

Cognitive Relations of a Physical Kind: Body without Organs in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin*

BY

Erin Gizewski
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THESIS

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Defense Committee:

Heidi Schlipphacke, Chair and Advisor
Patrick Fortmann, Committee Member
Sara Hall, Committee Member

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SUMMARY

Elfriede Jelinek's Noble Prize-winning novel, *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983), is well known as a postmodern pastiche. Using grotesque, surprising, and provocative language, Jelinek crafts a novel brimming with social and feminist critique of postmodern Austria, utilizing the troubled, masochistic main character, Erika Kohut, to anchor the critique. While current readings of *Die Klavierspielerin* offer readings that look at the fragmented narrative as a function of Jelinek's critique or as insight into the psychoanalytic underpinnings of Erika, none look to the ways in which the fragmented narrative contributes to the reader experience. In my essay, I offer a reading informed by the notion of assemblage and orientation.

In my essay, I look at Jelinek's novel with an eye to Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) in order to uncover *how* the novel presents in a volatile manner an assemblage that is both part and whole, inviting a readerly experience that is particularly disruptive and powerful. I look at the musical references within the novel and argue that these also create a musical text that breaks out of the signifying regime of language to instead present a postsignifying regime. I offer a descriptive reading of this that underscores the ways the novel gestures toward a "smooth" plane of volatility, one that produces an emotional readerly experience that potentially stimulates new conceptions of wholeness, body, and gender both within the novel itself and in relation to the reader's physicality.

I. RELATIONS AND BECOMINGS: MUSIC AND BODY WITHOUT ORGANS IN *DIE KLAVIERSPIELERIN*

A. Der richtige Beginn

„Aller Anfang ist schwer, beweist Erika der Bedeutung richtigen Beginnens“ (Jelinek 268).

Elfriede Jelinek's Noble Prize-winning novel, *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983), is well known as a postmodern pastiche. Using grotesque, surprising, and provocative language, Jelinek crafts a novel brimming with social and feminist critique of postmodern Austria, utilizing the troubled, masochistic main character, Erika Kohut, to anchor the critique. While current readings of *Die Klavierspielerin* offer a myriad of readings that look at the fragmented narrative as a function of Jelinek's critique or as insight into the psychoanalytic underpinnings of Erika, none looks to the ways in which the fragmented narrative offers a window to emphasize much more than this. In my essay, I offer a reading informed by the notion of assemblage and orientation. I look at Jelinek's novel with an eye to Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) in order to uncover *how* the novel presents in a volatile manner an assemblage that is both part and whole, inviting a readerly experience that is particularly disruptive and powerful. I offer a descriptive reading that underscores the ways the novel gestures toward a "smooth" plane of volatility, one that produces an emotional readerly experience that potentially stimulates new conceptions of wholeness, body, and gender both within the novel itself and in relation to the reader's physicality.

Like the above quote implies, correct beginnings point to correct endings. They entail a neat package. Traditional, dialectical, and teleological methods of analysis create expectations of neat beginnings, middles, and ends for novels and texts. Many critiques of Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* analyze this postmodern pastiche as they would any other stable or traditional

and unfragmented work. Often, these ways of looking at the novel highlight the main character, Erika. Elizabeth Wright, for example, analyzes the relationship between Erika and her mother in her essay “An aesthetics of disgust: Elfriede Jelinek’s *Die Klavierspielerin*” (1999). She argues that the hysterical, phallic, and erotic nature of the language used to describe this relationship underscores a narrative that seeks to allegorize the destruction of the bourgeois subject Jelinek touches on in her text. While Wright points to the destruction of a traditional subject, she turns to psychoanalysis without mentioning the fragmented nature of the text. Other authors look to the treatment of sexuality and power in Jelinek’s novel. Critics like Matthias Luserke (1993) look at the role of feminine, class, and sexual mythos in the text’s language. He produces valuable insights in his essay “Sexualität, Macht und Mythos: Elfriede Jelinek’s Roman *Die Klavierspielerin*” (1993) and explores the role Erika and others have in creating a novel rife with feminist, postmodern critique. Magdalena Sutarzewicz and Dominika Hadasz (2010b) take their cue from this more feminist approach and look to the different roles classical music plays in helping to express Erika’s pent-up sexual passion in both Jelinek’s novel and Michael Haneke’s 2001 film adaptation. Yet all these scholars disregard the effect of such highly analyzed language has on the reader. While they all provide invaluable insights, it is time to incorporate these dynamisms into discussions of the *Die Klavierspielerin*. The text is not just a novel with a beginning, middle, and end but also a series of relationships fostered between the novel and the reader.

In my approach, I use a descriptive method instead of prescribing a particular textual agenda, which allows the text to stay dynamic, fragmented, and contradictory. As Stephen Best and Heather Love argue in the introduction to the special edition of the journal *Representations*, “Description across Disciplines,” descriptions are useful in that they are responses “to the

liveliness of material relationships and realities” (Best, Marcus, and Love, 2016, 8). While the task of the critics described above is to take a textual phenomenon and create with it a distinct, teleological analysis, the task of the describer is to showcase the liveliness of the relationships and realities of the material, “...honoring the object described...” (14). In this case, honoring *Die Klavierspielerin* means honoring the dynamic nature of the text, keeping its fragments of non-traditional character, violent physicality, and subtle softness intact.

While description can take on many forms, mine will focus on the observation of the role of music within the text and text body. First, I will look at the contradictions contained within musical markers of the text in reference to the non-traditional novel character, Erika. Elfriede Jelinek creates a text that, despite its obvious Marxist critique, also relies on the reader to craft it. The text is an assemblage of other literary and musical texts. Thus, it not only uses musical references to create an idea of contradictory character without interiority but also creates a piece of music in interaction with the reader. I show how the parallels between Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage and its place within “Body without Organs” and Sara Ahmed’s queer phenomenology are useful tools to look at music within *Die Klavierspielerin* in a way that remains dynamic and rooted in relationships between the text or plot, text-body, and the reader. In making my argument, I partially mimic the form of the theoretical frame I utilize in the essay.

