Holliger (Heinz Holliger, Elliot Carter, Harrison Birtwistle), and Osian Ellis (Benjamin Britten).


The term “intermedia” emerged in the writings of Fluxus artist Dick Higgins. Intermedia refers to intersecting media, such as musical works that borrow from sculpture or theatre. Higgins writes, “The vehicle I chose, the word ‘intermedia,’ appears in the writings of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1812 in
Western performance art,²¹² Italian composer Luciano Berio’s virtuosic *Sequenza* series, new developments in electronic music²¹³, and most of all, shifting relationships between the composer, performer, score, and audience that accompanied and influenced the rise of the postmodern sensibility in the arts.

With this abundant network in mind, *Fidélité* possesses a rich citationality. The positioning of the female subject extends beyond acknowledging Brigitte Sylvestre’s role as a collaborator, or at a more symbolic level, the social significance of the female harpist. One can also find expressive similarities in other well-known works for female performers (often vocalists), such as John Cage’s *Aria* (1958), Berio’s *Sequenza III* (1965) and *Visage* (1961), and Aperghis’ own *Récitations* (1977-78).²¹⁴ In addition to exploring the sheer technical virtuosity of the female voice, these four works also represent a growing interest in re-defining the expressive

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²¹² Salzman and Dési, *The New Music Theatre*, 207.

Salzman and Dési describe the *zeitgeist* of mid-twentieth-century avant-garde art: “The years of experimentation known as the Sixties (actually the late 1960s and 1970s) had a very social side. ‘Music theatre in the streets’ was one of the ideas of the time that for various cultural, education, and ideological reasons (above all, faith in the democratization of contemporary art) attempted to reach new audiences. The French traditions of mime, clowning, and street spectacle were extended to opera starting the 1970s when the city of Paris supported the artistic and musical social work projects of Georges Aperghis and his ATEM.”

²¹³ *Musique concrète*, originated by Pierre Schaeffer, was an early electro-acoustic genre that involved the electronic manipulation of acoustic material. Examples include Édgar Varèse’s *Poème électronique* (1958) and Iannis Xenakis’s *Concret PH* (1958), both written for the opening of Le Corbusier’s Philips Pavilion, and Schaeffer’s *Étude aux chemins de fer* (1948). Schaeffer’s piece is often regarded as one of the first works of electronic music. In Germany, the WDR Studio for Electronic Music (Cologne, 1951) housed the “Cologne School,” whose techniques shifted from Schaeffer’s *musique concrète* through its focus on “pure electronics.” Key figures in the Cologne School include Karlheinz Stockhausen and Gottfried Koenig. In Italy, Luciano Berio and Bruno Maderna directed the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale* (Milan, 1960), and in the USA, hubs for electronic music emerged in New York (Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, 1959) and at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign through the work of Lejaren Hiller (*Illiac Suite for String Quartet*, 1957).


Berio’s and Cage’s works were all written for American vocalist Cathy Beberian.
and sonic characteristics of the female voice. Furthermore, these vocal works themselves take on social significance when considering their effect on transforming the cultural, symbolic, and material roles of women in opera and art song. In light of this history, Fidélité draws more semantic and expressive similarities from the history of female-subject vocal works than with the corpus of concert harp repertoire; although many harp pieces were written (by men) for or dedicated to female harpists, the concept of the female character performer does not feature as openly in concert harp repertoire. Therefore, taking cues from this performer-as-character tradition in vocal music, Fidélité transforms the performer from a means into a meaningful body that shapes and interacts with elements of the piece.

In addition to drawing a relationship with the Western classical female voice tradition, Fidélité also interacts with the evolving styles of concert harp-writing in the late twentieth century. Several important reference works pre-dating Fidélité include Heinz Holliger’s


Robert Schumann’s Frauenlieben und Leben, for example, has undergone scrutiny by performers and scholars over whether Adelbert von Chamisso’s text has explicitly feminist undertones or has the potential for a feminist interpretation. The work itself, though an exploration of a woman’s life and love, was originally intended for the male voice, leaving questions about how female agency is expressed through music. In opera, female characters are often characterized as a moral foil—either as paragons of virtue/saviors (Leonore in Ludwig van Beethoven’s Fidelio (1805), Senta in Richard Wagner’s Der fliegende Holländer (1843), Lucrecia in Benjamin Britten’s The Rape of Lucretia (1946)), femmes fatales (titular characters in Georges Bizet’s Carmen (1875), Giacomo Puccini’s Manon Lescaut (1893), Richard Strauss’ Salome (1905)), or both (Mélisande in Claude Debussy’s Pélleas et Mélisande (1898), Cio-cio-San in Puccini’s Madama Butterfly (1904))—to male characters. As discussed in early scholarship by Catherine Clément (1979), Susan McClary (1991), and Caroline Abbate (1993), these problematic depictions of women in opera demand critical perspectives from gender and sexuality discourses.

The majority of concert works in the harp canon are written by male composers and harpist-composers, with the exception of Germaine Taillefaire and harpist-composers Henriette Renié and Sophia Corri Dussek. Contemporary female composers whose works are appearing more frequently on recital programs include Caroline Lizotte, Kaija Saariaho, Deborah Henson-Conant, and Hannah Lash.

216 I define performer-as-character in contrast to instrument-as-character or sound-as-character. The latter, which is the predominant paradigm in instrumental music, uses the instrument to depict extramusical characters, such as birdsong, wind, or water. The former draws from vocal music tradition in embodying character through the performer’s body.
Sequenzen über Johannes 1, 32 (1962), Berio’s Sequenza II (1963) for solo harp, Mauricio Kagel’s Sonant, and R. Murray Schafer’s The Crown of Ariadne.218 These four works indicate a changing perception of the harp and point to the rise of integrating more theatrical approaches in the act of performance. Though only Kagel’s Sonant would explicitly fall into the category of “theatre,” the following musical characteristics also create theatrical possibilities for the harp, harpist, and aspects of their environment in the act of performance: 1) extended techniques as integral to the piece’s sonic language rather than representing an “othered” sound; 2) intertextuality (and the postmodern treatment of score and performance as texts); and 3) experimental notational paradigms that re-examine the relationships between sound, instrument, and body.

Early Examples of the Pedal Harp “Avant-Garde”: Heinz Holliger’s Sequenzen über Johannes 1, 32 (1962) and Luciano Berio’s Sequenza II (1963)

Holliger’s Sequenzen über Johannes 1, 32 refers to the Christian biblical text John 1:32 (“I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.”) and uses spatial notation to indicate tempo and also incorporates extended techniques (tuning key bisbigliando, tuning key glissando). Though Holliger’s Sequenzen premiered one year before Berio finished writing Sequenza II for Francis Pierre in 1963, Sequenza II possesses highly distinctive technical and musical demands that have ushered the work into the canon of avant-garde classical harp.

218 Berio, Sequenza II: per arpa solo; Holliger, Sequenzen über Johannes 1, 32; Kagel, Sonant; Schafer, The Crown of Ariadne.
repertoire. Berio’s statements about the piece also contribute important context about sound and gender to the analysis of Aperghis’s *Fidélité*. Berio writes:

> In my Sequenzas I have tried to develop a musical commentary between the virtuoso and his instrument and I have often explored specific technical aspects in depth, challenging the conventional notion of the instrument. French “impressionism” has left us with a rather limited vision of the harp, as if its most characteristic feature were that it could only be played by half-naked girls with long, blond hair, who confine themselves to drawing seductive glissandi from it. But the harp has another harder, louder and aggressive side to it. *Sequenza II* aims to bring out some of these characteristics, and to make them appear simultaneously: at certain moments it must sound like a forest with the wind blowing through it. [emphasis added]²¹⁹

Beyond Berio’s criticism of the harp’s unimpressively “impressionistic” sound, his notes for *Sequenza II* also address relationships between sonic aesthetics and the harp’s gendering. In response to the context of *Sequenza II*’s complex social, cultural, and musical background, Kirsty Whatley writes:

> Musical instruments are symbolic objects. Visually arresting, each can conjure an abundance of historical, social and personal associations into a persuasive mythology and distinct identity. As such, the instrument “performs” before a note is even played. In *Sequenza II* for harp (1963), these extra-musical acquisitions are manipulated into subject matter, directing specific musical material into an assertive character study, playful critique and cogent musical discourse. Filtering together a technically explorative agenda with contemporary cliché, the piece is prismatic, refracting the instrument’s relationship with composer, performer and spectator alike. While not overtly theatrical in the sense of *Sequenzas III* and *V*, it is nonetheless driven by more than the unfolding of purely musical processes, its rhetoric pressed by a desire to both use and abuse stereotype as its creative fuel.²²⁰

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²¹⁹ Berio, “*Sequenza II* (author’s note),” http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1458?131775360=1. One must note Berio’s gendering of “virtuoso,” which can likely be attributed to *Sequenza II*’s dedicatee, Francis Pierre. Further reflection demands parsing the visual contrast between the male viruoso and the “half-naked girls.”

Sequenza II, with its melodic disjuncture and violent, physical attacks on the harp, certainly marks a departure from the lush beauty of Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel’s harp writing (i.e. Claude Debussy’s Danses sacrée et profane (1904) for chromatic harp,221 Ravel’s Introduction et Allegro (1905)), and iconic orchestral pedal harp parts from Debussy’s Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune, L. 86 (1894) and Ravel’s Daphnis et Chloé (1909-1912)).222 Yet Berio’s re-imagining of the harp also contrasts with other new, non-feminized representations of the harp, such as the neo-classicism in Paul Hindemith’s Sonate (1939), the jazz-inflected harp concerti of André Jolivet (1952) and Darius Milhaud (1953), or the musical reminiscences of the Baroque in Benjamin Britten’s Suite (1969).223

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221 The instrument manufacturer Pleyel commissioned Claude Debussy’s Danses sacrée et profane for the chromatic harp, a double cross-strung, pedal-less harp developed by Pleyel’s director Gustave Lyon in 1894. Because the chromatic harp gradually fell out of popularity during the twentieth century, the Danses is now commonly performed on the pedal harp. Henriette Renié completed a pedal harp transcription in 1910. In 2016 American harpist Carl Swanson published an annotated pedal harp transcription of the Danses that compares the Renié transcription with the original manuscript.


With regards to extended techniques, Berio uses particularly grating ones: Bartók pizzicati,\textsuperscript{24} bass string slaps, nail effects, and aggressive pedal slides\textsuperscript{25}. In contrast to the idea of extended techniques as evocative—such as percussive knocks on the harp’s soundboard in Alberto Ginastera’s \textit{Harp Concerto} (1956, revised 1968)\textsuperscript{26} or Schafer’s (via the methodology of French harpist-composer Carlos Salzedo\textsuperscript{27}) “Aeolian rustling” (palm glissando) in \textit{The Crown of Ariadne} for imitating the sound of blowing wind\textsuperscript{28}—the extended techniques in \textit{Sequenza II} have no representational meaning. Instead the techniques create extremely visceral responses, both in the performer and the listener. Berio’s abstract exploration of the range of the harp challenges the very notion of virtuosity; it is not enough, nor is it possible, for the performer to physically take control of the harp in \textit{Sequenza II}. Rather the physical demands of the piece require the performer to wrestle with the instrument; one achieves virtuosity through what

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Béla Bartók, \textit{String Quartet No. 4} (New York, NY: Boosey & Hawkes, 1939).
  \item A “Bartók pizzicato” (also known as a “snap pizzicato”) on the harp involves placing the finger very near the soundboard and plucking downward so the finger makes contact with the soundboard, which creates a percussive sound. This percussive sound emulates a “Bartók pizzicato” on a bowed string instrument (e.g. violin), which involves plucking forcefully enough for the string to snap against the fingerboard. On bowed instruments, this effect is commonly achieved by plucking the string upwards and releasing, allowing the momentum of the released string to hit the fingerboard. This extended technique became associated with the Hungarian composer Béla Bartók through his use of the technique in his \textit{String Quartet No. 4}.
  \item Pedal slides were often used to achieve “jazzy” effect because the sound of the slide resembles portamento effects in string instruments. Whether used for exotic effect, such as Latin/Spanish evocations in André Caplet’s \textit{Divertissement à l’espagnole} (1924) and the third movement of Ginastera’s \textit{Harp Concerto} (1956), or jazz/swing-inspired music (i.e. Pearl Chertok’s \textit{Around the Clock Suite} (1948) and Robert Maxwell’s \textit{Harping on a Harp} (1948)), pedal slides introduced more possibilities for chromatic harp writing. Berio, however, treats pedal slides as very visceral, physical gestures because the frenetic pedaling places immense stress on both the instrument’s pedal mechanisms and the harpist’s body.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Ginastera, \textit{Harp Concerto, op. 25: Harp and Piano}.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Schafer, \textit{The Crown of Ariadne}.
\end{itemize}
Whatley refers to as “struggle,” “a taut dramatic battle,” and “tension between harpist and harp as they engage in an absorbing mental and physical confrontation.”

A Postmodern Virtuosity: Mauricio Kagel’s Sonant (1960/....)

This idea of an alternative virtuosity also appears in Mauricio Kagel’s Sonant (1960/....). An undisputed pioneer in post-modern music and avant-garde instrumental theatre, German-Argentine composer Kagel marked his foray in the genre with Sonant. Written for guitar, harp, contrabass, and membranophones (skin instruments), Sonant plays with the idea of a musical performance itself as theatre. The work consists of ten sections divided into four categories; Kagel specifies, “In putting a version one should pay attention to the following: choose at least five sections or fill out a minimum duration of fifteen minutes; begin with a FAITES VOTRE JEU section; end with a FIN section; do not play two sections with the same title immediately after one another.” The result is a work in open form, allowing multiple versions of the work to exist.

In Sonant—as with Sequenza II—virtuosity takes on a different meaning than that of the nineteenth-century flamboyance of Italian violinist Niccòlo Paganini, Hungarian pianist Franz

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229 Whatley, “Rough Romance,” 43.

Whatley writes, “In Sequenza II, the quality of the material balances the struggle to produce it and the piece to some extent even depends upon this. The demanding nature of the learning process can translate in the onstage performance rhetoric into both an intensified intimacy between performer and instrument, and a taut dramatic battle. Part of the theatrical potential of the piece lies in the tension between harpist and harp as they engage in an absorbing mental and physical confrontation.”


231 Ibid., 14. Although Kagel lists Sonant’s date of composition as 1960, the “/...” indicates that different performances count as re-compositions.

“If particular version of SONANT is performed for the first time, one can list it as a ‘premiere.’ When different versions are played in the same place, then each one is a ‘first performance.’”
Liszt, or English harpist Elias Parish Alvars. In the section “Pièce touché, pièce jouée,” for example, Kagel creates the possibility for a “virtual interpretation” in which the musicians mime playing (off a notated score) with equal intensity to that of a traditional performance. Another section, “FIN II / Invitation au jeu, voix,” literally treats music as text, requiring the performers to play off a completely textual score (Figure 4.1).


In these contexts, virtuosity entails more than technical skill. Kagel’s post-modern virtuosity demands increased self-reflexivity in both rehearsal and performance, the specific resistance of conventional musicianship predicated on tonal structures, and the breakdown of idiomatic
instrumental techniques through parody (i.e. through mime, theatre), “noise” (e.g. non-“musical” sound, such as resonance or silence), and total integration of extended techniques into the sonic landscape of a work.

**The Self-Reflexive Body as Theatre: R. Murray Schafer’s The Crown of Ariadne (1979)**

Meanwhile, in North America, the 1960s and 1970s incubated the early work of Canadian composer and music educator R. Murray Schafer, who was experimenting with sonic ideas that challenged human aural relationships with the environment. In the 1960s Schafer began working on his extensive Patria cycle (1966-), a set of music theatre works that experimented with site-specific performances, such as the beach setting for Patria V (1990-1991) and other environmental specifications (e.g. midnight and sunset performances). Schafer’s most widely performed work for harp is The Crown of Ariadne (1979), a quasi-theatrical work that employs a broad range of effects, including nail glissandi, gushing chords, pitch bends, de-tuned pitches, and pedal slides, that create extremely evocative and distinct sound worlds in each movement. Additionally, the work, which is scored in total for harp, percussion instruments (played by the harpist), and tape (pre-recorded by the performer), engages a level of ritualistic theatricality in its execution. In the first movement, for example, Schafer notates “waves” indicating how the performer should raise his/her/their arms as performance gestures.232 These bodily gestures also recur constantly, partly due to the necessity of choreographing transitions between playing the harp and percussion instruments. The second movement, titled “Ariadne’s Dance,” requires the performer to wear ankle bells and dance a rhythm while playing extremely

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232 Aubat-Andrieu et al., Guide to the Contemporary Harp, 41.
rhythmically and technically difficult passages in the high register of the harp; the blurring of the performer with the character through the wearing of ankle bells demonstrates an example of what I had described as “performer-as-character.” Finally, Schafer explicates the stage set-up of instruments, which he developed alongside the Canadian harpist Judy Loman; the configuration emphasizes both the practical (logistics of picking up and/or reaching for percussion instruments) and the aesthetic (the visual effect of the harpist/harp encased within the circle of percussion). Like with Fidélité, The Crown of Ariadne—written for Loman—places a female character as the center of the piece and interrogates the boundaries of performer-as-character. Does the harpist simply perform Ariadne through sound, or must the harpist become Ariadne?

Holliger, Berio, Kagel, and Schafer’s pieces exemplify emerging questions about different ways in which the harpist’s body occupies, interacts, transforms, and becomes meaningful in relation with the harp. Whether the process involves a change in how the body perceives tempo from spatial notation, how the body situates self-reflexively in theatrical movement, or thinking of extended techniques as a form of dis-embodiment, this growing consideration of the body’s significance in the interpretation and performance of musical scores diffracts with concept of the gendered (posthumanist) performative body. To understand how Fidélité engages these ideas, one must first understand the nature of the work.