B. *Die Klavierspielerin* as Assemblage

Arguably Elfriede Jelinek’s break-out novel, *Die Klavierspielerin* is known as a *Kampfschrift* against patriarchy and fascism (Luserke, 1993, 24). Utilizing the German language and its history to engage with feminism and *Herrschaftskritik*, the novel *Die Klavierspielerin* as well as Jelinek’s other works, famously thematize “kleinbürgerlicher Sexualität und Arbeits-und Werteideologie” (25). *Die Klavierspielerin* is set apart from her other texts, however, because it

is partly biographical. Elfriede Jelinek borrowed from her own experiences in childhood and her “*Hassliebe*” relationship with her mother to craft Erika and Frau Kohut (Sutarzewicz and Hadasz, 2010a, 56-57).¹ Steeped thus in the genres of biography and of the novel, the expectations of this work encompass a clear plot and linear narratological foundation, expectations that emerged in the context of the dialectical logic established during the Enlightenment (Schulte-Sasse, 1993, 128-29). Yet Jelinek also takes inspiration from the works of Ingeborg Bachmann, an Austrian writer well known for complicating clear-cut lines of personal boundaries, language, and truth (Radisch, 2017). Compounded with the times in which Jelinek wrote and published *Die Klavierspielerin* in 1983-- an era of post-structuralism, radically new feminist literature, and the rise of the Freedom Party of Austria-- the novel emerges not as a linear story of a neat, temporal worldview, but as a fragmented work and pastiche of postmodern critique. There is an absence of clear narration and traditional narrative voice, an aspect of this novel that is very well documented. Quoting Stefan Griessmann² in her essay, “*Die Klavierspielerin*--Eine Semiotische Untersuchung Zur Narrativen Perspektive in Der Literarischen Und Filmischen Erzählung,” recent critics of *Die Klavierspielerin* like Gabriella Nádudvari (2006, 256) merely mention as an aside that the narrative perspective in the novel switches so many times that the reader can never truly be sure who is speaking.³ However, Jelinek’s novel goes beyond just a fragmented text in which the reader must work to discern the narrative perspective. Indeed, *Die Klavierspielerin* is, I will argue, an assemblage, created using parts of other literary and musical works.

What is to be understood as assemblage? Integral to understanding Jelinek’s text, an assemblage in its most basic form connects two or more pieces and parts. The focus lies not on the separate parts, however, but their transformation into a collective whole. While Deleuze and

Guattari's use of assemblage is often times abstruse, the origins of the term stem from the Surrealist movement. Easier to grasp in the physical, the German surrealist photographer, Hans Bellmer, demonstrates assemblage very tangibly with the photographs of his assembled, almost grotesque dolls in *Die Puppe* (2004). He photographs these excessive groupings of legs, breasts, eyes, torsos, lips, feet, and hands next to everyday objects in ordinary rooms (fig 1). With their multiplicities of body parts splayed for all to see, these dolls stand as a fragmented, incohesive, and mutilated physical conglomeration of other physical bodies. Yet despite the dolls' fragmentary natures, Bellmer places one doll assemblage in each photograph, thus emphasizing each doll's completeness. An assemblage, like Bellmer's dolls, remains both fragmented but complete in itself and whole.



Fig. 1 *La Poupée*. 1938. International Center of Photography Library, 1114 Ave of the Americas, New York City. *International Center of Photography*. By Hans Bellmer. Web. 8 Sep 2018.

All things are assemblages in that they possess tendencies for both stasis and change. Everything exists on a continuum of change and possesses different ratios of both tendencies (Adkins, 2018, 13; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 19). All books are textual becomings⁴ to some degree. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari attempt to rethink the discontinuity of Kantian notions of intelligibility and sense. These encompass the properties and essence of an object that render it stable as well as the surface changes to the object (Adkins, 2015, 7). Deleuze and Guattari construe the notion of assemblage as a response to the paradox of intelligibility and sense. Texts and other works of art from the avant-garde Dada movement, for example, possess a higher ratio of change in comparison to a literary work like Goethe's *Faust* or a classical painting from Rembrandt because the Dada works exist purely as a conglomeration of words, phrases, and pictures from other texts. However, all of these works are equally assemblage; they merely exist with different orientations to stasis and change, each being more or less volatile but existing equally on the same plane. The volatility of a text refers to its ability to create and recreate relationships of change, of becomings. *Die Klavierspielerin* is particularly volatile in the unexpected way Jelinek pieces together grotesque language and fragment.

Like Bellmer's dolls, *Die Klavierspielerin* is also a physical body that contains words, phrases, and sentences that complete a whole. For Deleuze and Guattari, everything that exists in this world is a physical body. To imply otherwise, they contend, would mean that something would have to exist a priori, thus exposing a transcendental that exists beyond the plane of immediate reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 151). Yet Deleuze and Guattari assert that there is no transcendental, only the existential. Thus, the physicality of bodies and assemblage is extremely important. Furthermore, no bodies exist as a closed system whole, including text bodies. Rather, text bodies interact with one another to produce and reproduce physical

assemblage. In the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain how a physical text body—in this case a book—constitutes a physical assemblage:

As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages and in relation to other bodies without organs. We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier, we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities, in which other multiplicities its own are inserted and metamorphosed, and with what bodies without organs it makes its own converge. A book exists only through the outside and on the outside (4).

A book is an assemblage that interacts with other books. It does not just reference but contains pieces of other books, ideas, people, and the world outside of the text and text body. It is my contention that *Die Klavierspielerin* makes its interactions with and because of the outside world apparent in a particularly visible and visceral manner.

Although Elfriede Jelinek does not create a text as volatile or dynamic as those of Dada artists or even Surrealist artists like Hans Bellmer, she crafts a text that is still very outwardly oriented towards change. *Die Klavierspielerin* employs pieces of many other texts across genres and mediums. As is well documented from other critics, Jelinek crafts a text that contains quotes from famous German literary texts like *Faust* and well-known German Lieder from Schubert (Sutarzewicz and Hadasz, 2010b, 56-57). Although commonly referred to as intertextual, I will choose not to use this concept. *Die Klavierspielerin* is assemblage, and I shall argue, presents itself as an intermedial text. The text interacts with more than just other written texts; it also references and incorporates music. These intermedial relationships weave the body of *Die Klavierspielerin*. In *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious or The Anatomy of the Image* (2004) Hans Bellmer draws a parallel between body and written text, writing, “[...] the body is

comparable to a sentence that invites us to disarticulate it” (xiii). The physical text body of *Die Klavierspielerin* urges the reader to see and pick apart the intermedial weave. Even Bellmer’s verbiage exemplifies the physicality of this task, as the word disarticulate has two meanings: to break apart the logic of an argument or, more gruesomely, to physically separate bones at the joint. The text body, then, invites the reader to physically and even violently pick apart its whole at the joints that hinge together one fragment of text to another.

Despite urging readers to pick apart its jointed fragments, the form of *Die Klavierspielerin* is not to be separated from its meaning when looking at the text as assemblage. As Deleuze and Guattari state in the aforementioned quote, “We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier, we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things” (1987, 4). They assert that an assemblage has nothing to do with signified or signifier; in other words, assemblage has nothing to do with the conventional method of conveying meaning. A dialectical, Saussurian relationship between signified and signifier separates the sign from its meaning, splitting form and content. A signifier/signified relationship is thus a relationship of cause and effect. The signifier, or form, of a word, causes one to think of the signified, or the content and conveyed meaning behind the signifier. Against these notions, Deleuze and Guattari assert, “content is not a signified nor expression of a signifier. Rather, both are variables of the assemblage” (1987, 91). Content is not a stable signified; nor is it an expression of a stable signifier. Rather, form and content, signifier and signified, exist together. They interact in different ratios of change, transmitting and creating intensities with other bodies. It is this full, inseparable interaction of *action* and *affect* that creates meaning (Buchanan, 1997, 74). Because assemblage relies on the interdependence of action and

affect, it has neither subject nor object because this would be to split the exteriority of the physical body from its interactions.