233 Dis-embodiment in extended technique suggests a cognitive, spatial, and physical distance involved in learning and executing extended technique. In my own experience as a musician, the process of internalizing a legend of extended technique notations, such as in Kagel’s Sonant, is a highly intellectualized one and requires many hours of practicing outside conventional, embodied technique to achieve timbral integrity, motor facility, and spatial coordination (the latter particularly if the score indicates uses of additional tools, such as a tuning key, screwdriver, or mallet).
The Materiality of *Fidélité*: Extended Techniques and Sound

Taking cues from the four aforementioned works, *Fidélité*’s abundant use of extended techniques, atonal pitch material, and dramatic use of the harp’s pedals and range of strings create a specific style of postmodern virtuosity that emphasizes the mutuality of harp and harpist’s bodies. The introduction of the piece explains both the theatrical set-up (see preface to this chapter) and as shown below, specific extended technique symbols and an explanation of the score’s notational design (Figure 4.2).

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Figure 4.2: *Fidélité* (1982). Score. Front Matter. Used by kind permission from Georges Aperghis.²³⁴

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²³⁴ Translation of symbols (from top to bottom): “bisbigliando (finger tremolo) using the nail along the length of the string; flicked; glissando (descending or ascending) using the tuning key; make a buzzing
In addition to the listed extended techniques, the pedal slide appears prominently throughout the piece, especially at the beginning and the end. Unlike conventional pedal slides, which usually rely on plucking a string immediately before engaging the corresponding pedal to enable maximum resonance, Aperghis’s use of pedal slides relies primarily on the natural mechanical noise of the pedal mechanisms, and to a lesser extent, sympathetic vibrations from previously plucked strings.\(^{235}\) This focus on making the harp’s mechanical components more transparent in performance also appears through fixed de-tuning—tuning a string an entire octave lower drastically loosens the string tension, making the string both extremely different in sound and also at touch. Furthermore, Aperghis expects the harpist to de-tune the harp during the piece (Figure 4.3); the gesture of tuning, which typically occurs backstage or between pieces, and as discreetly as possible, suddenly becomes a part of “making music.”

\[^{235}\] The absence of significant resonance due to soft dynamics and the use of harmonics (which generate less string vibration than a conventionally plucked string) makes sympathetic vibrations a less influential reason for the pedal slides.

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noise using the nail. [First staff] (Sung part): inhalation; exhalation; spoken; [Second staff] The notes on this staff sound as written, except the (A-sharp) which should be extremely de-tuned; [Third staff] The pitches (B, C, D-flat, E-flat, F-flat) are tuned an octave lower; [Fourth staff] Pitches sound as written.” (Translation by Noël Wan)
The integral nature of the extended technique in postmodern music leads to less separation between music and effect, demanding a re-framing of what is conventional technique and what is extended. Perhaps “extended technique” can take on multiple meanings. On one hand, extended techniques simply broaden the parameters of conventional technique. From a new materialist perspective, extended technique points to the extending of bodies, entangled through permeable boundaries—fingernails, feet, neck, discs, pins, pedals, tuning keys, fingers, pedal rods, arms, and bodies. All sounds in Fidélité, whether “extended” or not, emerge through this contingent materiality. This contingency of sound, perceived most clearly during the production of sounds, leads to questions about the contingency of music—or what French
composer Edgar Varèse once referred to as “organized sound.”²³⁶ By implicating material bodies in the production of sound, I argue that bodies can agentially “organize” sound, creating music beyond the composer’s intent or other confines of the human mind. In *Fidélité*, I look specifically at how the mutuality of instrument and performer bodies manifests in sonic production, such as the aforementioned extended techniques, as well as the expressive trajectories of motivic and formal structures.

**Interpreting *Fidélité*’s Formal and Motivic Structures**

Although programmatic in nature, *Fidélité* does not rely on text to drive its musical language and formal development. Aperghis constructs *Fidélité* as through-composed, relying on motivic fragmentation, motivic diffraction, and contrasts between stasis and movement to create narrative tension. Toward the end of the piece, a climactic section occurs, followed by an introspective “coda.” While analyzing the piece as ABA’ form would be overly reductionist, Aperghis does create some conventionally satisfactory formal (but not emotional) resolution by ending the piece with material related to the opening motives.

Fragmentation, a common characteristic of Aperghis’s compositional style, plays an important role in creating the structure of *Fidélité*, and occurs through the splicing, variations, and interruption of thematic material. Additionally, instead of dividing different material into


It is important to note that Varèse himself sought new perspectives for musical composition and coined the term “organized sound” to resist more transcendental approaches to classical music. Filtered through a more contemporary perspective, such as my adoption of agential realism, music as “organized sound” is even too anthropocentric, implying that *someone* does the organizing that turns sound into organized sound.
distinct “A,” “B,” or “C” sections, I suggest that the structure emerges through organic transformations—aggregates of pitches, cells, themes, tempo indications, and gestures that respond to each other and become meaningful through proximal relationships. For example, the opening motives in the vocal and instrumental parts consist of a rhythmic pattern and a group of conjunct pitches (when considering the pitches that have been de-tuned down an octave). The vocal line oscillates between semitones—C♮, D♭, and D♮—and the instrumental part, A♯, B♮, C♮, and D♭. Aperghis repeats this set of motives in its entirety—with exception of the pedal slides—before commencing a series of subtle transformations, such as rhythmic changes, the addition of pitches, or the introduction of a new tempo (Figure 4.4).

![Figure 4.4: Fidélité (1982). Score. Measures 1-11. Used by kind permission from Georges Aperghis. Measures 1-4 consist of the first two motivic sections. I choose “motive” over “theme” because I do not interpret these pitch and rhythmic patterns as structurally teleological but rather as fragments of material that develop in tandem with other fragments.](image-url)
These transformations of the opening material continue for fifty-five measures. In measure 56 a new figure, characterized by extremely active (disjunct) leaps between registers, appears momentarily before returning to stasis, reinforced by a continuous eighth-note repetitions of C natural in the vocal part. (Figure 4.5)

Figure 4.5: *Fidélité* (1982). Score. Measures 53-68. Used by kind permission from Georges Aperghis. The leaping gesture (m. 56 in the score) is another motivic fragment that recurs in the piece.

Yet this return is not an exact return. The new figure diffracts with the earlier material, prompting a new set of transformations. I use diffraction, rather than pivot or foreshadowing (of later material), to argue that the relationship between the new figure and the opening material does not rely on the spatial juxtaposition of “A” and “B” motives; a spatial juxtaposition implies that each motive possesses distinct boundaries and exists inter-relationally, not intra-relationally with each other. Therefore, the figure in measure 56 does not act as a pivot; it interferes with previous material, initiating a new set of motivic patterns between measures 56 to 115. This new pattern relies on a complex and layered synthesis of active and static gestures, the emergence of multiple motives (versus transformations of one motive), and more rapid and erratic changes in
tempo in each micro-section. Furthermore, the introduction of this new “active” gesture in measure 56 literally shifts the body when re-adjusting to a completely new motivic pattern.\(^{237}\) Thus, diffraction also illustrates patterns of physical interference that occur within musical changes, and the necessity of thinking about expressive development as an entanglement of bodies, score, and sound.

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\(^{237}\) When practicing this transition, I discovered that my entire body—not just the arms and hands—shifts in response to technical changes, particularly when the changes involve large leaps or a re-positioning of hands (e.g. moving from harmonics to regularly plucked passages).
shift thus far and includes increased spoke-sung (spoken words set to pitches) and monotone spoken texts. This section is the most physically expressive and technically demanding, requiring the performer’s hands to execute wide leaps while vocalizing in time with the leaps. Despite its marked difference from the earlier two sections, the “rayonnante” section—aided by the corresponding text—depicts a motivic progression, not a departure, from initial material.

The end of this third section marks the beginning of a larger structural fragmentation; parts of the first three motivic sections begin a continuous process of fragmenting and interrupting to create a sense of uneasiness. Beginning at measure 133, Aperghis also introduces a completely new and significantly faster tempo (quarter note = 120 bpm) that he sets to the material from staves one to three in the opening motivic section (with the vocal part moved to the harp part). This quasi-re-statement of the beginning only lasts for twenty-four measures, compared to the original beginning’s fifty-six measures. Aperghis interrupts the re-statement with the “rayonnante” motive, which in turn is interrupted by the motive associated with the line “mes main mes poignets” from the second section. As the motivic interruptions become shorter,
the dramatic tension increases until finally, Aperghis interrupts the momentum with prolongations of C#. Though he has used repetitions of C# in earlier parts of the piece, the most extreme occurrence begins on the pick-up to measure 178 (Figure 4.9) and continues for the entirety of measure 182. In measure 182, Aperghis extends the measure to fit the following non-semantic text (a mixture of real and nonsense French words):

\[
\text{Ni tuer croyez si gai nier croyez jamais si gaie je n’ai pourrais jamais donner honneur o ni jamais tuer je or n’ai point donné ni mon portrait ni or harpie mignonne tête ni honneur harpie ma tête arboré honneur o ni pourrais jamais si gai tuer croyez je n’ai point donné mon portrait}
\]

Figure 4.9: *Fidélité* (1982). Score. Measure 176-178. Used by kind permission from Georges Aperghis. The whispered (“parlé chuchotté”) repetitions that set off the climactic section.

Although this repetition of C may seem monotonous, two other expressive devices, mediated by the body, completely transform this section from static to extremely active in affect. First, pitch repetition reduces variation in vocal fold vibration and lack of muscular movement from holding
the position of surrounding cartilages. Additionally, Aperghis indicates the harpist should speak in whispers (“parlé chuchotté”), a vocal technique shown to inflict more laryngeal trauma (than normal vocal production would) on many, but not all, individuals. Therefore, the vocal stress caused by whispering and repetition, not the actual musical material, directs the expressivity of this passage and propels the emotional narrative.

Between measures 184 and 191, Aperghis continues the rapid juxtaposition of fragmented motives, leading to the ecstatic, leaping gestures (from the “rayonnante” section) beneath the harpist’s increasingly hysterical laughter. Mid-way through measure 192, the bisbigliando (light, rapid, continuous repetitions of two or more pitches) on the high A♭ and G♮ re-appears, preceded by the text “she passionately shakes her fist at him.” The phrase had previously occurred at the end of the “rayonnante” section in measure 132, but at that juncture, Aperghis had left both the verbal fist-shaking and the bisbigliando unresolved by inserting a breath mark at the end of the measure, followed by new motivic material in measure 133. The second occurrence of this phrase, however, does not contain interruptions and continues developing the same motivic material with increasing emotional intensity until the climatic point. During this section, the character-harpist becomes infuriated and breathless. She forges onward with the leaping gestures, spinning out with the increasing tempo, until the climax in measure 196.

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In this measure the harpist begins with a long exhalation, followed by a thunder glissando. At this point Aperghis writes this instruction, “Play in a frenzied manner, like a child attacking a stubborn toy. Play extremely rapidly, as if the harp was going to explode. Allow some strings to ring and muffle others. Pedals *ad lib* – very quickly – move independently from the hands. Attack the pedals feverishly.” The use of graphic notation demonstrates the extreme range of the harp required to convey the character-harpist’s emotional and psychological collapse. This physical demonstration of violence leaves the harpist breathless, and furthermore, Aperghis exaggerates this bodily response, transforming it into theatre by literally notating inhalation and exhalation effects in the second half of measure 196.

Returning to similar motivic material as the beginning, Aperghis ends the piece with an air of futility because the return, despite its motivic resolution, does not signify a psychological resolution. The C pedal slide motive recurs for the entirety of this final section; heard in relation...
to the dramatic climax, the repetition of C♮ to C♯ creates a mechanical effect. Overlaying the pedal and the nail effects (also on the C string), the vocal parts also evoke the beginning of the piece, conveying an extremely restricted expressivity through a limited set of pitches related by semitone (B♮, C♮, D♭, D♮). Therefore, the return to the static at the end of the piece is both symbolic and physical, in that the music represents the never-ending oppression of the woman and also literally confines the harpist’s body to a limited range of gestures.

**Performing (Gendered) Identity through Text**

In addition to the role of musical components in structuring *Fidélité*’s narrative, text and language also participate equally in the construction of identity and meaning. What makes *Fidélité* an unusual and extremely challenging work for harpists lies partly in Aperghis’s inclusion of a vocal part, notated in the topmost staff in the score. This line presents all sung and spoken parts, as well as indications for breathing, laughing, and whispering—all of which fall within the features of postmodern virtuosity and also highlight Aperghis’s penchant for experimenting with the human voice. Most of the sung parts, such as the first line *Sion u toi mout ible es lui dur rien non*, intersperse nonsense, pseudo-French words (e.g. *ible*) with actual French words (i.e. *toi, lui, rien*), creating semantic jumbling. This textual patchwork—described idiomatically by a critic as *passé à la moulinette* (literally translates to “passed through the mill”)²⁴¹—de-centers the primacy of a narrative represented by text. Instead narrative


The author comments, “Impliquant ‘une harpiste seule regardée par un homme,’ *Fidélité* repose en partie sur un texte passé à la moulinette (“Sion u toi moutable es lui dur rien non’, etc) dont le degré d’intelligibilité fluctue.”
materializes through textual diffraction, a process by which meanings emerge from texts as interferences for other texts, musical elements, and performers. Aperghis does not use text solely to describe identities; his pastiche style subverts the representationalism of language, allowing both the text itself and the sounds of the text to create identities.

In Fidélité, text plays a role in several different contexts. The most apparent use involves the diffraction of texts, particularly the juxtaposition of non-semantic phrases with semantic ones. Rather than using a phonetic alphabet to notate the non-semantic text, Aperghis insists on using a combination of French-like and scrambled French words, allowing him to flow more cohesively between non-semantic and semantic text. For example, the harpist sings at the beginning of the piece:

[Sung, non-semantic]
Sion u toi mout ible es lui dur rien non
Je fane à rieuse mout ible es lui dur ça mé cour rien non

[Spoken, semantic]
Changeant brusquement de sujet
(“Suddenly changing the subject”)

[Sung, non-semantic]
Que je fane à je doute fil fur fil fur fil fluile harpe hier dis avant à toi mi d’ou i moi prends nuit d’hier non ible es lui dur ça mé cour non rien non il m’a avant que je fane dense flu harpe fur la jarre puis tière sse lentes dis hier à avant ni d’ou i nuit hier nuit d’hier es

[Spoken, semantic]
Soutient un moment son regard, puis se détournant avec un rire étrange cassé
(“Holding his gaze for a moment, then turning away with strange, broken laughter”)

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242 Translation by Noël Wan.
On one hand, the stark semantic clarity of the spoken lines, emphasized by the change in tone (from sung to spoken), creates structural markers for the listener and the performer. Because the non-semantic lines do resemble a language, they allow the harpist to read the text as language rather than as sound, propelling a wide range of expressivity outside the rules of language or the intentional absence of meaning in phonetics. Regarding a similar technique used in Récitations, Gee writes, “Aperghis uses non-semantic vocal structures to layer identity, to blur the boundaries of a specific language, and to add multiple subtexts to a vocalist’s line. He chooses not to use the IPA, and although this limits the specificity with which he can notate the vocal score, it also supports his desire to build layered identities.”

Though Fidélité and Récitations derive from different intents—the former has explicit psychological subtext and the latter tries to obscure any definitive subtext—the effect of Aperghis’s non-semantic structures remains consistent in Fidélité. Furthermore, the semantic/non-semantic juxtaposition in Fidélité, which is not found in Récitations, creates its own dramatic tension between scenes of restricted (semantic) and open (non-semantic) expressivities.

The second major use of text lies in its relationship with musical sounds. Aperghis disclaims:

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A frequent collaborator with Aperghis, comedian and vocalist Viard says, “Later on, in 1985, Georges Aperghis decided to stage [Récitations] himself. Wishing to divest the composition of any kind of psychological intention - the 'love and life story of a woman' genre - he devised a relatively simple system of stage lighting which brought into play the differences in the vocal timbres.”
The goal is that the music is independent. That it does not need to tell something of the piece. That it exists just for itself. And when it comes to the meaning with the text, then it becomes theatre. But if one changes the text it becomes a different theatre. The music is not made from the beginning to play such and such a role. It is just sound material.\textsuperscript{245}

The translated word “independent” does not quite describe Aperghis’s intent in this statement. Music, in his perspective, does not embody its own meaning, nor does its supposed intrinsic meaning transcend language. As a result, music is not independent in the sense that it already has meaning; it is independent in its lack of inherent meaning. The lack of meaning manifests as fragments, which Rebstock describes as:

Prepared materials [that] collide … at the rehearsals. … The form of the fragment has a technical composition rationale. Long, self-contained musical compositions cannot be integrated in an open and equal conflict with other materials at rehearsal, leading to the imposition of hierarchy from the beginning. The fragment as a form however has an ideological aspect that only finds its equivalent at the level of procedure.\textsuperscript{246}

In Fidélité, theatricality and narrative therefore emerge from the collision of non-hierarchical fragmented texts and music. This confluence, however, differs from text painting in Western classical music, which involves a fixed relationship between a specific text and music that corresponds or characterizes that text. Aperghis’s compositional style illuminates the inevitable mutuality in the meaning of music and text. For example, between measures 40 and 47, repetitions of C\textsuperscript{♯} occur in the instrumental part under the phrase Soutient un moment son regard, puis se détournant avec un rire étrange cassé (“Holding his gaze for a moment, then turning away with strange, broken laughter”). Between measures 58 and 64, Aperghis re-


\textsuperscript{246} Rebstock, 232.
introduces the C♮ in both the instrumental and vocal parts: *J’fane tant plor nos calirs spaces tant pleur noces claires spaces amants rien étions* (“I wilt so much plor our bright spaces so much cry wedding bright spaces lovers nothing we were”). In the first mentioned occurrence, the text, only in conjunction with the C♮, creates the feeling of suspension, and in the second occurrence, the same musical material, set to different text, infers nostalgia. Later in the piece, between measures 145 and 149, the C♮ returns only in the vocal part—*Est-il possible que vous que vous puissiez penser qu’il y ait quelque déguisement* (“Is it possible that you might think that there must be some deceit”)—and at a faster tempo. This time, repetition, mutually informed by and informing the text, relates insistence.247

Mutuality also occurs in instances of text entangled with musical motives. *Fidélité* contains three textual-sonic motives: *v’vous en’ dui zé com’si j’dev et’ vot’; mes mains mes poignets* (“my hands my wrists”); and *rayonnante* (“shining” or “radiant”). These entangled motives often function as structural markers within sections, or they interrupt longer phrases. Unlike musical motives in opera, such as the “Tristan chord” in *Tristan und Isolde* or the curse motive in *Rigoletto*, Aperghis’s motives are not symbolically evocative or referential. Because his motives rely on the entanglement of text and sound (with some exceptions, e.g. measures 76-77), their progression or transformation does not rely first on text or sound but on the collision of the two. In measure 90, the “mes mains mes poignets” motive occurs, followed by a true inversion in measure 95. Aperghis, however, cleverly inverts the text as well; “mes mains mes

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247 All translations on this page by Noël Wan.
248 The “Tristan chord” is a chord comprised either of the pitches F♮, B♮, D♯, and G♯ (the original chord) or transposed to other pitches so long as the chord retains the intervallic structure of a half-diminished seventh chord. The Rigoletto curse motive is an inverted A♭ dominant seventh chord. Both of these chords became famous for both the sounds and associated symbolisms generated by both composers’ unconventional approaches to harmonic resolutions.
poignets” becomes “net poids mes mains mes.” Between measures 107 and 114, v’yous […] occurs twice as fragmented juxtapositions of the leaping gestures in the harp part, with no clear indication of whether the text or musical material frames this structure. Aperghis’s objective lies in dissolving reflective hierarchies between text and sound by reinforcing total entanglement, resulting in the inability to assign representational meaning to these motives.

Finally, Fidélité’s text and vocal structures explore the gendered body, emphasized by the psychological subtext (a man’s oppression of a woman, presumably his wife) and the physical theatricality of the piece. Gee writes, “Aperghis, in turn, focuses on the innate theatricality of human action and of the voice in particular. … The vocal actions and their resultant sounds contribute to a heightened awareness of the vocal performer as individual, centering on the very personal, often intimate nature of the human voice.”

Echoing the percussionist’s role in Le corps à corps, Fidélité’s harpist also acts as narrator-protagonist, simultaneously expressing and observing herself. Although we have seen how the instrumental material implicates the harpist’s agential body, the text allows her to do more: to speak; to scream; to cry; to laugh; and to whisper. Aperghis’s treatment of the voice forces listeners to view the harpist’s body beyond the confines of her instrument, and that, more importantly, she is gendered and situated. Therefore, the text does not represent her gendering so much as it confronts her gendered body, forcing her to come to terms with her materiality.

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249 Gee, 197.
Conclusion

This chapter’s analysis of Fidélité’s text and music resists the idea that they are reflections of each other, and despite their genealogies, neither are they mere reflections of a zeitgeist, an aesthetic sensibility, a political movement, or a theatrical/literary genre. Instead Fidélité is a dynamic organism that draws from other organisms, such as other musical works or compositional practices, with the possibility of creating open interpretations grounded in a philosophy of indeterminacy rather than disciplinary anarchy. Considering the range of Fidélité’s analytical and aesthetic contexts, my reading of the work proposes that the intra-action of text, music, harp, and harpist creates a gendered performativity within musical performance. In the next chapter, I will discuss aspects of this chapter’s analysis within agential realism and my concept of “genderharp” to demonstrate the co-gendering of harpist and harp within the theatre of Fidélité.
PART III: “The Relationship Between a Woman and Her Identity as a (Married) Woman”
CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL DIFFRACTIONS OF *FIDÉLITÉ*

To locate myself in my body means more than understanding what is has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go.\(^{250}\)

- Adrienne Rich

*What makes gender—*the substance of gender, as it were—* is the fact that it expresses, in every case, the desires of another. Gender has therefore a complementary relation to sexual orientation: If sexual orientation is basically the social expression of one's own sexuality, then gender is basically a social expression of someone else's sexuality.*\(^{251}\)

- Andrea Long Chu

*Fidélité* is a musical work about a woman understanding her womanhood. In his program notes, Georges Aperghis divides the piece into three segments: the relationship between a woman and her instrument, the relationship between a woman and music, and a woman confronted with a (married) female identity. The woman question, or *querelles des femmes*, occupies the center of *Fidélité*, invoking Western literature and music about and/or by women seeking to develop ideas—spanning a spectrum of feminist and patriarchal—about the female identity.

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Rich is responding to the need for considering feminism in its non-white forms and argues that the female experience cannot be reduced into simply “female” but must encompass other aspects of identity—what is black female experience, what is gay female experience, et cetera. Rich was a major advocate for gay/lesbian rights, women’s rights, anti-Semitism, and anti-racism.


Chu is a transgender woman whose writings on the female experience—contrary to the works of earlier feminist phenomenologists, i.e. Simone de Beauvoir, Iris Marion Young—insist that femaleness is a relation of desire, not a category of biological sex or of gender. Though Chu does not claim to speak of the female gender, her radical interpretation of “female” provides a new positionings of both “female” as a gender and “female” as an existential condition.
When considering how to begin talking about womanhood and the harp, I have turned to studies on gender and the harp and have found two particular trends. Dialogues about gender and the harp have focused on the negative, historical femininization of the harp but do not critically interrogate theories of gender and womanhood, such as through the use of gender theory (e.g. Judith Butler’s gender performativity) or seminal works of feminist theory and/or feminist phenomenology (e.g. Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir). Instead the scholarship has mostly studied the patriarchal objectification and symbolism of female harpists and the status of the harp as a feminized, subordinate instrument. As I had briefly alluded in the Introduction, both scholarly and practical responses to the gendered history of the harp have turned to advocating for lesser known, historical female harpists and harpist-composers (e.g. Sophia Corri Dussek), prolific research about well-known female harpists and pedagogues (e.g. Henriette Renié), and empowering diverse representations of female harpists in both classical and popular music idioms (e.g. jazz/pop harpists Deborah Henson Conant and Daphne Hellman).

One critical feminist approach to gender and the harp might start with thinking about how bodies affect each other and the impact of embodiment on the materiality of performance practices. My reading of Fidélité explores embodiment in two ways: feminist phenomenological suggestions for the female harpist; and material embodiments as sites for observing power dynamics. Agential realism’s diffractive methodology focuses on the effects of bodies meeting other bodies, not on the identity politics of what constitutes bodies or what bodies represent. Thinking about the phenomenology of the female harpist draws from the entangled processes of genderharp. “Female harpist” does not give ontological primacy to either “female” or “harpist,”

252 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985). Irigaray was a Belgian-French feminist theorist, philosopher, and linguist who wrote extensively on psychoanalysis and women. Her debut book *Speculum of the Other Woman* is considered by many to be an important, canonical text in Western feminist intellectual movements.
but rather thinks about how being female and being a harpist mutually constitute each other. Their mutuality leads to pressing questions about how economic and racial inequalities converge with gendered ones, and also how gender plays a significant role in some harp aesthetic and pedagogical legacies. In the case of the latter, stage performance practices—i.e. how female concert harpists may be expected to dress and act on stage—which stem from larger institutional and significantly gendered expectations in classical music.\textsuperscript{253}

This chapter ultimately seeks to understand how genderharps surfaces through \textit{Fidélité’s} performers, its compositional style, and the contexts of its performance. Genderharp proposes that performative connections between identities and bodies re-enforce each other, resisting the urge to attribute agential resistance to human subjectivities. \textit{Fidélité’s} female harpist does not possess agency (in the liberal humanist sense) over her representation and her ontological formation. She materializes and genders through other human bodies, such as other performers in the piece, Aperghis as the composer, and people watching her on stage. She also materializes and genders through non-human bodies, such as the harp, the score, the stage, and media/technology.

\textsuperscript{253} Anna Bull, \textit{Class, Control, and Classical Music} (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6. In her 2019 monograph \textit{Class, Control, and Classical Music}, Anna Bull writes that “dress, venues, technologies, reviews, post-concert chat, and divisions of labour, to name just a few possibilities, are all part of classical music’s ‘assemblage’ and contribute to its meaning.” Bull’s book addresses the impact of class on social relations, which in turn affects classical music and the ways in which certain demographics hear and participate in classical music.
Feminist Interventions of the Body: Class, Gender, and Space

A feminist intervention exceeds a local concern with ‘the woman question’ and makes gender central to our terms of historical analysis (always in conjunction with the other structurations such as class and race which are mutually inflecting).  

- Griselda Pollock

*Fidélité*’s opening scene immediately illustrates this entanglement of bodies that produces ideas about class, gender, and sexuality. A woman dressed in elegant blacks—signifying her social class—walks on stage with an equally elegantly dressed man (presumably her husband). The man pulls her by the wrist toward the harp and positions her at the instrument, being careful to also arrange her feet on the pedals. After this series of actions, he sits at a chair, demonstrating an obvious indifference to her performance. Once she has finished the piece, he removes her from her seat and drags her (again by the wrist) off the stage.

My first “feminist intervention” emerges as a critique of the relationship between the harp and Western contemporary discourses of class. In *Fidélité* Aperghis alludes to domestic bourgeois culture through the simple placement of a chair, indicating some type of domestic space. In addition to emphasizing tasteful attire for both characters, Aperghis incorporates the harp’s historically classed connotations into the narrative. This performance of “bourgeois” invokes what I called “displaced historicity” in Chapter Three. How much of Aperghis’ “female harpist” is actually in character? How much of *Fidélité*’s re-enactment of supposedly obsolete gendered, classed spaces overlap with the spaces of contemporary Western harp practice?

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As previously discussed in the scholarship of Ann Yeung and Olga Gross, the Western pedal harp has acted as a class symbol for European aristocracy, and subsequently for economically privileged and educated middle class families that gradually dominated European societies. I argue that the pedal harp continues to uphold its status as a class symbol for middle classes, particularly in societies influenced by European (both Continental and British) culture or affected by Western European colonial expansion. The three geographical regions in which the pedal harp currently flourishes include parts of the Europe (including the United Kingdom), North America, and East Asia.

In *Class, Control, and Classical Music*, Anna Bull studies the complex relationship between the middle class in the United Kingdom and classical music. Although she disclaims that “middle class” encompasses an extremely heterogeneous population, she observes:

> [Middle classes] tend to share “a strong commitment to education as key to middle-class cultural reproduction,” and a “particular set of values, commitments and moral stances” constituting a “bourgeois self” can be identified. These values include “a sense of responsibility, underpinned by individualism, combined with agentic citizenship and a propensity for choice,” as well as ambition, a sense of entitlement, educational excellence, confidence, competitiveness, hard work, deferred gratification, and an ability to erect boundaries, both geographically and symbolically.\(^{255}\)

Bull focuses on this assessment of “middle class” values as key in understanding why classical music and its education operate particularly effectively in the maintenance of classed spaces. The cumulative cost of private music lessons or conservatory preparatory programs may actively carve out those classed spaces by presenting financial barriers for prospective harp students. In

the United States, however, an increasing number of public or private-public partnership school harp programs have garnered attention for their successes, including: award-winning alumni; positive responses to their emphasis on socioeconomic cultural outreach; and increased racial diversity in their harp student populations. Without discounting the education and social merits of these programs, one must interrogate the implications of the harp’s own classed history on human identity-formation and the sociomaterial regulation of bodies. Founded by Philadelphia Orchestra principal harpist Elizabeth Hainen’s not-for-profit Lyra Society, GLISSANDO! is a private-public harp program and partners with a number of schools in Philadelphia. Former Lyra Society’s Executive Director and harpist Elizabeth Steiner says, “we're not aiming to create a fleet of [harp] professionals, but we are aiming for exposure and access … It changes the game—it gives you a bit of an identity. You never know who could be waiting for the right opportunity.”

A GLISSANDO! alumna writes in her student profile on Lyra Society’s website:

> Playing the harp has taught me more than just simply matching the notes on the score to the many red, black and white strings. It has taught me discipline, structure, love, grit and a thousand more qualities that I could go on and on about. Because of the harp I sit straighter, I walk with purpose, and I always arrive at least 30 minutes before an event starts. I take the harp with me wherever I go, whether it be an interview or a family function. Everyone knows I play and love the harp so much; it is woven into my very personality. No matter what school I attend or what job I may have, I will always be able to say that I am a Harpist [sic].

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Additionally, the Mesa Public Schools Harp Program—the largest public school harp program in the United States—states that “the complexity of [the harp] and the added sophistication to the senses that the harp provides creates a higher level of aesthetics to the music.” One journalist writing about the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble (a private-public program in Atlanta) notes that “the harp is an instrument that conjures images of femininity and wealth, but the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble at Atlanta's Carver High School is quietly dispelling this stereotype,” and in another interview with the Urban Youth Harp Ensemble’s founder Rosalyn Lewis, Lewis says, “I thought [an after-school harp program] was a great idea because the sheer cost of the [harp] and lessons was far beyond anything my students’ parents could afford, plus the exposure it would give them.” Lewis believed the diverse exposure to a harp education afforded by her program “had the potential to significantly impact the gender and ethnicity of the harp world.”

Harp education in the United States presents dilemmas about class and subsequently, the mutually affective relationship between class and expectations of gendered behavior. Bull’s exploration of class in classical music is also her exploration of:

The ways in which playing classical music (particularly string and keyboard instruments) is a way for young women to perform a “respectable” femininity, and asking to what extent the constraints and expectations of normative middle-class femininity facilitate or inhibit young women’s creative expression in classical music.
A new materialist intervention of this relationship between class and gender introduces the possibility that an instrument is not just a signifier of a certain socioeconomic class, but that the instrument and its material genealogy have the capacity to reciprocally shape its performers. The Western pedal harp both evokes a historically classed, gendered, and racialized image and agentially acts to class, gender, and racialize its performers through its materiality and its performance practices.

Although many contemporary harpists have sought to re-invent and modernize this problematic image of the harp, one cannot totally erase the social fabric that has made the Western pedal harp what it is. As Barad has stated about causal relations, the spatial separation of “cause” (the harp’s past) from “effect” (the harp’s present) assumes an exteriority that belies ethical accountability. Both the images and the practices embodied in the Western harp tradition lend themselves to a complicated conversation about class rehabilitation, social mobility, and the harp. For example, how do the uses of words like “exposure,” “access,” and “identity” in classical music educational practices relate to other economic, political, and social factors? Citing political theorist Wendy Brown, Bull indicates an extremely complicated relationship between the middle class and a growing rhetoric of neoliberal subjectivity:

Both individualism and choice have been particularly emphasized in the last two to three decades as attributes of bourgeois identity that have become building blocks for a preferred type of subject under neoliberalism, a new sociopolitical regime whereby “all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of a market rationality.”

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Furthermore, is Lewis’ hope for a racial and economic diversification of the harp actually indicative of a linear path to democratization? Does she give too much agency to the human individual’s ability to change the harp and its practices? Does a focus on representation ignore ways in which the disciplinary canon of the Western harp tradition—its “added sophistication to the senses”—can create neo-idealist narratives of colonialism?263

An agential realist intervention of these dilemmas demands a shift away from representation as a simple solution for inequitable perceptions of the harp. While representation can be useful for mitigating inequality, one must also consider more deeply interrogating how the material genealogy of the Western classical harp tradition continually participates in the gendering, classing, and racializing of human/non-human bodies and spaces.

In her exploration of middle-class participation in classical music, Bull adds:

I am drawing on the idea of middle-class boundary-drawing to theorize the aesthetic of classical music as another mechanism—similarly to education or suburbanization—for maintaining middle-class spaces. The technical requirements of classical music’s repertoire, instruments, and ideals of beauty mean that those who are unwilling or unable to make the long-term investment needed to master these are unable to participate in classical music production.264

Performance practices of the harp, as exemplified through Bull’s understanding of “technical requirements,” are regulatory mechanisms that shape harpists’ bodies. I further argue that these

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264 Bull, 6.
performance practices are directly and mutually entangled with the material-discursivity of the harp itself as well as the physio-social spaces historically inhabited by the harp.

In Fidélité Aperghis emphasizes the domestic, female bourgeois life through his theatrical depiction of space. Private, feminine spaces have immense political, economic, and cultural significance. Art theorist Griselda Pollock has discussed the depiction of women in domestic spaces in visual art as a point for discussing gender politics and feminist phenomenology; nineteenth-century female artists—she especially explores the works of American painter Mary Cassatt (1844-1926) and French painter Berthe Morisot (1841-1895)—often painted still life works or scenes of domestic life and private spaces (e.g. the home). Spaces are not passive settings, and Pollock goes on to argue that “the spaces of femininity operated not only at the level of what is represented, the drawing-room or sewing-room. The spaces of femininity are those from which femininity is lived as a positionality in discourse and social practice. They are the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility, in the social relations of seeing and being seen.”

Fidélité’s spaces simultaneously intersect knowledge about class with the Western pedal harp’s entangled history with issues of class; in this economic context, classed, domestic spaces also locate gendered differences—how the female (harpist) and the male (actor) navigate the same space and how they are differently constrained by the same space.

Reading genderharp diffractively with Fidélité shows the inextricability of class in the intra-actions of gender and the harp. Class influences the aesthetic regulation and performativity of gender, which in turn influences that of the harp. Judith Butler reminds us that “performative” does not mean “constructed” but “stabilized through regulation over time” when she says:

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265 Pollock, 66.
To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent is “identity” a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? … Inasmuch as “identity” is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of “the person” is called into question by the cultural emergence of those “incoherent” or “discontinuous” gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.266

In the context of the pedal harp, aesthetic judgments of gender are mediated by aesthetic judgments of class; the confluence of judgements, in turn, also regulates bodies. To say that harpists “perform” classed ideals of femininity does not mean they are self-reflexively choosing to do so or that their performance is constructed and therefore, not real. Instead, the heteronormative performativity of pedal harp performance practices defers to the regulatory power of Western European class and gender identities, which in turn are iteratively reproduced as performativities. Furthermore, these discourses of class and gender in pedal harp culture also involve conversations about aesthetic values determined by race/colonialism and religious and/or sociomoral ideologies.