The language that makes up textual assemblage is also assemblage in itself. Language acts upon, changes, and is changed by other physical bodies. Thus, it exists in a social realm (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 88). Change produced through these interactions results in intensities, which may be understood as forces which move at variable speeds. As language intensities act on the reader, they generate affective bodily sensations perceived by the reader. Yet, within this interaction, there remains no subject because as Deleuze and Guattari assert, language can never exist in the subjective mode in the social realm but rather only in the indirect form (88). Instead, affect only fosters a momentary idea of subjectivity in the moments the reader physically perceives the intensity-produced bodily sensations. Subjectivity does not, then, remain a static, *a-priori* opposite of objectivity, but rather results from complex and dynamic relationships between action, affect, and physical bodies.

Although Deleuze and Guattari obliterate language hierarchies, they do not insist that language exists without differentiations of meaning. Language interacts with other assemblages to create a smooth space, or Body without Organs. Different language assemblages can even act upon each other to create a Body without Organs. Yet per definition of assemblage, a smooth space cannot be created by smooth, undifferentiated bodies. A Body without Organs and thus assemblage needs differentiations. A Body without Organs is rhizomic, meaning it does not have one offshoot of meaning, like a tree, but rather multiplicities of meaning assemblages. Constellations, for examples, are a whole, but they are necessarily made up of different individual stars spanning in a multitude of directions. Like constellations, assemblage and

therefore language requires dynamic multiplicities of meaning that exist with the same level of importance to create an assemblage whole and Body without Organs.

Additionally, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly and scathingly link the traditional, rigid, hierarchical regimes of language and philosophy with fascism. Although language is a plateau and has a propensity towards stability, language is only a temporary zone of stasis. Language assemblage produces intensive processes with fluctuating ratios of stability and change brought upon by the rich, diverse meanings of phrases and language chunks (87). Deleuze and Guattari split these ratios into two quasi-political regimes. The first regime is the signifying regime, which is more traditional, hierarchical and oriented towards stasis. Its hierarchies revolve around one central figure—the sign—and are thus despotic and fascist (115). The second regime of language is the postsignifying regime, which Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize as a “line of flight” or deterritorialization. It allows language to escape the limits of the despotic signifying regime while also showcasing its limits (121). A postsignifying regime, therefore, allows for dynamic movement within the signifying regime, escaping its tyranny while also underscoring its dangerous and controlling power.

C. Music as Postsignifying Regime

Music is a postsignifying regime that comes to the forefront in *Die Klavierspielerin*. It is a system limited by a signifying form of written notes and unwritten conventions but made volatile by the postsignifying regime of expression. It is a system of actions and affects. It is the “smoothest of smooth spaces” (Massumi, 1987, xiii), meaning that it is a plane without hierarchies, or a Body without Organs, comprised of assemblage bodies. *Die Klavierspielerin* is thus also a musical postsignifying regime. As Larson Powell and Brenda Betham (2008) argue, “one cannot do justice to Jelinek’s writing without reference both to its own inherent musicality

and its insistent thematization of music as paradigm of art” (163). The musicality of *Die Klavierspielerin* lies in its insistent and persistent thematization of music in the form of the text body and within the text. The text creates music with the form of the physical text body. Littered with musical tempos and rhythms created by language pattern and meaning, these become the joints that hinge one fragment of text body to another. The reader need not actively recognize these joints. Inevitably, the text body works on the reader’s body. They feel rhythms and tempos as intensities and therefore as bodily sensations. This musicality pushes the words of the text beyond their stable existence. In the affectual language play between the text body and the reader’s body, *Die Klavierspielerin* produces a temporary subjectivity made dynamic by the text body’s musical form. It is this interaction which creates movement in many different directions and multiplicities, as every reader experiences the text through a different bodily orientation. The multiplicities might be bent in further directions with the amount of previous musical knowledge the reader brings to and actively applies to the text because the music exists not just as intensities produced by a musical text body but also within the text.

While it would be nearly impossible to touch on every mention of music within the text and the creation of musical intensities by the text body in an essay of this scope, I will focus on what I believe to be the most prevalent musical references and creation of music within the text. One of the most frequent thematizations of music within the text revolves around Erika’s role as piano instructor and her interaction with the music and history of some of the most famous German Classical and Romantic composers: Schubert, Schumann, Chopin, and Beethoven. Even before the reader encounters Erika playing the piano and physically interacting with the music in the text, the narrator describes an interaction Erika has with her students, “Wenn ein Schüler nach ihrem Ziel fragt, so nennt sie die Humanität, in diesem Sinn faßt sie den Inhalt des

Heiligenstädter Testaments von Beethoven für die Schüler zusammen, sich heben den Heros der Tonkunst mit aufs Postament zwingend” (Jelinek, 2005, 14). While it may be easy to skip by this mention of Beethoven’s name within the context of the Vienna music conservatory as merely an interaction between Erika and her students, a reader who knows more about Beethoven notices the language within its inseparable context and recognizes a very subtle undertone to the text when Erika refers to him as a “Hero der Tonkunst” who has a “Heiligenstädter Testament.” Beethoven was Hitler’s ‘chosen’ composer. Hitler thought that Beethoven best represented the national voice and attitude of Germany (Neuschwander, 2012, 94-95). Thus, as Erika refers to Beethoven as an almost God-like hero, she echoes these sentiments of nationalism and fascism, which underscores the Viennese environment in which she lives. Within this musical reference, Erika interacts with and becomes a product of her place of birth, Vienna, and her orientation within the music conservatory space. The reader who brings this contextual knowledge notices the ties to nationalism and fascism. However, by understanding this while looking at the words as an assemblage, one can see and appreciate the depth of the text without participating in and perpetuating the same observed despotic signifying regime. The astute reader recognizes that the reference to this musical great ironically highlights the limits of the signifying regime by pointing to the link between the postsignifying regime, language, and political critique.

As Erika continues to interact with these famous composers and their well-known music, the subtle and ironic link between nationalism, its connection back to fascist Vienna, and music is echoed throughout the novel. When Erika plays for a small, private piano concert, she plays two Bach duets with an elderly music professor colleague, Herr Haberkorn, “...der in seinem früheren Leben einmal in Brahmsaal aufgetreten ist und dabei ein einziges Klavier ganz für

sich allein gehabt hat” (Jelinek, 2005, 65). Bach, another example of the pinnacle of German “high culture,” was idealized as a particularly German artist during World War II. Herr Haberkorn is clearly depicted as a remnant of this period (Neuschwander, 2012, 93). However, composers like Bach also keep their significance in Viennese culture as a marker of the educated Viennese elite.

Herr Haberkorn and Erika stand in this instance as even more nationalistic in contrast to the description of the musical patron family who hosts this intimate evening of music. The reader learns that the piano concert takes place “...in einer alten Patrizierwohnung am Donauskanal statt, zweiter Gemeindebezirk, wo eine polnische Emigrantenfamilie der vierten Generation ihre zwei Flügel und dazu die reichhaltige Patriturensammlung aufgeschlagen hat” (Jelinek, 2005, 64). Although this is the family’s fourth generation in Vienna and its members were presumably all born and raised firmly within the borders of Habsburg Austria and the constraints of Viennese culture, a narrator still divulges that this family originally comes from Poland. This family must stretch their wings to assemble a musical collection and gain patron status. Yet after still being assigned the status of “Polish,” the wings appear to emphasize the family’s dual Polish and Austrian roots. The wings stand as a representation the eagle on the state flag of Poland and the *Doppeladler* on the Austrian flag. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) Deleuze and Guattari exclaim that “Representations are bodies, too!” (86). Along these lines, the family is a physical marker of Poland and Austria, a merged Polish-Austrian body. The family becomes a music patron long after such a thing is considered fashionable, and thus the Polish eagle spreads its wings with great effort in an attempt to become more Austrian. “Flügel” can also mean piano, however, and exaggerates the great attempt to become more with their music patronage as the text reveals they possess not just one expensive piano, but two. The juxtaposition of this “Polish”

family to Bach played by two people who stand as examples of high culture and the Viennese elite serves to highlight the nationalistic divisions underscored by musical references within the text body. In this way, the text underscores the political implications of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of hierarchies in their model of assemblage. The more Erika plays or talks about her affinity to Schumann, Schubert, Chopin, Bach, and Beethoven, the more Jelinek's text becomes intermedial assemblage, therefore eschewing the nationalist politics and everyday fascism⁵ the text continually underscores.

While Jelinek crafts textual musical references within a postsignifying regime, these very same references serve to orient Erika as a conflicting participant of the despotic signifying regime within her environment in Vienna. Erika often expresses an affinity towards Schumann and Schubert and does so non-verbally within the environment of her piano studio. Schumann's death mask hangs on one of the walls in her piano studio (Jelinek, 1983, 109). Schumann is yet another marker of nationalism, as Wagner was a great admirer of and took inspiration from many of Schumann's works. The choice to place such a reminder of high culture and nationalism in her piano studio is a morbidly redundant way to distinguish herself as a participator and curator of this culture. Erika is already within the Viennese conservatory, an institution which is decidedly Viennese and has shaped the confines of what is to be considered high culture with regard to music for centuries. The reader is even reminded of this when they are introduced to the environment of Viennese culture with a gruesome metaphor quite early in the text, "Wien, Stadt der Musik! Nur was sich bisher bewährt hat, wird sich in dieser Stadt auch hinkünftig bewähren. Die Knöpfe platzen ihr vom weißen fetten Bauch der Kultur, die, wie jede Wasserleiche, die man nicht herausfischt, jedes Jahr noch aufgeblähter wird" (16). Compared to the buttons on the blouse of a drowned corpse, Vienna is a city of music that is an adornment to the dead, bloated

culture of Austria. How fitting, then, that the excess impression of culture Erika chooses for her studio is that of a death mask, another bloated and dead representation of Viennese high culture. Yet the reader is still left with the question: why does Erika choose to include this in a studio already situated within the most saturated point of culture itself? What does Erika have to prove? Certainly, a death mask resonates with the metaphors Jelinek uses for culture and the picture that she portrays with music, but why this one and why here? Erika clearly desires to further solidify her connection with and perhaps her embodiment of Viennese high culture and nationalism. She chooses to partake in a signifying regime as she tries to physically distance herself from those teachers in the petty bourgeoisie and claim a mental superiority over those within the confines of the conservatory. Erika sets a class barrier between her and her fellow conservatory teachers who do not reside, as she does, within the walls of her own piano studio. With this, she attempts to orient herself as part of the signifying regime while ironically making her living participating in the interpretation of music.

D. Music as Physical Orientation

Erika's physical markers of musicality within the text also serve to orient and align her postsignifying interaction with music as part of the everyday fascist, signifying environment of high culture Vienna. Erika's textual orientation influences the reader's interaction with the text because orientation necessarily produces affect. Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* treats orientation as integral to affect. Ahmed takes from the works of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to explore the relationship between action, direction, and perception. She uses their theories to develop a concept of orientation within and because of space and objects within space in terms of social class, race, and sexual desire (Ahmed, 2006, 23). While Ahmed looks at three phenomenology forefathers to develop her concept of

phenomenological orientation, I will be referencing the concept of orientation that revolves around Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* because his work explores existential phenomenology. In existential phenomenology, the subject is not transcendental but rather embodied firmly and concretely within the world. This embodiment influences perceptions of the world and vice-versa, thus constituting a subject that influences its environment and is shaped by that very same environment (Stadlar, 61, 1994). The concept of body in Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology encompasses the "body image," which exists neither exclusively in the mental or physical domains, but rather in involved (encompassing both mental and physical) *action* with perceived people and objects (Smith, 2013). Just like the concept of assemblage in *Body without Organs*,⁶ Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology requires *action*, as seen from the concept of body image, and *affect*.

The concept of orientation that emerges from action and affect in Ahmed's (2006) work treats the physical body as an extension of space. "Orientation," Ahmed (2006) writes, "is about making the strange familiar through the extension of bodies into space." (11). Erika attempts to make the environment of Vienna familiar by extending her body and her musical, physical markers of high culture into spaces outside of the music conservatory. Traveling home from the conservatory on the city train, „[...] wird SIE vom Gewicht von Musikinstrumenten, die ihr vorne und hinten vom Leib baumeln, dazu die prall gefüllten Notentaschen...Das Tier fühlt, daß Kräfte in ihm schlummern, denen die Musik nicht genügt“ (Jelinek, 2005, 18). Like the rest of the Viennese Volk,⁷ she takes public transportation. Erika takes her distinguishing markers of high culture out of the conservatory and into the public sphere. Yet these, like the weight of the water in the drowned corpse of Viennese culture, weigh her down. They hinder Erika outside of the space of the music conservatory, where they mark her as a mere teacher of music instead of

the musical artist that would truly make her a part of the elite. Erika attempts to extend her body into the space of the cityscape using markers of high culture only to find them irrelevant outside of the confines of the conservatory in which music is held in such high regard. As Ahmed argues, disorientation occurs when the extension of the body into space fails (Ahmed, 2006, 11), and because of this Erika becomes something less than human. In this failure, the body is no longer as volatile or dynamic. It becomes more stable and connected to a signifying regime. When she steps outside of the conservatory and into the space of the Volk who have no connection to music, Erika feels other sources of power within her that are not satisfied with just her connection to high culture. This power within Erika spreads into the realm of nature. Erika's untamed, disordered animalistic nature conforms to a social regime and showcases the limits of music's ability to orient within a signifying regime. Volatile and dynamic, nature and its slumbering intensities within Erika perform the dynamisms of a postsignifying regime.