As a result, genderharp relates a much more complex narrative beyond simply “gender” and the “harp.” Returning to Barad’s concept of the material-discursive, the pedal harp and harpist emerge through an entanglement, not a linear causality, of discourse(s) and matter. To better explain “material-discursive,” Barad refers to the example of the human fetus as an enfolding of social and material practices:

266 Butler, Gender Trouble, 23.
From the perspective of agential realism, the fetus is not a preexisting object of investigation with inherent properties. The fetus is a *phenomenon* that is constituted and reconstituted out of historically and culturally specific iterative intra-actions of material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production. The fetus as a phenomenon “includes” the apparatuses of phenomenon out of which it is constituted: in particular, it includes the pregnant woman (her uterus, placenta, amniotic fluid, hormones, blood supply, nutrients, emotions, etc., as well as her “surroundings” and her intra-actions with/in them) and much more. The object of investigation is constructed through the enactment of particular cuts and not others. Which cuts are enacted are not a matter of choice in the liberal humanist sense; rather, the specificity of particular cuts is a matter of specific material practices through which the very notion of the human is differentially constituted.267

A “fetus,” Barad argues, emerges through process; a fetus is not a “self-contained, free-floating body located inside a technomaternal environment.”268 A discussion of the fetus as a material-discursive phenomena, mediated by material-discursive apparatuses, does not focus on whether it possesses agency (in Barad’s rebuttal of Monica Casper’s 1994 article “Reframing and Grounding Nonhuman Agency: What Makes a Fetus an Agent?”, autonomy, or subjective identity. Instead, the identity of “fetus” stabilizes through material apparatuses, such as the woman carrying the fetus, fetal imaging through ultrasonography, and reproductive technologies, which in turn intra-act with discourses, such as motherhood, human agency, and racism and classism, respectively. Like the fetus, the harpist is “a *phenomenon* that is constituted and reconstituted out of historically and culturally specific iterative intra-actions of material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production.” The harpist “as a phenomenon ‘includes’ the apparatuses of phenomenon out of which it is constituted: in particular, it includes” the harp, the score, the repertoire canon, concert dress [etiquette], the stage, the practice room, the harpist’s body (size, shape, color), racialized labor and neoliberalism, geopolitical location and pedagogy-

268 Ibid., 217.
as-nationalism (i.e. “French” or “Russian” methods), and technical and interpretive methodologies created by a body of mostly male harpists.

**Genderharp: A Material Critique of Subjectivity**

Genderharp’s departure from gender and harp studies from the twentieth century mainly lies in its argument for the diffusion of human agency and exceptionalism in response to social injustices. Agential realism attempts to counter human exceptionalism by insisting that humans exist in entanglement with, not in superimposition to, the material world. How does feminism make sense in an agential realist model? One might argue that feminism must consider female subjectivities, female empowerment, and female agency acting against a patriarchal society; feminism is about defining womanhood and the female experience in response to sociocultural and economic structures that have not considered women. In these contexts, the focus on the representation and musical/social impact of female harpists certainly falls within feminist veins.

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270 These labels more likely serve as broad nationalist or legacy markers and are not necessarily indicative of specific styles. The Russian method of harp playing, for example, further divides into sub-branches (often stemming from individual teachers), such as the Moscow and the St. Petersburg lineages. I have experienced working with teachers who possess an intense loyalty to one’s pedagogical nationality (e.g. “I only teach the French method”) and shun methodologies from other nationalities.

271 In the United States, a large majority of American harpists teach the “Salzedo” method (after Carlos Salzedo, modified by his former wife and student Lucile Lawrence) or the “Grandjany” method (after Marcel Grandjany. In France, there is the Paris Conservatory lineage (including the teachers Alphonse Hasselmans, Marcel Tournier, and Pierre Jamet). Currently, the most widely practiced method written by a female harpist is the Renié method (after Henriette Renié), and the majority of methods in contemporary circulation consist of those established by European male harpists.
Criticisms of mainstream second-wave feminism, such as intersectionality (first mentioned by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989) and standpoint theory, introduced the idea that feminism could not congeal a multiplicity of differences amongst women.

While I do agree that a more equitable presence of women in the harp’s history is important, a representational methodology obscures the processes that make representations and identities, subjecting female harpists to divisive identity politics. “Female harpist” constitutes representations and identities. Read through *Fidélité*, “female harpist” also becomes a body materialized through intra-actions with other bodies. A female harpist is matter, or as Barad writes, “a substance in its intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity.” The shift away from the human self as center allows more openness to consider the things entangled in the production of our subjectivities and differences rather than focusing only on how our different subjectivities determine epistemological outcomes. Viewing the female harpist as a material-

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272 Second-wave feminism was a feminist movement that flourished between the 1960s and 1970s and was marked by an increased focus on gender equality, such as through equal pay, in contrast to first-wave feminism’s primary focus on abolition. Though second-wave feminism divided into many sub-movements, one of the main criticisms of the second wave rested on the dominance of educated, white, middle-class women as the progenitors of the movement and the assumption of the universality of “women’s issues.”


Not to be conflated with Donna Haraway’s theory of situated knowledges, standpoint theory encompasses a broad, epistemological trend in feminist theory that emphasized the situatedness of identities and their knowledge. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy condenses standpoint theory’s objectives into three points: “(1) Knowledge is socially situated. (2) Marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized. (3) Research, particularly that focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized.”

discursive phenomenon, not a bounded human subject, unfolds “different possibilities for reworking material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production: acts of subversion, resistance, opposition, and revolution.” These possibilities can implicate the non-human, such as agential effects of the harp and its technologies on harpists, breaking the concept of human subjectivity as the only site for agency. This perspective allows us to question what is “natural” and/or normative, who has power, and what gets implicated in the resistance against normativities.

Therefore, re-thinking agency in context of the gendered harp and harpist demands a resistance against prioritizing human subjectivity in representation and an increased consideration of diffractions—other things entangled and acting within representations. The material-discursive configurations of *Fidélité* challenge the subjective agency of the performer and the woman, resisting the idea that the [female] harpist has power over how she presents/is presented, how she perceives/is perceived, and how she watches/is watched. Instead agential realism attends to the intra-activity of *who* and *what* she is. These intra-actions implicate other human and non-human materialities enfolded in her materialization. Both Yeung and Gross have discussed some of these phenomena, such as the femininization of the harp’s physical structure or the sociopolitical and economic factors that contributed to trends in harp

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276 Ibid., 218.

Returning to diffractions of “fetus,” Barad points to lesbian reproductive technologies (artificial gynogenesis) as an example of non-human agency through genetic manipulation. Artificial gynogenesis involves destroying DNA in the sperm and using meiosis or genetic material from a second egg to re-create a diploid ovum. Barad cites Sarah Franklin’s 1990 essay, which argues that artificial gynogenesis literally “[re-works] the material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production” by subverting the “unnaturalness of test-tube conception and the supposed ‘naturalness’ of the [patriarchal, heteronormative] institutions.”


Gross constructs this evocative image of the female harpist: “To play [the harp], the harpist spreads her legs and draws the harp towards her body, nestling it against her shoulder. Using the flesh of
construction, demand, and practice.\textsuperscript{279} The pedal harp’s unwieldy body, described by Gross as physically shackling the harpist to her instrument, was not a constant norm. Medieval harps, such as those played by troubadours and minstrels, were smaller for traveling purposes. As demonstrated in Roslyn Rensch’s research on the harp in visual art, the depiction of harpists and harpers\textsuperscript{280} in pre-modern European visual art skews towards men, and particularly in Christian imagery of King David and his lyre.\textsuperscript{281} In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, playing the larger pedal harp took on more sexually suggestive tones. Robert Adelson and Jacqueline Letzer’s article on gender and the harp expresses that the harp presented challenges for female decorum because playing the instrument exposed one’s limbs in an unseemly way to the public, and “paradoxically, it is perhaps for this very reason the harp became the instrument that men liked to see in the hands of women. The instrument conformed to ‘feminine decency,’ but it also presented a titillating spectacle that was far from uninteresting for the male viewer.”\textsuperscript{282}

Perhaps this grossly sexualized and feminized nature of the harp in the eighteenth century can be summed by this observation:

her fingers, she plucks the strings directly, as the instrument resonates against her shoulder. Only her limbs are free to move across the strings and manipulate the pedals. Her torso and head are completely restricted from any motion. Woman is physically and symbolically bound by the harp.”

\textsuperscript{279} Yeung, “Gender, Image, and Reception: The Development and Social History of the Pedal Harp.”

\textsuperscript{280} The term “harper” is often used to denote a harp player outside of the classical music tradition, such as one who performs in the Celtic harp tradition. “Harpist” generally refers to a harp player who practices within classical music. It is important to note that some harp players may play classical music on a Celtic harp and refer to themselves as “harpists.” The distinction between “harper” and “harpist” is not always clearly delineated and may depend on the individual harp player’s preference.

\textsuperscript{281} Rensch writes in “Early Representations,” 29-51: Rensch, “The Harp in Art, 1200-1665,” 52-74. Rensch writes in “Early Representations” that “As for the harpists who played these harps, the [pre-twelfth century, Western European] art examples show an exclusive group, with King David foremost. The earliest representations and the majority thus far considered, depict the biblical psalmist, or one of his companions, with the harp. ... The preponderance of biblical figures is hardly surprising, since most all of the art extant from this period is religious art.”

\textsuperscript{282} Adelson and Letzer, 321.
Prior to 1760, the expression “to play the harp” (“jouer de la harpe”) meant [satirically] to “to [sic] pilfer or steal,” an anti-semitic allusion to the harp-playing [of] King David. After 1760, however, French dictionaries add [sic] a new meaning: to grope a woman’s body; “to play with one’s hands upon a woman, to slide one’s hands over her, to touch her private parts, to grope her with one’s fingers, rub her clitoris and excite her with one’s fingers.”

Meanwhile, Yeung traces the growing economic and political stabilization of Western Europe as an impetus for developing larger harps. These larger harps, of course, dispelled with mobility, and the implementation of more complex, chromatic technologies, from lever to early pedal mechanisms, contributed to the further alienation of the harp as an accessible instrument (both in size and difficulty), fueling a reputation of elitism. The intra-action of the harp’s growing elitism with exploding cultural growth in Europe’s metropoles encouraged instrument-makers to lavishly decorate their harps; the increasingly ornate designs of the harp fueled the instrument’s status of cultural refinement and wealth. As the harp moved indoors into more private spaces, it gained even more popularity as a woman’s instrument in context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European ideals about the domestic roles and delicate, virtuous characterizations of women. Following Sebastian Érard’s 1810 patent for the double-action pedal harp mechanism and the subsequent, gradual stabilization of the double-action harp as the concert standard, Yeung credits new waves of sociopolitical and economic changes throughout the twentieth

283 Ibid., 325.

New developments in pedal harp technology continue to occur, but the fundamental modulation mechanisms used by manufacturers have remained mostly unchanged. The most widely known exception is Paris-based Camac Harps’ “Memory Harp” prototype, a pedal harp with a computer-controlled, hydraulic pedal mechanism. However, the “Memory Harp” never entered commercial production. Most contemporary manufacturing developments have addressed issues with volume of sound, tone, weight/size, and mobility, and most of the largest harp manufacturers have also entered the electric and electroacoustic harp market.
century as the impetus for increased representation of female harpists outside the home and in professional music settings.

*Regardée/Regarder: Power and the Partiality of Vision*

*Fidélité*’s narrative of womanhood diffracts with the sociocultural trajectory of the pedal harp, enabling Aperghis’ theatrical choices to act as apparatuses cutting boundaries around the identities of the harp and female harpist. Apparatuses, to recall Barad’s definition, “are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices—specific material (re)configurings of the world—which come to matter”\(^{285}\) [original emphasis]. Aperghis’ situating of the male gazer and the female gazed both describes and produces gendered and classed power dynamics in harp performance practices.

Furthermore, Barad states that apparatuses are also phenomena (and vice versa), which constantly de-stabilizes the identities of the gazer/subject and the gazed/object. Contrary to what Aperghis indicates in *Fidélité*’s subtitle “pour harpiste seule regardée par un homme” (“for solo female harpist watched by a man”), the male character is not the only gazer. In a different material configuration, *Fidélité*’s audience also gazes, or perhaps in yet another configuration, the female harpist gazes, or in another, the harp gazes, or in another, Aperghis, as the composer, gazes. Therefore, the gazer does not signify center/subject, and more importantly, watching does not entail possessing the ability to subjugate. The gaze—entailing both *regarder* (“to watch”) and *regardée* (“being watched”)—is itself an important apparatus, producing attributes and

\(^{285}\) Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. 140.
relations within phenomena. Additionally, my reference to Fidélité’s “regardée” doubly refers to Donna Haraway’s commentary on vision that “optics is a politics of positioning.”\textsuperscript{286} She writes:

Vision is \textit{always} a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualizing practices. With whose blood were my eyes crafted? … [Histories of technologies] are ways of life, social orders, practices of visualizations. Technologies are skilled practices. How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? Who gets blinded? Who wears blinders? Who interprets the visual field? What other sensory powers do we wish to cultivate besides vision?\textsuperscript{287}

Despite their binaristic positioning, “to watch” and “to be watched” are powerful apparatuses, allowing us to glimpse structures otherwise hidden by representations and reflections. Watching and gazing constitute onto-epistemologies. Watching is intra-active.

Furthermore, watching does not limit itself to human eyes. How? Looking upon something entails causalities—not in the conventional, logical sense of “cause and effect” but agential causality (marks made by one body acting on another). Aperghis watches his composition and his performers and co-genders through his gaze. Man watches woman and co-genders through his gaze. Audience members watch performers and co-gender through their gazes. Harp and harpist watch each other and co-gender through their gazes, creating \textit{genderharp}.

Although the discourse of “gender and the harp” has focused intensely on rebutting feminist-crippling, femininized stereotypes from pre-twentieth- and twenty-first-century Western culture, I am not as interested in the rebuttal/negation of those stereotypes. My genderharp reading of Fidélité may not necessarily reveal a more empowered female harpist or show what

\textsuperscript{286} Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 586.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid., 585.
kinds of performances represent female empowerment. Instead my intent lies in recognizing the partiality and mutuality of identities, the power relations (apparatuses) that situate (cut) those identities, and the accountability of all bodies involved in those processes. I insist that performance practices and musical enactments in repertoire do not reflect our identities, but that they form identities through intra-actions with other bodies.

_Fidélité_’s theatre and sound demonstrate how bodies watch each other and how that intra-active watching produces gendered relations and identities. I focus on different material-discursive bodies (man, woman/harpist, harp, composer, score) and how their intra-actions stabilize and perpetuate concepts of gender and, more specifically, how womanhood intra-acts with the harp. In the next section, I look at two paths of inquiry that stem from Fidélité’s subtitle “for female harpist watched by a man.” The first part, “for female harpist,” investigates the significance of gendered embodiment in the execution and interpretation of the piece. The second part, “watched by a man,” extends the concept of the gaze-as-apparatus and focuses on how the piece’s configuration of bodies produces, perpetuates, and subverts power structures of gender and class.
“For Female Harpist”: Genderharp and Situated Embodiment

One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. ... For girls and boys, the body is first the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that brings about the comprehension of the world: they apprehend the universe through their eyes and hands, and not through their sexual parts. 288

- Simone de Beauvoir

Though Aperghis’ boldly ironic scoring of Fidélité for “female harpist” is perhaps the first of its kind, the harp’s musical history involves a robust practice of composers dedicating works to female harpists. Considering this history, “for female harpist” recalls both the historical practices and aesthetic implications of musical patronage. In the eighteenth-century Paris, for example, composers often relied on patrons, many of whom were musically educated noblewomen, for financial support and in return, dedicated works to them. These dedications, in turn, were “an important source of information for aristocratic patronage, providing insights into the popular view or reputation of the dedicatee.” 289 For example, a piece dedicated to the eighteenth-century French Princesse de Lamballe would perhaps have suited the aristocratic environment of court salons and certainly would not have been performed on the streets of Paris. These dedicated works therefore possessed social cues to indicate for whom the piece had been written, and therefore also where the piece might be played.

288 De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, 283.
289 Grant, Female Portraiture and Patronage in Marie Antoinette’s Court: The Princess de Lamballe, 191.
In contemporary harp performance practice, these spatial and functional distinctions in concert repertoire have blurred. Contemporary harpists often engage with Western classical repertoire in acontextual spaces; for example, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century salon pieces are performed in large concert halls or twentieth-century concert works make their way into house concerts, church services, or even funerals and weddings. Aperghis’ placement of the harp and his music within theatre is perhaps an attempt to re-situate the work within a timespacemattering rather than allowing an embodied performance to cede into disembodied audiation. *Fidélité* demands that we consider questions of “What is female? What is harpist? What is female in relation to harpist?” alongside the music, and not to ignore the bodies in performance. The process of learning the piece involves a consideration of one’s own body: am I female? How am I female? How is my female-ness affected by the harp? By the piece? If I am not female or do not otherwise identify as female, how does my non-female-ness alter the performance?

Aperghis relies on the harpist’s voice and her body to create embodied parameters around the piece, and he also reads her embodiment through the harp. The harp, with its gendered history, constitutes an apparatus through which the harpist’s female-ness materializes. This process occurs, for example, in the opening vignette when the woman becomes the “female harpist” when the man installs her at the harp. The meeting of female and harp bodies literally creates the material-discursive phenomenon “female harpist.” Subsequently to that intra-action, the harp cannot be perceived independently of the woman and vice versa; the harp is now genderharp.

Within the piece, the most prominent example of genderharp occurs at the climax. After building tension through increasingly fragmented sections, the harpist attacks the harp in a fit of rage, frantically pulling at strings and aggressively stomping on pedals as if intending to destroy
the instrument. Having already been placed, even symbolically chained, to the harp, the harpist acts in subversion to her state of body. The subversion, however, cannot exist without first locating her body in its specific gendering, which in turn does not exist out-of-relation to the harp. *Fidélité* therefore demonstrates gender, harp, and harpist as exteriorities-within. Countering the female harpist with a male harpist would not alter the relation; it would be a completely different relation, marked by a different apparatus that produces different boundaries. Aperghis also relies on gendering through language and the voice (i.e. vocal inflections, emotional cadences) to create genderharp identities, and he also challenges the harpist to negotiate completely non-idiomatic techniques, resisting much of the “elegant” aesthetic one might argue is inherent to the harp.