The volatility of nature continues to demonstrate the constraints of culture as Erika lashes out, becoming more and more disoriented as the city train does not leave room for a comfortable extension of Erika's body. During this ride, Erika terrorizes those around her with the violins and violas she carries. She intentionally knocks into people with instrument cases, causing pain, confusion, and calamity. When these people try to figure out the culprit of such chaos on the crowded train, she feigns innocence using her physical markers of music:

„SIE [Erika] tut als gebe sie sich soeben jenen geheimnisvoll wirkenden, immer auf Steigerung bedachten gefühlsbetonten Kraft der musikalischen Romantik hin und habe für nichts sonst einen Gedanken übrig. Das Volk spricht daraufhin wie mit einer Stimme: das Mädchen mit dem Maschinengewehr ist es sicher nicht gewesen“ (Jelinek, 2005, 22).

In this instance, as in the aforementioned quote, Jelinek continues to use upper-case spellings of SIE and IHR to delineate Erika's actions. The pronouns in all caps emphasize and even scream

out to the reader that Erika is a woman and thus a human being. The reader is violently forced to confront this. Yet, Erika's violent actions create an Erika which cannot be connected to the instruments of high, refined Viennese culture she holds in her hands. Her wild, aggressive behavior thus contradicts her physical orientation and paints her more as animal, „das Tier,“ to which she is referred in this same passage. Even the people on the train are aware of this and collectively and actively refuse to ignore the evidence of her actions. There is no way a woman who appears to physically be a participant of high culture could have such an animalistic power within her. This becomes too much of a contradiction. Because of her physical markers of high culture, they assume a mental or internal connection to this as well. They create an interiority for Erika that is exclusively a signifying regime. Yet this regime is also an aggressive power. In the eyes of the Volk, Erika holds not instruments, but machine gun. This is normalized for those in Vienna and their way of reconciling Erika with a still despotic, still fascist environment. Erika feeds this mindset in her own way as she attempts to blend in with the social constraints of Vienna by acting as if she thinks about nothing but music. Erika herself dramatizes her physical orientation to music and plays as if the „Kraft“ she holds within cannot be the „Kräfte“ of an animal but must instead be the emotional power of the musical Romantic period. However, because this act comes from a narrator and the reader receives no insight from Erika herself, it is thus assumed that Erika is acting this way or even putting on airs. The text, however, provides the reader with direct thoughts of those on the train, who all collectively peg Erika as possessing a despotic, signifying interiority.

The assumption that Erika acts as though she thinks of nothing but the Romantic period of music further pits nature and culture and the signifying and postsignifying regimes against each other. While the Romantic literary epoch was a critical response to the Enlightenment and

emphasizes the expression of emotion, the Romantic musical period pushed this boundary further. In response to the Classical period, the swelling, aching harmonies in the Romantic period as well as a looser expression of previous musical forms emphasized a more emotional connection to music than the work of previous composers. Freer interpretations and forms push music from this time towards volatility. However, this period of music set a precedence for all other music to come. With its freer sonata forms came an ironic constraint; the music of the Romantic period was thought to most clearly and superiorly demonstrate that this music was the best way with which to express emotions. Many musical professionals believe Romantic music to be the pinnacle of emotional expression to this day (Gabler, 2016).⁸ Musical Romanticism, in its escape from the confines of musical Classicism, merely created new confines of acceptable means to express emotions within predetermined musical forms and high culture. Thus, musical Romanticism, while seemingly merging nature with culture, merely creates new, acceptable confines for neatly boxing nature within cultural forms. Music may be a smooth space, but splitting music into periods that hold hierarchical value takes the smooth space and makes it a signifying regime. In much the same way, the people on the train, with the assumption that Erika's outward cultural orientation must match an inner orientation, neatly put Erika into a similar box. They take her „Kräfte,“ her inner intensities, and place an acceptable cultural form around them. Erika hides her inner intensities with her physical orientation towards music, and those around her ignore and cover up Erika's intensities in a similar manner. This shapes the reader's view of Erika and Erika's view of herself. Ahmed points out that “the skin of social bodies might be affected by the comings and goings of different bodies, creating new lines and textures in the ways in which things are arranged” (Ahmed, 2006, 9). Thus, those on the bus, and perhaps even Erika herself, paint their own assumptions about the comings and goings of Erika

by stripping her of any physical contradictions. The Volk and even a narrator provide her with a cohesive narrative that is not her own in an attempt to make Erika less volatile than she is.

However, this blatant disregard for contradictions does not just come from a cold Viennese Volk and an impersonal narrator. Walter Klemmer, in his attempt to get close to Erika, also solidifies her in this way. In the wake of their first sexual encounter, Walter Klemmer follows Erika to her and her mother's apartment in hopes of a second. Erika lets him in, and they shut themselves in Erika's room. Despite Klemmer's efforts to seduce Erika, Erika maintains that he must read the letter in which she discloses her masochistic desires. After reading a few pages Klemmer pauses in disbelief and anger, thinking, "Die Frau kann es so nicht gemeint haben, die derartig Chopin spielt. Das und nichts anderes ist der Frau jedoch sehr erwünscht, weil sie immer nur Chopin und Brahms gespielt hat" (Jelinek, 2005, 229). Klemmer expresses his disbelief by thinking that Erika could not desire such masochistic actions because she plays pieces by Chopin and Brahms. Both Chopin and Brahms are well known Romantic period composers often connected very closely to nationalism and the idyllic rural folk because of their compositions that take respectively from Polish and German folk songs. Erika plays these composers' compositions and thus physically orients herself quite close to these composers. The interpretation of the notes brings her even closer to these great composers, orienting herself to them, interacting with their bodies, and creating a smooth space of music. However, she still yearns for and has masochistic sexual desires that do not fit neatly within this physical and mental space she carves out for herself within the realm of the musical world. Klemmer is confused by Erika's letter because he does not recognize and accept these contradictions as part of her whole. Instead, he becomes later even quite angry that Erika's desires do not neatly coincide with his expectations of her as a participant of the signifying regime of high culture in

Vienna. Even the man who attempts to physically get the closest to Erika attempts to petrify her as a static, signifying representation of musical embodiment.

E. Erika as Non-Traditional Character

Queer phenomenological orientation is a useful theoretical tool to help understand Erika Kohut as a subject independent of her environment in *Die Klavierspielerin*. Erika is not a traditional main character. The genre of novel implies insight to interiority of characters, particularly the protagonist. However, the view the reader collects of Erika is extremely fragmented and without any real insight into the inner workings of her psyche. A traditional novel protagonist can be understood as a character that has an interiority revealed throughout the text. Often times, this interiority fits into a “type” of character or stands in part for themes hidden throughout a novel (Fricke et. al., 1997, 297-98). However, in *Die Klavierspielerin*, narrative voice constantly changes, and there are points where one cannot be sure if the viewpoint of Erika, a narrator, or another character is expressed. This change complicates a reading of this novel that relies strongly on character or subject. Blending personal perspectives creates a language that is social, performative, and therefore without interiority, just as Deleuze and Guattari assert (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 79-80). Thus, the reader experiences the text without interiority as an intensity that acts upon the reader. Like those within the text who try to assign a stable interiority to Erika, the reader sees only the surface of Erika.

Confronted with fragments of Erika blended into other narrative voices the reader feels only the affect of her intensities. With this, subject is created. Yet this subjectivity is not the enunciation of the reader as individual, but rather, Erika. Attributing a Deleuzian subjectivity to Erika could result in assigning an interiority to her that is reliant on a false assumption of hierarchical depth. Yet the physical signifying markers Erika uses to orient herself within her

environment exist without signs of interiority. As an assemblage that nears Body without Organs, the text moves within the subjectivity of the affectual reader. The reader is called to analyze the fragmented physical orientation of Erika and understand her dimensions without solidifying her into a traditional novel character, one who becomes streamlined and conforms to a signifying regime. Hans Bellmer (2004) so aptly writes of similar attempts to ignore fragment and assemblage in his artwork, comparing fragments to the life of a worm:

...in a piece of wood projects its tracks in this way, creating a labyrinth of intimate corridors that are dream-eaten and comfortable. To obtain its positive representation, lead is poured into the furrows after which the wood is dissolved. What remains is the unmoving panorama of its movement, the multiplication of the worm. This is how we would prefer the strange object to remain, a tragic and meticulous set of tracks that leaves in its passage a nude projected through the window onto the sidewalk (35-36).

To analyze Erika as a traditional character is to obtain a comfortable, familiar, unmoving, and dead representation of her fragments instead of attempting to grasp her intensities. Erika, however, is a labyrinth of contradictions, which do not fit together but still create an active, living, and dynamic whole.

Additionally, Erika's masochistic actions within the text imply that despite her physical attempts at orienting herself towards a signifying Viennese high culture, she still desires to become more volatile and dynamic. The text body mirrors this desire with its fragmented assemblage form that creates the reader's concept of Erika. Although everything exists as an assemblage, the human body is tied to the dichotomy of cause and effect. As the assemblage of the human body interacts with other assemblages, it has the possibility of inching closer to becoming a Body without Organs. However, to get closer to becoming more volatile or eventually even reaching this smooth plane, the body must shed its dependence on cause and effect. This is because the main question that underscores the concept of Body without Organs is

“what can it do?” not “how does it function?”. Therefore, *Body without Organs* is not focused on instinct, a cause-and-effect hierarchy (Buchanan, 1997, 79). Rather, *Body without Organs* exists beyond hierarchy and explores the ability of a body to create relations. According to Deleuze, masochism is the fluctuation between the desire for submission and domination (Musser, 2006). It is not teleological because it bends the binaries of sadism and masochism. Thus, masochists get the closest to becoming a volatile assemblage and interacting with other volatile assemblages to create a *Body without Organs* because their conflicting desires create a relationship of tension and intensities. Erika’s performances of self-harm express a yearning to shed her hierarchical organs and become a volatile assemblage like those in a *Body without Organs*. She always performs acts of self-harm in the wake of emotional happenings in her life that induce her to feel a spectrum of emotions: lust, anger, love, disappointment, hatred, etc. One of the most famous scenes of self-harm in the novel transpires in the wake of an explanation of Erika’s unrequited love for a violinist. The narration slips into the present tense as Erika steps into the bathroom, takes out a razor, and begins to cut, “einen Schnitt, der die Öffnung vergrößern soll, die als Tür in ihren Leib hineinführt” (Jelinek, 2005, 90). In this gruesome scene, Erika’s act of self-harm is closely tied to the emotions of unrequited love via the text body. She cuts her physical body in an attempt to sever the cause of her physical agitation from her emotional agitation. She attempts to suspend the tension of her senses and with it her ties to this cause/effect binary. Erika slices open a part of her body that is described as a door to her belly and body. Trying to literally pry herself open, she struggles to make her physical body more open and more volatile. In these moments, Erika seems to crave affect that resides on the same strata as action. She craves intensities and relationships between her and other bodies.

This yearning is emphasized with the language used to describe the blood that runs out of Erika's self-inflicted cuts. The first time the reader encounters Erika cutting herself is in a flashback to one of her childhood summers in the countryside. In this particular summer, an older male cousin and very sporty Austrian *Burschi* wrestles her, picking her up and flipping her upside down, resulting in Erika's first contact with male sex organs. Jelinek paints this instance in a language of intensities. The pace of the text is fast and equally as disorienting as what Erika feels when *der Burschi* physically flips Erika upside down. Neither Erika nor the reader know whether she has touched him with her lips or chin (46). Disoriented by the motions and her conflicting emotions, Erika makes a Faustian plea about the image of his sex, "Dieser Augenblick soll bitte verweilen, er ist so schön" (46). After they both retreat inside to eat dinner with Erika's mother as if nothing happened, Erika steals off to her room. She takes a razor and proceeds to cut the back of her hand four times. Erika watches: "Auf dem Fußboden und auch schon auf dem Bettzeug vereinigen sich die vier kleinen Bächlein zum reißenden Strom. Folge nach nur meinen Tränen, nimmt dich bald das Bächlein auf. Eine kleine Lache bildet sich. Und es rinnt immer weiter. Es rinnt und rinnt und rinnt und rinnt" (47). The blood runs and flows fluidly from four different cuts, or sources. These sources build upon each other and create one continuously flowing creek. The blood mixes and mingles and constantly flows, thus, this blood has postsignifying intensities that Erika does not possess with her signifying hierarchical, Viennese world of music at the conservatory. Every time Erika induces self-harm, a narrator describes the blood in almost the exact same manner. It is always a power that runs and flows like a creek.⁹ In letting her own blood, Erika attempts to sever the ties between cause and effect in her life as she watches her physical body do what she cannot: ebb and flow as a postsignifying, natural force with the ability to form relationships with itself and the things surrounding it.