Yet these compositional choices should not only rest on subverting identities, such as the transformation the harp from “elegant” into “edgy.” Barad notes that “while subversive acts play on the instability of hegemonic apparatuses, they—like the hegemonic attempts to contain contradictions and add stability to the apparatuses—including reinforcing and destabilizing elements.” In *Fidélité*, therefore, subversive musical acts can instead act as diffractive nodes through which to view frictions and differences.

*Fidélité*’s confluence of music and theatre produces questions of how the limitations and partialities of our bodies have ontological implications. Aperghis’ decision to program the piece “for female harpist,” along with the sheer physicality of his musical writing, prompt questions about what differences emerge with a performance by a female harpist rather than just any harpist. More importantly, “female harpist” acts as an apparatus for viewing agential cuts, such as embodied differences and structural inequalities. These cuts allow us to see our accountability

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290 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 219-220.
to injustices and also to provide opportunities for exploring different experiences of diverse bodies and new aesthetic worlds from feminist and posthuman phenomenologies. Thinking of these phenomenologies requires a situating of harp and harpist and asks: What does it feel like to be a “female harpist”? Where do womanhood and harpist meet halfway in their entanglement?

The physicality of the harp requires many harpists to bend their bodies to produce idealized audiations, and it is within this sheer physicality that one can locate one’s body. Identifying as a harpist and learning/teaching the harp are not politically neutral acts; they are sites for a politics of a difference. Self-proclaimed “black lesbian feminist socialist” writer, theorist, and civil rights activist Audre Lorde argues:

Certainly there are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation. … Too often, we pour the energy needed for recognizing and exploring difference into pretending those differences are insurmountable barriers, or that they do not exist at all. This results in a voluntary isolation, or false and treacherous connections. Either way, we do not develop tools for using human difference as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance.

What does a politics of difference look like for harpists? I suggest that the very fundamental elements of playing the harp—“proper” technique and musicianship—already implicate a distorted universality that filters the deviant from the normative. One must consider the questions of “who?” and “for whom?” in relation to the methodologies and repertoire that constitute the canon of a classical harp education. On one hand, these investigations would reveal differences,

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293 Ibid., 115.
such as variations of pedal harp sizes over centuries, perhaps to accommodate the difference bodily sizes of the harp’s target players. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, these target players were comprised of a mainly white, European demographic, and most harp teachers—with some exceptions—were male. In the twenty-first century, the body of classical harpists is more racially and physiologically diverse than it had been in previous centuries. The increased variability of bodies, experiences, and cultural traditions requires re-appraising the techniques, repertoire, and perceptions of “good musicianship” derived from a canon constructed by homogenous factors (race, gender, class, physical ability, religion, and cultural values).

I consider my own experiences as a cis-female person of Taiwanese descent. The small size of my hands and body—perhaps more normal amongst people of my sex and ethnicity—cannot easily reach intervals of twelfths and thirteenths, which often appear in repertoire written by (often male) harpists with much larger hands. My “natural” physique often cannot sustain extended passages of chords at a forte dynamic. In response, some of my teachers have told me to “build up my body” or to apply more strength from my arms and hands when plucking harp strings in order to achieve their perception of a more desirable sound or affect. As a result, the self-conscious labor of my othered body (in relation to the harp) is both literal and figurative. The labor is literal in the physical work I must do to obscure my otherness in the music I produce, and the labor is also figurative in negotiating my otherness against white European,

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The Austrian harpist Josef Molnar is considered by many Japanese harpists to have founded the Western harp tradition in Japan during the 1950s, which may have facilitated the more prominent role of Asian harpists in the international classical harp community. However, I also include this description of Molnar by Russian harpist Sasha Boldachev to suggest the need for a more critical reflection of Molnar’s legacy: “The words ‘God’ and ‘Father’ appear on the lips of many harpists whenever the name of Josef Molnar is mentioned. … He is considered ‘The Father of the Harp in Japan.’”
patriarchal, heteronormative expectations of beauty and femininity that still prevail in some circles of classical harpists.

Beyond this understanding of my body through my own lens, there are many other considerations of difference in female bodies that have immense structural implications. In the case of cis-female bodies, some harpists have been applauded for their ability to maintain performing careers and be mothers, yet the state of being pregnant has revealed deep structural biases and inequalities that manifest through maternal leave policies, the affordability of health insurance and childcare, and tenuous financial security for freelancing harpists or those hired in a part-time capacity (often without benefits) in orchestras and academic institutions. In an interview, Canadian harpist Judy Loman cites her experience overcoming challenges as a female orchestral player in the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in the 1960s:

If a female player got pregnant … she was expected to stop playing in the orchestra as soon as the pregnancy was beginning to show. But what happened with me is that I stayed for as long as I could comfortably embrace the instrument, because there weren’t many harpists that the TSO could hire while I’m away on maternity leave for months. So I played through pregnancy, and after that, other women in the orchestra could too.295

Associate harpist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra Susan Jolles also shares:

When I was pregnant with my first child, a contractor from New Jersey called me. There was a big event at Lincoln Center. I remember that Tony Bennett and all the big stars at the time were there, including Joan Rivers. The contractor said, “I want you to know I don’t hire women, but you’ve been highly recommended and I can’t find any men that are available.” Those words speak for themselves. Then, when I was pregnant with my second child, I was returning from a day trip to Washington D.C. with a group that I will not mention. It was early in the pregnancy and I was feeling pretty sick. We arrived at

Lincoln Center around 2 a.m. I asked if somebody could help me find a cab. One of the men turned to me and said, “You want to work like a man, you have to act like a man.” So there you have it.296

Despite invaluable efforts to use increased representation of women to combat these structural biases in professional classical music culture, the politics of difference does not only refer to the social identities of bodies, but also to differences generated by bodies in relation to sound. I have described my experience with the othering of my body in the canonic production of classical pedal harp repertoire and technique. Perhaps one might also consider how canonic pedagogies, shaped by past bodies and shaping present/future bodies, affect musical and aesthetic preferences that create normative “ears” in classical musicianship. Although the “blind screen” has long been touted as a symbol of a politically neutralized meritocracy in auditions and has been admittedly vital to diversifying the racial and gender composition of symphony orchestras, I argue that an embodied institutional aurality still exists and demands further interrogation. While I acknowledge the implicit subjectivity in music appreciation and practice, my appropriation of the term “institutional” here infers that certain affective subjectivities in classical music have become sustained structurations. These structurations, in turn, create complex power relations that are reinforced by discursive-material inequalities of gender, race, and class.

Situating the female harpist’s embodiment within a politics of difference facilitates a step towards a “corrective justice”297 with regards to issues of gender, sex, race, class, and ability

in the institutionalized pedagogical and performance practices of the Western classical harp tradition. A corrective justice for gender and the harp demands that harpists challenge and call out patriarchal power structures that have disadvantaged women economically and socially, rather than focusing on the statistical equality of male and female harpists. One must query whether the appeal for female harpists to empower themselves by “breaking down feminine stereotypes” thoroughly addresses what even constitutes images of “female empowerment,” who influenced those images, and how those images became regarded as empowering for women. Moreover, I argue that the reliance of empowerment narratives on the assumption of “free will” (e.g. the freedom of individual choice, self-determination) does not always entail an ethical accountability to historical injustices. As philosopher Charles W. Mills writes, “the context of choice is an ideal society, not in the sense of an ‘ideal’ social order self-consciously correcting for past injustices but an ‘ideal’ society without any such history.”

While representational difference as one type of corrective justice is important in changing cultural and social perceptions of the Western pedal harp and harpist, focusing on the metrics of equal representation alone does not sufficiently address structural processes that underlie equitable representation. For example, in a conjectural situation in which a committee of white men tokenistically selects a woman and/or person of color as a candidate for a job, is

I use “corrective justice” in context of the work of Jamaican political and social philosopher Charles W. Mills, who wrote the book *The Racial Contract* and many other texts on race and contract theory. In “Philosophy and the Racial Contract,” Mills imagines several possibilities for racial corrective justice, including: “the ending of second-class citizenship (both in terms of electoral questions—e.g., the problem of white majoritarianism—and other areas like police brutality and the general biases of the criminal justice system); the ending of racial exploitation (not just ongoing practices of discrimination but also the legacy of past practices in the form of the huge wealth gap between white and black and Latino households); and the ending of racial disrespect in its multiple dimensions (e.g., routine pejorative media representations of blacks, the Confederate flag issue, the symbolism of Civil War monuments, the use of Native Americans as sports mascots, Eurocentric school textbooks, and so forth).”

that decision to diversify actually equitable? Or does an unequal power relation—established by structural contracts of privilege—ultimately ground that decision? Therefore, equal representation of gender and the harp must be intervened by a politics of difference that is based on embodiment and the genealogies of those embodiments. Otherwise, the desire for an “ideal society” could easily subsume or erase the differences most clearly affected by acts of social injustices (see footnote 297). To quote Lorde, “there is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist.”

When tracing these genealogies of difference, one must also consider that historical sources only tell us partial narratives about female musicians (both professional and amateur). This partiality itself is entangled within the difficulties of equitable representation. The historical inequality of women’s education ensures that letters and manuscripts preserve the legacies of only the most privileged, silencing the experiences of the everywoman. Prior to the twentieth century, few female music critics and philosophers existed in public cultural circles. In harp scholarship researchers have looked to the polymath Caroline-Stéphanie-Félicité du Crest de Saint-Aubin—also known as Madame de Genlis—a French writer, educator, and harpist with ties to the Bourbon-Penthièvre royal family, as well as the virtuosi Dorette Scheidler Spohr, Sophia Corri Dussek, and Anne-Marie (Steckler) Krumpholtz. I have found existing scholarship of Scheidler Spohr, Corri Dussek, and Steckler Krumpholtz to lack a critically feminist lens, partly due to the authors’ strong focus on the relationships between the harpists and their more famous composer husbands.

299 Lorde, “Age, Race, Class,” 116.
300 I reviewed this scholarship in the literature review in the Introduction. Refer to footnotes 22-24.
Reviewing the historical research of Henriette Renié, one of the most thoroughly researched female harpists from the twentieth century, presents a possible example of using personal and musical genealogies to understand female embodiment. First, one must consider that Renié already stands in a position of great privilege. Through the efforts of many devoted students, her legacy has been well-preserved and therefore accessible to contemporary scholars.

In a series of interviews aired by Radio-Sottens in 1965, Renié recounts her memories of being a young harpist, so prodigiously talented that her formidable musical abilities allowed her to transcend some social boundaries of gender. At the age of ten, she won the Premier Prix at the Paris Conservatory; she joined composition classes at the Conservatory, noting some self-consciousness in being the only female student in those classes. At the age of twenty-five, she became the first harpist to play any concerto (also notably, she premiered her own concerto) with the Concerts Lamoureux, a prestigious musical society in Paris. Although Renié’s accomplishments make her an exception and allow her to rise above the multitudes of nineteenth-century “lady harpist” dilettantes, it is important to remember her, not as transcending her gender through her accomplishments, but as providing the invaluable perspective of a woman as a harpist. Odette de Montesquiou, self-proclaimed as “one of the most faithful former disciples of Henriette Renié,” intimates some of these perspectives through her published correspondence with Renié:

301 Though Renié was born in 1875, the majority of her career existed (evident through the completion of most of her significant musical compositions) during the twentieth century. Therefore, I consider her as musical figure active during the twentieth century instead of the nineteenth century.
303 Haefner, 11.
One should not be satisfied with “perfection,” with everything being in its proper place. I don’t care about that. One must have generosity, passion, sensitivity, and spirit. One must be able to give oneself, to give part of oneself, or what one has received; to be lacking enough in those little ready-made ideas called “inspiration.” Too bad if it makes people tremble and if it moves them. One only gives what one has.\footnote{De Montesquiou, 51.}

Renié also believed that the more a musician could refrain from too much personal interpretation “so that the listeners forget him in order to listen to the work in its own beauty … the more he nears perfection.”\footnote{Ibid., 51.} This juxtaposition captures an instance of Renié’s conflict between self and transcendence of self, and it is in this conflict I re-situate the idea of “female harpist” from a collective symbol of resistance into a locus for thinking about “difference” from the stances of feminist phenomenologies and embodied performance practices.

The confluence of Renié’s lived experience as a female harpist and Aperghis’ “female harpist” re-inforce the following perspectives to genderharp: ontological relations are materially entangled; and the gendered harpist is a specific positionality mutually enacted by harp and harpist. In the same way that Adrienne Rich uses her “white skin” to comment on the necessary intersectionality of feminism, \textit{Fidélité} uses “female harpist” to cut boundaries of gender and remind where those boundaries can and cannot take us. This realization marks an important node in understanding womanhood—not as a social construct but as embodied difference. Therefore, a harpist must define her womanhood beyond a reduction to sexual anatomy and acknowledge how her body, and not just her subjectivity, affects aesthetic production and valuation.
“Watched by a Man”: Genderharp, Power, and the Gaze-As-Apparatus

Feminist approaches in classical music must rely on tracing material-discursive flows of power rather than grounding subjugation in issues of identity. Discourses of gender in a musical context have relied on interpreting certain musical gestures as “feminine” or “masculine,” which takes gender identities for granted. Susan McClary, for example, famously critiqued the use of the term “feminine endings” in musical analysis as a more latent indication of female subjugation and sexual politics in classical music.307 Jonathan Kramer, though appropriately disclaiming his lack of “the space [and] the expertise to enter this debate [of postmodernism and feminism] in the context of music,”308 problematizes perspectives of gender and musical language, comparing modernism to masculinity and postmodernism to femininity.309 In the context of Fidélité’s “watched by a man,” a feminist analysis does not simply analyze man versus woman or masculine versus feminine. A feminist analysis must dissect who has power and how power emerges in differences; the addition of an agential realist analysis then suggests that matter and materialization produce and implicate structures of power. Barad wants us to ask, “How is

307 McClary, Feminine Endings.
308 Jonathan Kramer, Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening, 232.
309 Ibid., 232.

Kramer writes, “In some ways, hardcore modernist music—such as that by Schoenberg, Webern, Stravinsky, Hindemith and Barton, and that by latter day modernists like Boulez, Babbitt, Carter, Stockhausen, Nono, and Wuorinen—can be characterized as masculine. This music can be aggressive, uncompromising, and challenging. Music which retains some form of atonality, such as the French surrealist music discussed in Chapter 9 and the latter-day music of a postmodernist bent discussed throughout this book, can be characterized in some ways as feminine. ... It should be understood that, although I am not prepared to offer definitions of the masculine and the feminine in music, I do not believe that music composed by men is necessarily masculine and that by women is necessarily feminine. I am thinking about the masculine and/or feminine personae of the music itself, not of the shape of the genitalia of the actual people who wrote the music.”
difference iteratively produced? What local forms does it take? What differences do differences in production make for the production of different differences?”

If “for female harpist” negotiates the embodied differences within intra-actions of woman, harpist, and harp, the appellation “watched by a man” enacts a friction that produces differences and introduces apparatuses that configure materializations of power between those differences. Returning to the gaze apparatus, “watched by a man” refers to Barad’s perspectives of causality and the accountability involved in agential cuts. In their most transparent interpretations, Aperghis’ theatrical choices refer to the power dynamics of the patriarchy and the female psyche in response to her oppression.

I propose that the piece’s “watched by a man” also materializes other power relations in addition to those implicated in gender. These relations might involve identity, such as class and race, but also extend to aesthetic ideologies in classical performance culture. For example, I challenge Buchanan’s interpretation of Aperghis as a composer-auteur as well as the perpetuating [patriarchal] myth of creative authorship that obstructs agential perspectives of materiality in performance. Finally, I locate a third body—the audience/public/critic—that uses the gaze-apparatus to regulate and stabilize (cut boundaries around) social aesthetics and socialized bodies.

In Fidélité’s performance instructions, Aperghis captures the power dynamic between the man and the female harpist through the act of watching, which he further nuances with specific physiospatial contrasts. The tension of the scene relies on the binaristic conflict between activity and passivity: the man brings the woman onto the stage (active) and places her at the harp (passive). He sits at a chair at a distance and does not speak (passive) while she sings/speaks and

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performs virtuosically (active). She is, however, restricted to her instrument (passive) when performing while he moves from the harp to the chair (active). Ultimately, he is the first to move (active)—upon waiting for her to finish the piece—and leads her (passive) off stage. The harp, which mediates the entire scene, literally cannot move (passive) but also is the sonic and visually expressive mechanism through (active) and on which (passive) the harpist acts.

Solely focusing on “active” as empowered and “passive” as disempowered, however, turns into a struggle for power to subjugate and fails to consider who even gets to contest for power (e.g. the premise of structural inequality). For example, I emphasize the harpist’s ability to express her character in unconventional ways—such as breathing, panting, screaming, knocking, non-lyrical singing. Aperghis’ unconventional sonic language only exists meaningfully when perceived in relation to the material bodies on stage: the harp, the male actor, the female harpist, and even the stage itself. For example, the presence of the female harpist within the piece negotiates boundaries around what constitutes social and musical subversion when considering the harp’s social and aesthetic genealogy. The physical presence of the male actor—whether acting as husband, patriarchy, or institution but in relation to the female harpist—forces viewers to acknowledge that the woman does not express herself for her own pleasure. Although physical distance from the male actor permits the guise of privacy/agency for the female harpist, emotional distance and the state of being watched re-enforce the idea that her expressive empowerment still exists in the margins.