Although Erika craves relationships, she ultimately neglects one of the most important aspects of assemblage within *Body without Organs*. While it is true that *Body without Organs* extends beyond the physical and is a state of becoming, it must also necessarily embrace the physical body, as it is comprised of relationships between physical body assemblages. A healthy, working, and dynamic *Body without Organs* is, according to Deleuze, a body that is thus able to constantly foster new relations to other assemblage body images and spaces (Buchanan, 1997, 82).¹⁰ Like Erika's blood, a healthy body image ebbs, flows, and becomes a part of whatever it comes into contact with, even if that something happens to be itself. Erika's bodily cuts do nothing to nurture her own physical body and the capacity of her physical body to form relations with her organs. Her actions of self-harm attempt to obliterate the physical in favor of only the mental, that which she can more strictly control. Thus, as long as Erika induces self-harm, she not only further prevents herself from being able to form relations with other, more dynamic physical body assemblages, but she also prevents herself from forming the most important relation of them all: that of her own body. In Deleuze's definition of masochism, the goal of the masochist is not to purely submit and obliterate the flesh but rather to control and orchestrate its pain and submission (Musser, 2006). While Deleuze and Guattari argue that masochists may come closer to reaching a truly fluid state of becomings, they can never truly reach a smooth plane because they attempt to orchestrate and control with the mind the submission of the flesh (Asplund, 1997, 179). The hierarchy of cause and effect remains because the mind is held in higher regard than the body. There remains the urge to control affect with the mind, and Erika, as a masochist, remains determined that her, "Geist wird über die Vorzüge des Leibes siegen" (Jelinek, 2005, 169), despite her yearning to finally separate herself from hierarchies and subsist in intensities.

The reader knows of Erika's contradictory yearnings because of the way the text distantly depicts Erika's inner desires. After a seemingly omniscient narrator explains the isolated life Erika and her mother lead, Frau Kohut and this narrator mix voices, explaining to Erika and the reader the reason why Frau Kohut and Erika must remain alone in a space described as a metaphorical "Käseglöcke" (17). Erika, trapped in the cheese dome of protective motherly love, becomes ageless, an insect baked into amber:

"Eingebacken ist Erika in die Backform der Unendlichkeit. Diese Unendlichkeit teilt sie freudig mit ihren geliebten Tonkünstlern, doch an Beliebtheit kann sie es mit jenen beliebt nicht aufnehmen. Erika erkämpft sich einen kleinen Platz, noch in Sichtweite der großen Musikschröpfer" (18).

While it seems at first as if Erika is suffering, baked into a static state she is unable to escape, this passage suggests that Erika is actually happy in this static state. This is what Erika strives to be in the public domain. She wants to be solidified in perpetuity as a concrete concept of popularity, like the great, deceased music composers who have been petrified into the hierarchy of greatness by musicians and the lay public alike.

This passage is, however, rife with as many contradictions as Erika herself and accurately mirrors Erika's tension-laden, masochistic desires. Erika is baked in a *form of endlessness*. Ironically, that which is endless is necessarily boundless and thus cannot have a form. Yet Erika does not seem to recognize this as she fights for a particular spot in a hierarchy of musical greats. Perhaps, however, this also has to do with the nature of music itself. Music on paper is a signifying regime bound by the form of the physical notes on the page as well as the accepted constructions of certain types of musical pieces such as sonatas or concertos. Conversely, music is also a living, formless, and fluid presignifying phenomenon of sound, which, although constrained by the notes on the page, multiplies and divides itself depending on who is playing

the music. The interpretation of music--notes, form, dynamics, etc-- is entirely dependent on how the musician decides to interpret them. As a physical entity, musical pieces are a dead, petrified hierarchy, just like their composers. However, when played, music goes beyond the pieces and becomes an active, affectual phenomenon; it becomes smooth space. (Asplund, 1997, 176). The interpreter is charged with creating this smooth space. As Erika concedes, „Schließlich ist auch der Nachschöpfer noch eine Schöpferform“ (Jelinek, 2005, 18). They can interpret into seemingly endless multiplicities despite the constraints on the physical form because the sounds will act differently upon different spaces and listeners. Erika is nonetheless incapable of creating these intensities as she again finds herself trying to strictly control the affect of her actions. She only believes that the interpreter has „...sein bescheidenes Ziel: gut zu spielen“ (18). Playing a piece of music with a goal to play “well” is a hierarchical cause/effect relationship in which the musician plays the physical notes and expects a certain response from either the listener or themselves, as “well” is an evaluation of the performance and not an effect of the act of playing the music and creating sounds. Erika’s yearning to be endless is bound by her view of music and herself in relation to it. “Ihr Körper,” a narrator explains just a few pages later, “ist ein einziger großer Kühlschrank, in dem sich die Kunst gut hält“ (25). Erika believes her job as musician and interpreter is not to create intangible becomings of sound but rather to take the physicality of musical text exactly as it appears and hold it within her own physicality, like a refrigerator holds food. Instead of acting on the text and letting the musical text simultaneously act upon her, she instead chooses to control it and contain it. She uses her physical form to house another dead signifying regime instead of using her musicianship to create dynamic multiplicities with her interpretations of the relationships between music, interpreter, listener, and space.

F. Klavierlich zu Wort Kommen¹¹

In *Die Klavierspielerin*, music and word often become inseparable. They bleed into one another to create a text body that is both novel and music, and thus a language assemblage. One of the first instances in which the reader encounters such musical descriptions in the text body for things otherwise not even remotely related to music comes quite early in the novel, as a narrator explains the nightly routine of Erika and her mother. After coming home from work, Frau Kohut always asks Erika if she struggles with her students, if they irritate her. Frau Kohut, „beklagt sich über mangelnden Ehrgeiz des Kindes. Das Kind hört diese falschen Töne nun seit über dreißig Jahren“ (36). This passage makes sense within the text, and the reader can understand “Töne” within the context of sound. Yet the adjective “falsch“ makes even the uninformed reader think contextually of music notes, as it is often these which are played incorrectly or falsely and would not make sense to make incorrect sounds. Here, then, the mother’s words are not merely equated with notes; they are rather notes that are incorrectly played according to Erika’s (“das Kind”) finely tuned musical ear. The perspective of this quote, however, is mixed. Only Frau Kohut would refer to Erika as “das Kind,“ yet it is only Erika who hears these wrong notes within the text. Furthermore, the reader also recognizes that Erika hears these wrong notes, yet they themselves are not able to hear the mother’s words as musical notes within the text. They stay, rather, spoken word. For the reader, the wrong notes, then, are necessarily metaphors or equivalents, but for Erika, this spoken word is music. Jelinek cleverly mixes perspective and uses words whose stable meanings bleed into the next, creating a postsignifying regime from a textual scenario that might otherwise provide the reader with a hierarchical sign/signifier reading.