Rather than positioning subject against object, Aperghis’ use of distance between bodies indicates that subversive sounds and representations do not always equivocate with subverting patriarchal structures. While the musical style of Fidélité does challenge the harp’s oppressive, gendered association with bourgeois domesticity and “half-naked girls with long, blond hair,
who confine themselves to drawing seductive glissandi from it,” sonic subversion, though valuable to re-configuring gendered ideas about the harp’s aesthetic, is not necessarily what makes *Fidélité* an interesting case study for genderharp. Instead, the apparatuses and phenomena intra-acting through Aperghis’ setting for the piece materialize issues of embodiment and identity politics that already permeate the history of the Western pedal harp. Furthermore, these specific issues have only emerged specifically through Aperghis’ postmodern compositional style, the dissolution of representational narratives through musical fragmentation and non-semantic text, and the way bodies play an important role in the production of sound. Therefore, diffracting discourses of gender, the harp, and power with *Fidélité*, “is not about some proclaimed symmetry between subject and object, or social and scientific practices, but rather about the production of mutually informative insights that might be useful in producing an enriched understanding of materiality, agency, and the nature of techno scientific and other social processes.”

Additionally, genderharp does not restrict itself to the gendering of the harp. The term genderharp, as I had introduced, disputes the ontological and epistemological separation of “gender” and “harp” in the phrase “gender and the harp,” but I also argue that both gender and the harp are themselves materially entangled with other modern discourses—notably those of race and class. Therefore, one must consider those entanglements in a critical analysis of gender and the harp. “Female harpist” is by no means a homogeneous label, and genderharp cannot assume the universality of gendered experiences. This specific stance on the inextricability of class, gender, and race (what Mills referred to as “the big three”) has been increasing prevalent

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312 Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 208.
in domains of critical theory, cultural studies, and the social sciences since the latter half of the twentieth century, and I align my theoretical perspective with this history of scholarship.\(^{314}\)

Understanding identity as relational intersections is relatively new to sociological analyses of classical music. Bull writes:

Debates on diversifying classical music, while they are still in their early stages, are troubling classical music’s disavowal of the social. On one hand, some of the distinction of classical music lies in its exclusivity, which will be destroyed or diluted by increasing its popularity, while on the other hand, practitioners desire to share what they love with the world. In order to diversify classical music, a more sophisticated social analysis of its practices, institutions, and social significations and, through these, its value is required. Rather than a renewed justification of its extrasocial musical value, this demands an understanding of how classical music’s distinctive aesthetic shapes practices that contribute towards socially valued identities, which in turn are shaped through particular class, gender, and race positionalities.\(^{315}\)

From a methodological perspective, agential realism’s philosophy of entanglement allows genderharp to interrogate the extrasociality of classical pedal harp practices. Because agential realism posits that bodies both reveal and are themselves made of material-discursive relations, I argue that genderharp spans a gamut of social, political, and economic phenomena that create

\[^{315}\text{Bull, 1.}\]
positionalities of difference. As a new materialist analysis, genderharp also emphasizes the importance of viewing these phenomena and relations through material bodies (not as purely human constructions). In her commentary of Leela Fernandes’ materialist study of Kolkata jute mills, Barad states that “issues of political economy and cultural identity are inseparable” because the workers’ gendered identities, which are also mutually entangled with the Indian caste system, also constantly re-enforce power relations within the mill’s structures of production by both humans and machines.

I use Barad’s example to posit that Fidélité’s material conditions “produce relations of class and other forms of cultural identity in the intra-action of humans and machines.” The meeting of machines (harp) with humans (man, woman) in a specific material space (stage) in the performance of Fidélité points to the identity politics of who is playing the instrument and who is watching the performance. These identities point to many economic/class issues: who can afford to attend concerts; to buy an instrument and instrument supplies; to take on years of music lessons. Additional scholarship on classical music and class in the United States and United Kingdom also point to Western classical music’s history as a tool of class rehabilitation and cultural reform. Racially and/or ethnically inflected narratives also emerge. How well do

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317 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 236.
318 Ibid., 237.
319 Ibid., 237.
320 Bull writes that “Rollock et al., in their study of Black middle-class parents in London, found they would enroll [sic] their children in lessons on orchestral instruments to counteract the ‘deficient’ Black stereotype, including the gender-specific ‘(perceived) Black male threat constant within wider


Fidélité and its historical context resonate with colored bodies? (Not well). Beyond mere demographic diversification, how do classical harpists of color negotiate their racial identities within classical music’s celebration of white, European cultural imperialism?\(^{321}\) In his 1993 book The Sight of Sound, American musicologist Richard Leppert uses a Marxian approach to study the intersections of class, race, and gender with musical practices in Sir Charles D’Oyly’s 1824 watercolor The Summer Room, set in India:

The two musical instruments, a grand fortepiano and a pedal harp, appear in both drawings. Each [instrument] enjoyed unassailable status among the European upper classes, the harp having come into its own among women in the late-eighteenth century… The extra-musical status garnered by their bulk interests me in particular here. These large instruments … are also oddly shaped and hence difficult and expensive to pack and ship. Like most musical instruments, they are also delicate, hence easily damaged, and highly sensitive to climatic change. … It is precisely this impracticality that increases their ideological use value. In India their significance has as much to do with a totemic function as a musical one. Inessential, like most other furnishings, to the economic and political success of colonialism, they are nonetheless important as cultural fetishes and markers of racial difference.\(^{322}\)

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society.’’ This particular example demonstrates the aspirational value of Western classical music. Meanwhile, Kolb’s evaluation of classical music concert attendance (based on data from a study done by the National Endowment for the Arts in 1998) demonstrated that rises of income—generally regarded as an indicator for increased spending on arts and culture—did not significantly alter the attendance of African-Americans at classical music events. Kolb uses this data to conjecture that racial and/or ethnic diversity in classical music attendance is affected by both economic status and the specific sociocultural values upheld in Western classical music.


Whiteness is a complicated discourse. Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to “white” and inversely, to “color,” in the ways done in cultural studies (i.e. critical race theory) to talk about subject/other relations in a racial context. My use of “white” generally denotes to the sociopolitical discourse of “white European,” rather than to the literal racial category of “white.” For example, in the United States the census category of “white” currently applies to people of Middle Eastern or North African descent, and historically, the Irish-Americans and Italian-Americans were not considered “white.” Yet as Neda Maghbouleh details in her book The Limits of Whiteness, to label oneself “white” does not necessarily reflect broader narratives of racial politics and violence that also imbue meanings into those labels.

Leppert’s analysis re-enforces the entanglement of economy and identity: to talk about gender in relation to the harp is also to talk about the harp as a symbol of class for women, strengthened by patriarchal values of femininity and domesticity. To talk about class in relation to the harp is to talk about the color of harpists’ skins and to address issues of race in the history of the harp and how these historical, aesthetic values continue to permeate contemporary harp performance practices. Black harpists, for example, have found a more robust home in jazz than in Western classical music, despite the pioneering labor of classical harpists like Ann Hobson Pilot (former principal harpist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra). Pilot herself has uttered that “[the harp wasn’t considered an instrument a black girl was able to play.” Nevertheless, jazz harpists Dorothy Ashby and Alice Coltrane contributed significantly to both the jazz harp practice and repertoire in the twentieth century and in the twenty-first century, younger American harpists like Charles Overton and Brandee Younger have continued the genre. Described as “a harpist of rare prominence in jazz [who is] building on an African-American legacy largely defined by Ms. Ashby and Alice Coltrane,” Younger self-professes to have “found kinship in the jazz program” as a classical harp student at the University of Hartford’s The Hartt School: “[The Hartt School] was a real culture shock,” [Younger] said. ‘I didn’t fit in socially.’ She hadn’t attended a

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Former Boston Symphony principal harpist Ann Hobson Pilot is considered by many to be the pioneering figure for black Western classical harpists. Danseyar reports that “when Pilot joined the BSO as second harp and principal harp for the Boston Pops in 1969, she was the first black woman to join the orchestra, which was founded in 1881, and only one of three black musicians playing in the country’s leading orchestras.”
performing arts high school, which was one difference. Another was more glaring: ‘Black girl, plus harp,’ she said wryly. ‘I stuck out like a sore thumb.’”

Despite increasing efforts to promote people of color in classical music or to create more affordable opportunities in classical music education, however, I question whether Western classical music can be positioned as a politically neutral, culturally universal art form that can be adopted by different populations without encountering frictions. My objective in this section has been to challenge the belief that the problematic social history of the Western pedal harp is an obsolete narrative that can be erased by vigorous, “empowering” image rehabilitation in the present. Instead I insist that this history—fraught with more concerns than that of pitting women against men—actively and mutually participates in the materiality of the pedal harp, which produces performance practices that in turn regulate the bodies of harpists.

_Fidélité’s_ bodies-watching-bodies physically reminds its performers and audiences that a musical performance is not a transcendent, static object; each performance embodies an implicit sociality created by complex, entangled relations. Applied to Aperghis’ use of the gaze, the politics of siting/sighting also infers that acts of watching are: 1) agential cuts that resolve material-discursive bodies and, in turn, materializations of identities; and 2) significant acts of power that can center and marginalize different positionalities. While the phrase “watched by a man” certainly problematizes female oppression through the male gaze, my application of “gaze” as a Baradian apparatus allows a more extensive analysis of how performance practices and the

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325 Several emerging organizations that promote classical musicians of color include Chineke!, a British orchestra comprising mostly black players, Orchestra Noir, an all-African-American orchestra, The Dream Unfinished, an “activist orchestra” based in New York City, The Sphinx Organization, an arts and social justice organization, and Challenge the Stats, an education and concert series platform for musicians of color. Notably, Challenge the Stats was founded by the American harpist Angelica Hairston.
material conditions of \textit{Fidélité}’s performance can more broadly highlight issues of gender, race, and class implicated within the Western pedal harp’s history and traditions.

\textbf{Viewing Authorship through Genderharp}

The entanglement of genderharp and the gaze apparatus also diffract with patriarchal concepts of authorship to subvert gendered performance practices. In his dissertation, Jason Buchanan draws parallels between auteur theory and the creative style of Georges Aperghis, citing that “issues of authorship and division of artistic responsibility [of an auteur] serve as a useful analogue when discussing the role of a composer in theatrical works.”\footnote{Buchanan, “Behavior and Compositional Process in Georges Aperghis’ ‘Luna Park,’” 56.} Buchanan argues that Aperghis’ artistic functions resemble that of an auteur, who would oversee and influence the overall creative decisions in a film. Nevertheless, Buchanan acknowledges that Aperghis takes a more intuitive, lively approach to the creation of his works—he uses the phrase “influence [performers’] behavior” to describe composers’ shift to collaborating with musicians throughout the compositional process and proposes that Aperghis’ model “has the potential to provide greater interpretive freedom and emphasis on collaboration. … in other words, a safe space for creative dialogue where the composer is not necessarily the authority, but a partner.”\footnote{Ibid., 58.} In response to Buchanan’s analysis of Aperghis as an auteur who creates flexible paradigms for performers, I argue that auteur-ship, whether collaborative or absolute, constitutes agentially-cut boundaries instead of objective states of authorship. Collaboration is not subjective but agential; composer, performer, and instrument are all material-discursive phenomena and apparatuses in intra-action. Interpretations “according to the composer’s intent” or “with historical authenticity”
do not reveal a more truthful work; they are agential cuts mediated by material-discursive pedagogical and aesthetic apparatuses. According to some perspectives, Aperghis might possess absolute authorship over the execution of his works, but the postmodern and post-structural veins running through his compositional process (as discussed in Chapter Two) more likely suggest that his authorship/auteur-ship emerges from material conditions-discourses of aesthetics, power, gender, colonialism/post-colonialism, and class. Thinking about gender, subjectivity, and authorship, for example, might manifest through Kramer’s parallels between “masculine” and “feminine” and modernism and postmodernism:

The way hardcore modernist composers have sought (and still do seek) to marginalize current tonal music does parallel the way masculine values and attitudes have sought to subjugate feminine values and attitudes. The postmodern in music, like the feminine, is still the other—distrusted, kept from power, yet still in some ways alluring (radical postmodernism’s abiding ability to disturb audiences, or for conservative postmodernism’s acceptance by audiences.  

Though I do not necessarily agree with Kramer’s ease in drawing parallels between gender and musical styles, he does bring up the problem of a hegemonic center’s withholding power to the other and the underlying politics of postmodern music as a medium for exploring otherness. In response, feminist ideas about authorship in classical music—whether modernist or postmodern—might question the myth of meritocracy, essentialism/colonialism, the absence of intersectionality, and other universalisms that shape classical harp culture and its structural practices.

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328 Kramer, 233.
This radical departure from conventional modernist and classical approaches to learning and performing musical scores creates room for queerness, subversion, and resistance. In the context of *Fidélité*, “for female harpist watched by a man” produces certain power relations that rely on the harp’s history of subjugated women. Earlier, I argued that this specific scoring also prompted questions about female embodiment in a way that most works for harp do not. Yet I do not think Aperghis’ theatre should be read only reflectively. Resisting normative interpretations and performance practices in a work like *Fidélité* could involve the queering of the female harpist; I imagine a rich exploration of other power dynamics and embodiments for performers in drag or performers identifying as trans-gendered.

As a performer and educator invested in the educational and cultural rhetoric of classical music, I push against the masculinization of creative authorship and instead look toward works and artists (many outside of classical music) that take entangled, partial embodiments into consideration of authorship. Some examples include: Vietnamese-American filmmaker Trinh Minh-ha’s *Reassemblage*330 (a post-colonial critique of the documentary genre); Canadian Indigenous poet Billy-Ray Belcourt’s anthology *The Wound is a World*331 (his body as a locus of queer and post-colonial resistance); and American pop singer Janelle Monáe’s *Dirty Computer*332 (intersections of blackness and the female in the cyborg).

Re-thinking authorship as situated embodiment ultimately de-centers the composer, not by denying his/her/their role in the creative process, but by changing the causal relationships...
between composer, score, and performer(s). This change has immense implications for pedagogies and performance practices by re-situating performers’ attention from their roles as compelling interpreters to those of agential bodies actively producing identities through material entanglements. Rather than focusing on negating or empowering fixed identities, harpists can perceive their bodies as intra-active embodiments with boundaries in constant states of becoming.

**Genderharp as a Social Aesthetic**

Diffractions of “watched by a man” have led this inquiry of power from co-gendering to authorship to one final path: genderharp as regulated by a social aesthetic.\(^{333}\) We have seen gender emerge through *Fidélité* itself and through different relationships between the composer and the performer. Using the gaze-as-apparatus, however, also produces gendering through the intra-action of the public/social body (audience) and the material conditions of *Fidélité*. A musical performance does not occur in isolation. The environmental circumstances can affect a performance so much that many performers simulate symptoms of nervousness during practice sessions to better prepare for the effects of stage anxiety. Aesthetics are socialized and the social is aestheticized through these intra-actions between performers and those who watch them. My understanding of genderharp as a social aesthetic draws broadly from the following statement in the book *Improvisation and Social Aesthetics*:

\(^{333}\) My use of the phrase “social aesthetic” does not seek to embed itself within the theoretical lineages of social and relational aesthetics. Instead ‘social aesthetic’ simply acknowledges the socialization of aesthetics.
[The field of aesthetics] needs to consider the many ways in which individual aesthetic judgments are influenced by social processes and pressures that may be fluid or rigid and enduring. It needs to address how social entities themselves—social groups, populations, cultural institutions, disciplinary formations, governments—adopt, invent, forge, promote, and/or police certain aesthetic tendencies and positions. And it needs to register and theorize how particularly socialities and social relations can themselves ‘get into,’ partake in, and animate aesthetic imagination and experience.334

Diffracting this conceptualization of “social aesthetics” with Barad’s agential realism produces the idea that social aesthetics emerge through materialities. A performance therefore intra-acts with bodies beyond those involved in the creative process (composer, scores, instruments, performers) and co-produces, with those watching, a social-material aesthetic.

In the performance of Fidélité, genderharp becomes socialized and regulated through the meeting of harpist, harp, and audience. I define the audience as a social body and a material-discursive apparatus through which gendered identities emerge. The social body does not represent discourse, nor does it represent the abstract institutional bodies enforced by recursive, performative acts. The social body is the materialization of collectivities that constantly negotiate with bodies performing on stage, such as through acts of applauding (e.g. never between movements), demanding encores, writing concert reviews, self-publicizing on social media through photos and event invitations, and interacting with the audience during the performance (through spoken program notes or acknowledgements). These intra-actions demonstrate that the music itself plays but one role in a larger configuration. What matters includes how the harpist dresses, how she/he/they walks and bows on stage, what kind of repertoire is chosen, and how that repertoire is conveyed to the audience. The feedback we receive from audiences influences how we might choose to present ourselves. For example, a colleague once asked if he needed to

“tone down on his gayness” in a competition in fear that an overly flamboyant shirt might offend a jury member and affect his chances of winning. Thinking about this phenomenon in context of Fidélité, I argue that the female harpist, not as the character but as the performer, cannot perform without being watched and policed by the social body. Her identity falls within a constantly enfolding of her character of “female harpist” (enacted through the piece, mediated by her relationship with the composer) and her being as “female harpist” (enacted through her performance, mediated by her relationship with the audience).

Genderharp acknowledges that the female harpist is not only posthumanist performative (intra-active), situated through agential cuts, and inculcated in power relations, but that she also emerges through a materially socialized aesthetic. Therefore, reading genderharp as a social aesthetic again entails an accountability to distributions of power, and more practically, how concert practices themselves produce power relations of class, gender (and sexuality), and race. For instance, I point to the mission statement of the American Harp Society, Inc., a United States-based, national professional organization for both classical and non-classical harpists: “To celebrate our legacy, inspire excellence, and empower the next generation of harpists.”335 Whose legacy? What defines excellence? How are some individuals privileged to a singular perception of “excellence” and others not? How do those questions identify who comprises “the next generation of harpists”? We have to question what kind of legacy we are celebrating, not so as to reject it per se, but to be accountable to the flows of power in certain legacies. The stakes go beyond the aesthetic boundaries of Fidélité and into real re-configurations of pedagogies and curriculum, of history and literature (how harpists teach repertoire and talk about its hallowed

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Conclusion

Learning how to intra-act responsibly within and as part of the world means understanding that we are not the only active beings—though this is never justification for deflecting that responsibility onto other entities. The acknowledgement of ‘non-human agency’ does not lessen human accountability; on the contrary, it means that accountability requires that much more attentiveness to existing power asymmetries.\(^\text{336}\)

- Karen Barad

In her essay “Notes toward a Politics of Location,” Adrienne Rich asks, “But once having said [“I”], as we realize the necessity to go further, isn’t there a difficulty of saying “we”? […] We who are not the same. We who are many and do not want to be the same.”\(^\text{337}\) Contemporary dialogue about embodiment, gender, and the harp must include this question of “we” and consider the making of the things that constitute “we.” This dialogue acknowledges, for example, that the harp comes from a predominantly white, European tradition of elitism and bourgeois sensibilities, and that women did not always dominate professional harp circles and possess the same artistic liberties as their male counterparts. These traditions permeate pedagogies and performance practices, leaving new generations of harpists with the difficult choices of which legacies to preserve and which to leave behind. The history of the Western pedal harp comprises marked bodies, which in turn mark our bodies.

\(^{336}\) Barad, \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway}, 215-216.

\(^{337}\) Rich, 224-225.
Inquiring the makings of “we”—of human and non-human bodies intertwined with our enactments and inventions of gender—has led to reading harp and harpist through the fuzzy boundaries of Karen Barad’s agential realism. Contrary to Rich’s understanding of embodiment as identity that shapes experience and movement, Barad sees embodiment as an iterative process, asserting that things are not “located in the world but are material configurations or re-configurings of the world.”338 While Rich demonstrates the importance of identity to more inclusive and sympathetic feminisms, Barad’s perspective of embodiment demands an accountability to how those identities are made, not what those identities are, and more importantly, de-centering the anthropocentrism of identity politics. “We,” in the context of gender and the harp, does not merely harness the collective power of female harpists, nor does interrogating “we” always empower diversity in female harpists. Furthermore, the response to “we” is not “I”—both retain a human-centered subjectivity. “Female harpist” denotes neither the exclusive subjectivities of “we” nor “I.” The female harpist is a body, and as Astrida Neimanis writes, “the thing called ‘the body’ … is a congeries of other bodies, and always on the move.”339

In the same way that the narrative of “we” often erases the complexity of its formation, the focus on representational shifts in classical harp culture has not attended sufficiently to how and why those inequal representations exist and the differentiated bodies implicated in the politics of representation. Viewing the important, increasing diversification of pedal harp culture as moving beyond the time when “Marie Antoinette and her kind sat around in salons and plucked in a gracious, ladylike way”340 engenders a tempting illusion of line that separates the

338 Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway, 146.
339 Neimanis, Bodies of Water, 34.
present from the past. Subsequently, this line obfuscates how the past continues to mark harpists’ bodies through repertoire canons and pedagogical lineages. Furthermore, this separation, while empowering in its emphasis on “choice” and “agency,” does not acknowledge the many ways in which contemporary performance practices continue to instigate historical injustices.

As a result, I have turned to the crux of performance practice—the music we play—as an important locus for understanding how these injustices unfold in the act of performing a musical piece. The experimentalism of Fidélité’s postmodern language permits the exploration of contradictions; namely, how the explicitly gendered nature of the piece invokes the oppression of women but also interrogates the bodily relations that produce this oppression. In agential realism, a contradiction does not nullify reality; contradictions actually explicate the multiplicity and partiality of worlding. Therefore, these contradictions produced by the music, text, and theatre Fidélité have facilitated important discussions about how bodies matter and how they intra-act as the world. Bodies are not shells inhabited by the subjectivities of “I” and “we.” Bodies are active doings, becoming-identities, and worldings-in-action.
CONCLUSION

i fall into the opening between subject and object
and call it a condition of possibility

and i think about the time an elder told me to be a man and to
decolonize in the same breath. there are days when i want to wear
nail polish more than i want to protest. But then i remember that i
wasn’t meant to live life here and i paint my nails because 1) it looks cute
and 2) it is a protest.

- excerpts, Billy-Ray Belcourt

My reading of gender and the harp through agential realism and Georges Aperghis’ 
*Fidélité* has led me to the concept of genderharp and a feminist, embodied approach to analyzing
a musical work. Agential realism’s emphasis on matter as dynamically productive, rather than
passively reflective, permits the idea that gender does not occur as a cultural construct, mediated
by humans and subjected onto the materiality of the harp and harpist. Instead, gender emerges
through the material intra-actions of harp and harpist, and gender itself constitutes other
entanglements of race and economics. Agential realism via genderharp has proven its relevance
to historical and aesthetic perspectives of gender and the harp. The insistence on the mutuality of
gender and the pedal harp, for example, strengthens Ann Yeung’s historical research on the close
relationships between the mechanical development of the harp, socioeconomic trends in Western
Europe, and Continental discourses on femininity and class. Yet agential realism also suggests
that these relationships are intra-active, not interactive, which changes relational causality from a
linear/hierarchical model to a lateral/rhizomatic one. The lateral causality of agential realism

341 Belcourt, “Gay Incantations,” in *This Wound is a World*, 11.
creates difficulty in pinpointing a single source of the harp’s feminine stereotyping. Focusing on finding a source can only better illuminate (but does not change) this aspect of the pedal harp’s past.

I introduced genderharp as a way to bring bodies back into the discussion of gender and the pedal harp. Much of the rhetoric of gender and the harp has focused on representation and how to mitigate inequalities in representation, whether those inequalities are statistical or rooted in stereotypes. Barad’s emphasis on the agency of matter enables dialogues about how our physical bodies (not mediated by our consciousness of our bodies) emerge in intra-activity with other bodies in the world, and that bodies can also be apparatuses that cut boundaries around intra-actions to create realities. Apparatuses and the material configurations that designate those apparatuses matter.

As a result, reading genderharp and agential realism through Fidélité has demonstrated how both harp and harpist behave as apparatuses that gender each other, how Fidélité’s staging and musical score also become apparatuses that create specific power relations implicated within gender, and how the specific realities enacted by Fidélité’s material configurations highlight the important political and ethical implications of agential realism. Ultimately, a genderharp paradigm seeks justice for women and women’s bodies by articulating the importance of tracing

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A cursory glance at the results of an internet search on the keywords “gender,” “male,” and “harp” yield the following community forum queries: “Reasons for mysterious gender imbalance in harp playing...?”, “Why are male harpists so rare?”, and “Why are there so few male harpists?” Another targeted search on two other popular keywords that I have encountered as a harpist—“beautiful” and “angelic”—with the word “harp” extracts: the toy “Harp Angel™ Barbie® Doll”; concert reviews touting “virtuosic and angelic harpists” or the negating “more than angelic” and “so much for the harp’s angelic voice;” and multiple freelancing harpists using the words “harp” or “angel” in their professional monikers. On the website Harp Column’s popular forum, a user writes, “I can’t be the only one who noticed this.... [sic] What is it with harpists and being so beautiful? Which came first, the beautiful instrument or the beautiful person who decided to play it?”
injustice in the production, not the representation, of femininity. Criticizing feminine stereotypes should not, in the process of doing so, deny women the experience of their bodies and the exploration of how their differently embodied experiences differently situate our knowledge of the harp, its repertoire, and how we as harpists perform our instruments in public.

**Review of Chapters**

Chapter One offered three main theoretical takeaways from agential realism that contribute new critical perspectives to existing scholarship on gender and the harp. The first is posthumanist performativity, Karen Barad’s adaptation of Judith Butler’s gender performativity, which argues against centering human subjectivity, consciousness, and discourse in discussing ontology, epistemology, and agency. Posthumanist performativity claims that performativity does not only implicate human speech-acts regulated and stabilized by human institutions. In context of harp and gender, gendered identities do not emerge only through language and discourse, which would otherwise grant too much power to the way we talk about the harp and not attend to how material objects acting through each other can also gender both harp and harpist. Furthermore, Barad uses posthumanist performativity to argue that agency is enacted, not possessed. Barad resists what she calls “liberal humanist” conceptions of agency—agency as the conscious capacity to act on or against something—which ultimately engenders an optics of injustice based on (unequal) privileges of possession. Posthumanist performativity posits that matter, by virtue of its capacity to affect, is agential, and therefore we must re-consider agency beyond the confines of human consciousness.
Adopting a posthumanist perspective of agency creates considerable ethical and political stakes. For example, Barad takes the brittlestar, a brainless invertebrate comprised almost entirely of lenses (eyes),\textsuperscript{344} to assert that its lack of a brain and thus lack of willing-to-act does not detract from its capacity to survive and affect its surroundings, or to make controversial waves in scientific research. The brittlestar is certainly capable of acting upon the world even if it does not possess agency mediated by consciousness.\textsuperscript{345}

Using this perspective, I have addressed the importance of considering the harp and harpist’s bodies as agential instead of referring to the harpist’s agency to (re-)gender the harp. My alignment with feminism demands this distinction because I have explicitly chosen not to use pop-feminist buzzwords like “empowerment,” “choice,” and “agency” in response to their obstruction of structural inequalities that have nourished oppressive, gendered aesthetics in harp culture. Attributing aesthetics to individual choice ignores the permeability of boundaries between bodies—our decisions are never spatially separated—and the extent of material entanglements involved in acts of choice. Aesthetics is not just an abstract idea. Aesthetics constitute material practices enacted by, not on, bodies-in-relation. Rather than considering \textit{Fidélité}’s female harpist as an object of gendered aesthetics, I have focused on examining how the material collision of harp, woman, and harpist in \textit{Fidélité} can produce both gender and gendered aesthetics, and the importance of bodies in production of gender indicates the need for


Barad writes that “the researchers found that the approximately ten thousand spherically domed calcite crystals covering the five limbs and central body of the brittlestar function as microlenses. These microlenses collect and focus light directly onto nerve bundles that are part of the brittlestar’s diffuse nervous system. Remarkably, the brittlestars secrete this crystalline form of calcium carbonate (calcite) and organize it to make the optical arrays.”

\textsuperscript{345} Ibid., 227.

Barad adds that “brittlestars do not \textit{have} eyes. They \textit{are} eyes. That is, it is not merely the case that its visual system is embodied. Its very being \textit{is} a visualizing apparatus.”
a greater accountability to the world’s materiality. Although this model may seem materially deterministic, it demonstrates the necessity of considering matter alongside discourse and resists reducing the relationship between gender and the harp to an endless cycle of discursive constructions and de-constructions.

Furthermore, a posthumanist performative reading of gender and the harp could not exist without a diffractive methodology. While posthumanist performativity argued for a renewed understanding of what matter is (agential), a diffractive methodology looks at what matter can do and how matter moves. Diffraction has played a vital role in the structuring of my dissertation by emphasizing the inextricability of matter—diffraction allows us to visualize matter as paths of things passed through other things—and focusing on those tensions produced by the processes of passing-through. A diffractive methodology has taken Fidélité’s depiction of a feminized, racialized, and classed (Western) harp and harpist as a starting point for thinking about embodiment and power; this statement demonstrates the musical work as agential and the harp and harpist as co-worlded, not discretely bounded, bodies. Without diffraction, a feminist reading of Fidélité would likely only focus on how sonic elements of the piece resist stereotypes of the harp’s feminine sound, or another approach could involve a scathing critique of how Aperghis’ scoring reveals the unfair depiction of the harp as a woman’s instrument. While both of these perspectives might offer important insights, the focus on negating representations creates divisive identity politics and does not necessarily consider how gendered perceptions of the harp interact with changing social movements and perspectives. In response, a diffractive methodology involves pursuing frictions inculcated by the non-linear meeting of two or more concepts and/or things, such as I have done in this dissertation with Fidélité, gender, and agential realism.
Furthermore, analyzing *Fidélité* and Aperghis’ compositional style has also led to considering the citationality of bodies and the entangled relationships between music and the bodies that produce music, which returns to philosophical ideas in genderharp and agential realism. The gendering of the harp is an extremely complex phenomenon. The harp’s modernized public image and its more recent push for gender diversity and inclusivity do not imply we are now unaffected by issues of gender. Diffractive perspectives of gender and the harp allows us to view the feminine stereotypes of the harp—not just for what they are not (i.e. empowering)—but as performativities constantly transforming through encounters with different bodies: harpists, harps, concert curators, stages, buildings, technologies, media, composers, sound, tools, clothes, conductors, administrators, audiences, and communities. Each encounter creates a different (though sometimes intersecting) path of inquiry about the harp’s gendering; *Fidélité*’s intra-action of harp and harpist only cuts only one of many boundaries of gender in context of the harp.

The many possibilities of agential cuts through diffraction leads to my dissertation’s most important takeaway from agential realism: ethics and genderharp. Barad clarifies that her stance on ethics is not predicated on the individual as the ethical subject, but citing the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, that proximity creates ethics.\(^{346}\) An onto-epistemological paradigm based on entanglement thus implies that “to be” entails constant ethical dilemmas. In context of genderharp, this observation suggests that the harp’s gendering, produced through the harp and harpist’s proximal relationship, concerns ethics as much as it does aesthetics. The ethics

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\(^{346}\) Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 391.

“Levinas rejects the metaphysics of the self that serves the foundation for conventional approaches to ethics. Subjectivity is not a matter of individuality but a relation of responsibility to the other. Crucially, then, the ethical subject is not the disembodied rational subject of traditional ethics but rather an embodied sensibility, which responds to its proximal relationship to the other through a mode of wonderment that is antecedent to consciousness.”
of the harp’s gendering does not only refer to the problematic sexualization of women or simply to point that fair representations matter because “there is a web of causal relations that we are implicated in and that there are consequences to our actions.” Barad goes on to say, “we are a much more intimate part of the universe than any such statement [about causality] implies. … Our (intra)actions matter—each one reconfigures the world in its becoming—and yet they never leave us; they are sedimented into our becoming, they become us. And yet even in our becoming there is no ‘I’ separate from the intra-active becoming of the world.”

Rather than focusing on the ways in which ideas about gender have significantly defined the harp’s identity, genderharp invests in highlighting the players that produce the gendered harp and holding those players accountable to what they materialize. In the case of Fidélité, I have held the (artistic) players accountable by looking at differentiated embodiments (the female harpist and the male gazer), by examining the situated history of the Western pedal harp, and by considering the power dynamics enacted by the confluence of different bodies. Furthermore, these explorations are thoroughly entangled with each other and with much more of the world. There is no “right” way to view gender and the harp, nor does a singular, linear path of progress that takes us from oppression to freedom exist. Instead the ethics of genderharp focuses on how certain musical practices and bodies act as apparatuses that create other bodies through agential cuts, the range of other materialities implicit in acts of gendering, and how these realizations, in turn, demonstrates the world’s proximity to us. If ethics is about relational proximity and not subjectivity, what role does the human then take? Barad answers with, “We are responsible for the world of which we are a part, not because it is an arbitrary construction of our choosing but

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347 Ibid., 394.
348 Ibid., 394.
because reality is sedimented out of particular practices that have a role in shaping and through which we are shaped.”

Despite agential realism’s central role in developing the core ideas about gender in relation to the harp, its application to performance and music has only been able to emerge in relation to the compositional style of Georges Aperghis. Although one could potentially discuss the ethics and politics of gender and the harp in context of older musical works—for example, how Suzanne Cusick discuss embodiment in context of Fanny Hensel’s Trio in D minor—Aperghis’ engagement with radical social theories by his contemporaries presents a more fruitful example of how critical theory and musical performance can work together. In Chapter Two, I discussed Aperghis’ musical genealogy, which draws from the politicization through theatre and the deconstruction of language and musical form. These trends emerged alongside philosophical and social movements during the late twentieth century, such as ideas proposed by postmodernist and post-structuralist thinkers.

From an aesthetic and stylistic perspective, I have chosen to categorize Aperghis as a postmodernist based on Jonathan Kramer’s definition that includes use of irony, pastiche, intertextuality, multiplicity, lack of unity, eclecticism, technology, and social criticism. Postmodern music’s dissolution of grand narratives, whether in musical structure or aesthetic ideologies, provides an appropriate basis for theories also interested in questioning dominant structures. Aperghis, in particular, has provided a significant bridge between postmodernism in music and more specific concepts in post-structuralist theories.

I have especially focused on Aperghis’ musical adaptation of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s rhizome in his approach to creating musical structures (or rather the lack thereof) and

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349 Ibid., 390.
his interest in developing lateral, non-representational relations in sound. Aperghis avoids using musical material to representing meaning and instead focuses on how music transforms as it interacts with language, instruments, and bodies. This turn towards the interactivity and the mutual affectivity of music offers a rich platform for thinking about, for example, Judith Butler’s gender performativity and the possibility of bodies gendering in music. Moving beyond the human limitations of gender performativity leads to Karen Barad’s posthumanist performativity and the idea that performers and instrument are human and non-human bodies that co-gender in and through musical performances.

In Chapter Three, I explored the application of agential realism and posthumanist performativity to Aperghis’ solo harp piece *Fidélité* for “female harpist watched by a man” in context of *Fidélité*’s place within the discourse of postmodern harp repertoire. I argued that postmodern trends in harp music incorporated intertextuality, a more integral approach to extended techniques, and the consideration of bodies mediating physical space through increased uses of non-canonic symbols and graphic notation. Using harp works by Heinz Holliger, Luciano Berio, Mauricio Kagel, and R. Murray Schafer, I have demonstrated how these specific compositional traits have re-defined the spatial, aesthetic, and music relationships between the harpist and the harp and created new ideas about virtuosity in relation to the body and the score.

Of the four contextual works referenced in Chapter Three, I have especially attended to Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza II* because its gendered connotations present the work as an important precursor to *Fidélité*. Although harpist-composer Carlos Salzedo had already pioneered modernist sonic palettes on the harp and advocated aggressively for distancing the harp from its feminized reputation (e.g. the development of the angular, Art Deco-inspired Lyon and Healy
“Salzedo” model\textsuperscript{351}), I consider Berio’s *Sequenza II* to be one of the first solo pieces for harp that explicitly sought create music responding to—and not simply overriding—the harp’s gendered history. This concept of sound co-gendered by specific types of bodies bridges postmodern compositional practices with agential realism’s theoretical framework and facilitates the translation of Barad’s terminology in a musical context.

My analysis of *Fidélité* in Chapter Three also helps readers understand the structure and musical language of the work from a practitioner’s perspective. I focused on ideas related to the performance of the work, such as attending to how Aperghis builds a narrative structure through the development of various motivic sections and the effect of fragmentation on the overall development of the piece. The analysis also examined the piece’s use of extended techniques, how to execute them, and the sonic significance of extended techniques in contrast with a more conventional approach to the harp’s timbral range.

In addition to deciphering the musical elements of *Fidélité*, my analysis explored Aperghis’ unique stylization of voice, language, and text and located juxtapositions of the semantic and non-semantic as intra-acting to produce the harpist-protagonist’s identity. At the time of its composition, *Fidélité*’s inclusion of the human voice—a tense point of gender and sexual identity—presented a radical departure from other works in the harp repertoire canon. Engaging the voice along with other parts of the body in playing the harp, however, forces the (female) harpist to confront her situated embodiment, or what Barad through Levinas calls, the entangled ethics of “being in one’s skin.”\textsuperscript{352} Ending this chapter on the subject of embodiment presents the music of *Fidélité* as an intra-action of bodies rather than a culmination of interactive sounds, performers, and instruments.


\textsuperscript{352} Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 392.
The final chapter expanded agential realist perspectives of *Fidélité*’s music into critical applications of genderharp onto the theatre and scoring of the piece. *Fidélité*’s subtitle “for female harpist watched by a man” first prompted my interest in thinking about different bodies in musical performance. Why does being bodied matter? What does it mean to be bodied? How does being differently bodied change experiences and interactions other things? Genderharp has sought to address what being bodied means. Embodiment is entanglement, and therefore, being bodied in a genderharp paradigm insists on the inseparability of gender with the harp and the harpist. In this chapter, I explored two means of embodiment for the female harpist. The first involves a feminist phenomenological angle, such as taking into account experiencing the physicality of femaleness, but also the experiences attached to being female. These experiences include bodily differences that produce different ranges of sound or have different physical/tactile relationships with the harp. Additionally, the experience of being a female harpist draws from gendered experiences in and outside music, a perspective I have drawn from Adrienne Rich’s “politics of location.” Although the “female” in *Fidélité*’s “female harpist” ultimately refers to the subjugation of the woman and its significance in context of the harp, I have taken Aperghis’ gendered specifications as an opportunity to explore possibilities of

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I have specified both types of experiences to recognize growing scholarship on transgender communities and also acknowledge the diversity of “female” and the many ways in which “female” is experienced. The classical pedal harp community—including both professional and non-professional harpists—has been historically rigid in its depictions of gender and the harp. Therefore, I would want my audiences to consider the interpretive possibilities of female embodiment from a variety of perspectives, such as cisgender, transgender, heteronormative, queer, Western, and non-Western. Published in 2019, the article “Queer Organology of the Pedal Harp” is one of the first scholarly works that explicitly addresses the relationship between the feminization of the harp with gay subculture in the United States. Likewise, I suggest that contemporary scholarship on “gender and the harp” must dispute Western heteronormative expressions of “feminine” and “masculine” as the basis of gendered identity in musical or musicological study.
viewing harp performance practices and pedagogies from the perspective of agential and situated embodiments.

In addition to the agential materiality of bodies, different flows of power influence and shape embodiments. I have taken the second part of Fidélité’s subtitle “watched by a man” as a diffractive point for tracing power dynamics involved in the gendered harp and harpist. Borrowing Donna Haraway’s theory of situated knowledges, I used Aperghis’ score instructions to tackle the difficult concept of vision and power. Vision always entails seeing in partiality, not objective observation, and “watched by a man” suggests that the male gaze both symbolizes and enacts the partiality of a patriarchy. By asserting that vision is power, Fidélité demonstrates the troubled relationship between the watcher and the watched—as theatre in performance and as relations in the world but also as marginalization of identities and within performance practices. Genderharp has specifically addressed power structures as entangled with issues of gender as well as class and race. Therefore, conversations about gender equality in harp must also consider economic and racial inequalities; these conversations must ultimately interrogate who is watching and who is being watched. For example, modernism’s resistance, expressed by “the vitriol of … anti-romantic movements,” to the feminine connotations of the pedal harp’s “romantic and impressionist expression”\(^{354}\) coincided with increased visibility of female harpists in professional music life.\(^ {355}\) Nevertheless, did this resistance, pioneered by male harpists and male composers, really seek to diminish patriarchal attitudes toward female harpists? Twentieth-century French-American harpist-composer Carlos Salzedo is still considered by many harpists

\(^{354}\) Whatley, “Rough Romance,” 41.

as a leading figure in liberating the harp from its feminized, “romantic” past, yet Salzedo’s second wife (and influential harpist in her own right) Lucile Lawrence has said:

[Salzedo] was a world-class harpist who made no bones about being a male chauvinist … and was always looking for a male successor. I think he wanted what we call a “clone.” But that would be unrealistic in any case. He said a woman would never be able to do it. … I think the basic problem with Salzedo and his male pupils is that a man is not as likely to accept direction blindly as some women do. I think this is why he had more success with his female students. 

Fast-forwarding to the twentieth-first century, a similar chauvinism emerges from French harpist Emmanuel Ceysson, who said, “There's a reason why the true virtuosi of the past were men, and it's because the harp is actually a tough instrument. You need strength to get the full dynamic range from it, the big fortes.” In light of these perspectives from male harpists claiming to “break stereotypes” of a female-dominated, classical harp culture, one must ask: who benefits the most in efforts to de-feminize the harp? How do attempts at diversifying representation really obscure inequalities enacted by practices materialized through privilege and power?

The final sections of this chapter addresses some of these inequalities produced by material configurations of power by: 1) challenging practices of authorship and de-stabilizing the role of the composer and the objective score; and 2) arguing that genderharp (in addition to its materialization through practices on stage) also emerges within socialized material practices. This second point suggests that accountability extends far beyond individual performance practices or a musical work. Genderharp as a social aesthetic reminds harpists that gendered

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aesthetics are iteratively enacted and do not stand at a distance or merely reflect a bygone subjugation of women. Genderharp is socialized in the same way that gender performativity relies on the institutionalization of collective speech-acts or that posthumanist performativity asserts that we “come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity—its performativity.”\(^{358}\) Therefore, we are accountable to genderharp through our practices as harpists-in-performance, but also through our engagement as educators, administrators, and spectators.

**Contributed Knowledge**

Through the inclusion of feminist and critical theories, my research has participated in creating valuable interdisciplinary perspectives of gender and the pedal harp. Agential realism has provided an important theoretical foundation for a feminist analysis of a musical work, and my diffractive approach to *Fidélité* stimulates profuse connections between the relatively marginalized body of “avant-garde” harp repertoire, postmodernist music and film/theatre, and ideas from a gamut of scholars writing on musicology, phenomenology, anthropology, and feminist, post-structuralist, and (new) materialist theories. My dissertation’s reliance on these scholarly writings emphasizes the necessity of reading one’s own discipline through multiple lenses—in my case, understanding facets of the harp’s social and aesthetic history beyond a harpist’s emic perspective. I have analyzed *Fidélité* as a harpist (considering its musical, sonic, and technical merits in context of other concert harp works), as a performer (considering the character role, aspects of execution, compositional elements of *Fidélité* in relation to broader

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\(^{358}\) Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 824.
aesthetic trends), as a theorist (through the conceptualization of genderharp), and as an activist (observing layers of social inequalities embedded in the discourse of gender and the Western pedal harp).

The analysis of *Fidélité* in Chapter Three offers an important resource for harpists interested in performing or studying the work. There is currently no literature by a harpist that solely focuses on *Fidélité*. Therefore, I have provided one version of a musical analysis, English translations of Aperghis’ staging instructions and score instructions (originally in French), performance suggestions, and critical commentary that contextualizes *Fidélité* with other harp works—particularly Luciano Berio’s *Sequenza II*—and stylistic trends in postmodern classical music. Meanwhile, my research on Georges Aperghis’ compositional techniques in other works, embodiment and gender, and feminist authorship speaks to topics in performance studies related to practices in classical music.

Through agential realism, I have argued that material bodies are agential and participate in the production of knowledge and identity. This emphasis on bodies, applied to classical concert performance practices, demands the re-imagining of material relations in composition and performance practices. I also briefly reviewed Aperghis’ different staging choices in his “Machine Trilogy” as examples of posthumanist commentary, considering the effect of a performer-as-character/performer-protagonist paradigm in instrumental music (i.e. *Fidélité* and *Le corps à corps*), and Aperghis’ particular interest in a work’s layering of human bodies, movement, sound, and space—what he called “hidden theatre.” Aperghis’ treatment of bodies in his works influenced the two feminist interpretations of embodied performance discussed in Chapter Four.

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In context of *Fidélité*, I have contributed a feminist phenomenological perspective of harp practice by considering the experiences of womanhood and being/identifying as female *vis-à-vis* conflicts over femininity in concert harp culture. Furthermore, I sought to disturb modernist concepts (in classical music) of objectivity and authorship in musical interpretation and suggest that re-framing the linear relationships between composer, score, and performer could highlight, for example, the partiality of the female harpist’s embodiment or even provide the interpretive possibilities for queering the “female” in “female harpist.”

My dissertation’s most significant contribution to the existing literature on gender and the harp lies in the development of genderharp. Genderharp directly recalls neologisms by Donna Haraway (naturecultures) and Karen Barad (ethico-onto-epistemology) and emphasizes the entanglement, as opposed to the reflective optics, of gender and harp. This entanglement radically changes the relationship between gender and the harp and subsequently should re-frame how harpists view the role of gender in their performance practices and the rhetoric that dominates institutional perceptions of concert harp aesthetic. Genderharp argues against the inscription of gender on the harp and instead demands accountability to the material conditions that produce gender. These material conditions actively implicate the harp, harpist, and other human and non-human bodies involved in the preparation, interpretation, and performance of a musical work. Further applications of genderharp focuses on the ethics embedded in power relations and resists representation as the sole indicator of shifts in power dynamics. To be a harpist is to occupy a specific vantage point of power, and to be a female harpist is to occupy a different point; gender, materially entangled with class and race, cuts different boundaries around those points of power. This assertion contributes important perspectives to ongoing trends of activism and outreach in classical harp communities. Despite increased conversations about
equal access apropos to gender and racial equality, the material conditions of “concert harp” and “concert harpist” continue to re-enforce deep social and economic inequalities and maintain power relations grounded in Western European imperialist and exceptionalist sensibilities.

Aligning genderharp with agential realism fundamentally responds to different philosophical paradigms, such as rationalism, empiricism, and constructivism, that explicitly or implicitly ground activism or other scholarship relating to gender and the harp. Therefore, genderharp does not contribute new gendered identities for the harp or promote a specific aesthetic reaction to feminine stereotypes of the harp. Instead, my critique tries to conceptualize a different metaphysics for understanding those identities by claiming that they emerge within the intra-action of specific material practices and regulatory discourses. Genderharp brings a critical/philosophical lens to harp history and performance practices and contributes important resources and methodological ideas for harpist interested in exploring feminist and other social theoretical applications from a performer’s perspective. This dissertation ultimately serves as an example of bridging harpist-practitioner scholarship, which has tended toward more traditional modes of historical and musical analyses, with branches of research in neighboring disciplines (ethnomusicology, new musicology, and performance studies) invested in studying the mutual impact of social movements on music-making.
Next Steps: Applications for Genderharp

*I think social movements are producers of knowledge, and I see my work [on indigeneity] as using the knowledge a particular social movement has produced in order to then produce more knowledge for and about social movements. ... Whereas the academy itself is very interested in reproducing settler-colonial ideology but also reproducing ruling-class ideology. I’m not interested in decolonizing the academy—I don’t think that’s possible as long as the occupation exists. What I am invested in is building movements from below and to the left.*

- Nick Estes

My dissertation has demonstrated the abundant possibilities of studying a single topic—gender and the harp—through the theoretical lens of agential realism. The philosophies of agential realism and similar theories intend to provoke and dissect social structures for the purpose of envisioning alternative materializations of the world. Therefore, I have conceived of some research and practical applications for genderharp, posthumanist performativity, and situated embodiment. These applications demonstrate how genderharp, despite its immediate focus on gender, explores ways in which other facets of worlding intra-act with gender. The prolonged process of (re-)turning agential realism and the complex narrative of gender and harp have created fascinating confrontations with economics, cultural studies, and improvisation.

Although I have already briefly referenced some economic issues by reviewing connections between gender, the pedal harp, and class, deliberating Western classical music and concert harp practices within broader discourses of capitalism and late capitalism reveals rich interplay between the topics of gender, neoliberalism, and music entrepreneurship. I plan on researching the entanglement of gender with the branding and advertising of freelancing harpists.

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and the role of technology (i.e. through social media—especially Facebook and Instagram—and online event platforms like GigMasters and WeddingWire) in producing and regulating professional image. This study would primarily critique the dominance of neoliberal ideologies in harpists’ discourses and practices of entrepreneurship, which contribute to specific aesthetic formations that subjugate deviant bodies. Radically reconsidering gender and the harp in this context requires equally radical re-interpretations of phenomena that take meaning from capitalism, such as “value” and “capital,” and visualizing how alternative (material) forms of “music entrepreneurship” rooted in economic relationality and collectivity could produce different gendered identities.

A practical application for genderharp lies in conceptualizing methods for a “feminist improvisation”—an idea I will develop in future work. I have based this application on my discussion on embodiment and gender in musical interpretation and performance and view improvisation as a field for exploring gendered embodiment through a “becoming-music,” a term I described in Chapter Two. Improvisation has not been featured prominently in the concert harp tradition, and in many instances, a Western classically trained harpist often learns improvisatory techniques by internalizing and reproducing codified stylistic practices in pop, jazz, Celtic/folk, and/or Western early music traditions (i.e. Baroque, Renaissance, Medieval). In my perspective, less codified practices of improvisation do exist in more experimental approaches to existing genres (i.e. pop, jazz, hiphop) and contemporary forms of experimental sound art (i.e. sound sculpture). Those forms of improvisation do not necessarily demand fluency in the logical rules


Brian Massumi and Erin Manning’s work on cryptoeconomy through the 3E Process Seed Bank, for example, challenges neoliberalism’s hyper-quantification of capital and draws from cryptocurrency models and Deleuzoguattarian theory.
of a genre’s harmonic and semantic structures, which I consider to be the basis of a codified improvisatory practice. Furthermore, these experimental methods are not generally taught as part of a *classical concert harp curriculum* in a Western-style classical music conservatory or university music program.

Using my arguments connecting performance practices in *Fidélité* with feminist phenomenology, I propose a robust development of a feminist improvisation and its inclusion in concert harp pedagogies. My conceptualization of feminist improvisation draws sonic inspiration from the aesthetic spaces carved by women in experimental and avant-garde music.\(^{362}\) I also imagine more specific improvisatory models that diffract Astrida Neimanis’ posthumanist phenomenology, which is inspired by Adrienne Rich’s politics of location,\(^{363}\) with Pauline Oliveros’ practice of deep listening\(^{364}\) and require a critical exploration of the material bodies participating in the production of sound. Feminist improvisation insists that making sound is a collaborative process, and the boundaries of “improvising” constantly materialize and shift as bodies are re-configured. In practice, a feminist approach to improvisation interrogates critical differences and encourages students to ask themselves questions about how their bodies, differentiated by different musical, cultural, economic, educational, or racial experiences, meet


\(^{363}\) Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*.

Neimanis’s *Bodies of Water* looks at the possibilities of viewing embodiments as posthuman and watery—permeable, seeping, and constantly in motion. Thinking about sound, for example, does not need to be limited to how the human body and/or brain perceives and interprets sound and different music, or how music takes on meaning in only human cultural contexts.


“Heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body. … Sound imagining is encouraged through the use of various questions designed to trigger auditory fantasy. Individuals are then asked to share what was heard inwardly, with members of the group using any means to describe the experience. Conditions given for listening to present sounds are intended to expand awareness of the auditory environment, both within and without of the individual.”
the harp and its own aesthetic tradition. From a performer’s perspective, improvisation is a much more flexible medium than a pre-composed musical work and therefore has the potential to better highlight bodies marked in diverse ways—in broad categories like gender, sexuality, race, and class but also less apparent ones, such as dis-/ability, chronic illness, geographical displacement, cultural hybridization, parenthood, or marriage. This model of improvisation can also act as a pedagogical tool for harpists to develop critical perspectives on institutional concepts of musicianship, the Western classical pedal harp canon, and on different behaviors and meanings of sound.

Although critical theories ground many aspects of these research ideas, I strongly advocate for the use of theory as a means of re-conceptualizing practice—not as a hermetic exercise. Feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz writes:

Concepts emerge, have value, and function only through the impact of problems, problems generated from an absolute outside, from the real. Concepts are not solutions to problems—most problems, like the problem of gravity, of living with others, or that of mortality, have no solutions—but ways of living with problems. … Concepts are ways in which the living add ideality to the world, transforming the givenness of the real, the pressing problem, into various forms of order, into possibilities of being otherwise.  

Theoretical concepts can often provide the language for expressing an interpretation or for challenging social structures deeply embedded in the practices that need to be interrogated.

Grosz adds:

In short, theory is never about us, about who we are. It affirms only what we can become, extracted as it is from the events that move us beyond ourselves. … Feminist theory is

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essential, not as plan or anticipation of action to come, but as the addition of ideality or incorporeality to the horrifying materiality of the present as patriarchal, racist, ethnocentric, a ballast to enable the present to be transformed. 366

Agential realism has provided a necessary framework for creating genderharp, which in turn creates an important intervention on the unsustainability of representation in discussing the gendered harp. Looking at material practices and the bodies that participate in those practices turns our attention away from recursive acts of negation and inventing countermyths and toward the material-discursive processes implicated in the differentiating of the world. Genderharp situates the harp and harpist at the forefront of my dissertation, insisting that their intra-action with elements of musical performances produces, not reflects, gender identities. We cannot simply distance the present condition of gender and the harp from its problematic past. Instead, we must consider the material conditions of Western pedal harp performance practices and the accountability involved in the who is performing, where we perform, and how we perform the harp.

366 Ibid., 81.
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**Audio/Visual Media**