At the previously mentioned private chamber music concert, Erika again encounters music within language that the reader cannot hear. During intermission, Walter Klemmer engages Erika in conversation about the great Romantic period composers, Schubert and Schumann. Erika admits she feels an affinity to these men because of their madness. She explains, “Der Angesprochene ist glücklich über das Wort Kollege aus berufenem Mund und spricht sofort in bewegenden Fachausdrücken vom Verdämmern Schumanns und des späten Schubert. Er redet deren zarten Zwischentönen und tönt dabei selbst mottenhaft grau in grau” (73-74). Once again, „Ton“ is ambiguous and its meanings multiple. The word „Zwischentönen“ means shades, and it can refer shades of color, overtones in music, or nuances of a text. The physicality of the text body suggest that the nuances of the text is more prevalent in the reader’s mind. However, coupled with the verb „tönen,“ the text hints at both music and shades of color. Not quite equivalent with „to sound,“ a verb which implies a mere description of a musical noise, „tönt“ rather means „to chime.“ Not only does this word more explicitly describe the music of Klemmer’s speech, but the word’s physicality also emulates the chiming of a bell. Starting with a hard, sharp alveolar consonant, the beginning „t“ of the verb underscores the initial sharp clang of a bell, followed by the round sound of the ö that resounds or chimes from a bell after the initial impact of the bell clapper on the sound bow. Furthermore, „tönen“ also implies shades of color, an association invited by the last part of the sentence, „...mottenhaft grau in grau.” The text body, then, creates a sentence that carries at once multiple shades of meaning of which the reader may or may not be aware. The text crafts a strange music as it literally plays with and layers the words from the same word family, „Ton,“ using its multiplicities as a sort of overtone that pervades throughout the physical text body and emulates a music only truly hearable by Erika. Physical word, for Erika, is again music that the reader can only see and analyze, not hear.

It is a smooth plane to which the reader does not have access. However, this strange speech-music makes the language foreign to the reader, because even though the reader may be able to pick apart the stable meanings of words, it is still unclear how these meanings are oriented vis-à-vis one another. To make language foreign, “to be a foreigner but in one’s own tongue [...] to be bilingual, multilingual, but in one and the same language” is to make language intensive, “a pure continuum of values and intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 98). Thus, although the reader does not have access to the smooth plane of music that Erika hears as language, Jelinek plays with the concept of overtones within the text body to induce a more intensive language and thus a volatile, postsignifying space of language assemblage.

The layers of overtones come forward even more explicitly when the sound of music itself is described. During a practice for an upcoming concert at the conservatory, Walter Klemmer sits outside of the practice hall with other students and flirts with a girl. Erika looks on in jealousy as suddenly: „Von fern her dringt das Donnern eines lauten Bach-Katarakts an die Ohren der Klavierspielerin Erika“ (Jelinek, 2005, 167). Erika’s jealous voyeurism is punctured by the thunder of a loud “Bach-Katarakt.” Music is often described as a sort of “Donnern,” and the use of the noun here implies not just a connection to nature, but also a sudden explosion of sound, not necessarily musical. Additionally, the reader encounters the great composer Bach in conjunction with the noun “Katarakt.” A cataract can be an obstruction, and it seems certainly that Erika recognizes the girl Klemmer’s talking to as an obstruction. However, a cataract is also a great, powerful rush of water. The hyphen between the two words implies that the high culture of Bach and a nature-oriented cataract, become one: a waterfall of Bach’s falling sounds. Furthermore, a cataract is extremely powerful, a rush of running water reminiscent of the powerful stream of blood in Erika’s first act of self-harm. Just as “vier kleinen Bächlein” of

blood come together to form a “rießenden Strom” (47), so, too, does the Bach become a running, powerful stream. This parallel passage reflects the powerful current as well as the influence of “Bach.” “Bach” here obviously refers to music, but in the word’s physical proximity to “Katarakt,” it ambiguously becomes both music and water. The reader need not have any knowledge of music or even the passage which this one parallels for the obvious intersection of music and nature, the bleeding of overtones that allows an otherwise signifying sentence to be imbued with a postsignifying regime. And although it is only Erika who can hear the music composed by Bach in the text, the reader actually participates as they hear the loud, rushing sounds of a waterfall crashing down around Erika’s—and their—ears.

And yet this is not the only intersection of intermedial culture and nature within the text. At a private concert held by the Polish-Austrian’s patron family, Walter Klemmer, watches her play, blatantly hungering after Erika’s body as she sways to and fro while playing a Bach sonata. A narrator takes a short paragraph to describe the last time Klemmer was in the same room, when he decided at the age of 17 to start seriously studying piano (66). After these mere two sentences, a narrator abruptly changes time and topic and begins to describe the present music being played, „Der Bach rieselt in den schnellen Satz hinein, und Klemer mustert mit von selbst erwachendem Hunger den unter dem Sitzteil abgeschittenen Leib seiner Klavierlehrerin von hinten“ (66). While the reader reads „der Bach“ and at first thinks, due to previous references to Bach within the text, that a narrator is describing the music Erika plays, the next word, the verb „rieselt“ implies that this „Bach“ is a stream. „Der Bach“ becomes neither a simile for music as nature nor a metaphor for it. Rather, der Bach is simultaneously culture and nature, music and stream, tangible and intangible. All these words within this ambiguous reference trickle into each other and destroy any sense of hierarchy and clear boundaries. This phenomenon does not

happen within the text. Instead, it happens merely on the level of the text body, as the characters within the novel have no control over the way in which such things are described and do not play a role in their description. It is only the reader who is confronted with this ambiguity. Yet the reader doesn't necessarily have to analyze the first part of this sentence nor even recognize its ambiguity to grasp the meaning of the text. Perhaps they are not fully aware of the lines crossed between nature and music, or perhaps, because of all the previous contextual mention of Bach within the text, they are not even thinking explicitly of a stream; upon reading, however, the reader is able to feel the music as it ripples through the apartment within the text. The word choice and the sentence's structural beginning exist in relationship to the reader's body. The music thus becomes active and alive with the verb „rieselt.“ The actions of the text body influence the perception and feel the reader has for the story within the text, bringing a sense of clarity to the verbal ambiguity. In analysis of the first part of this sentence, it becomes easy to separate the text body from the text. Yet in action, in the middle of reading, the text body and the text meld together as stream and music, as melody and harmony, as the tangible and intangible do within the physical sentence in relation to the reader.

This phenomenon reflected in the music of the physical text's words continues as the reader interacts with the next part of the sentence in the aforementioned quote. The music and stream ripple „in den Satz hinein...“ (66). Even if it were possible for the reader to previously stay ignorant of the sentence's beginning ambiguity and thus ignorant of the patterns in text body, the mention of „Satz“ reminds the reader of the physicality of the text and forces them to think about the relationship text body and story. Confronted with a physical word that represents a physical piece of text, the reader must grapple with the feeling of being aware of this tangible existence while experiencing the intangible meaning of the text. And yet, as the feeling of music

trickles into „den Satz,“ the relationship of text and text body also holds. The text cannot happen without the text body, and the text body does not happen without the text. Both act on each other as they simultaneously cause and are a result of one another. The sentence refers to music and nature while actively moving into a musical phrase and written text, thus creating an assemblage in which the text body acts on and changes the text and vice versa.

This one particular sentence underscores something much larger in the text body: the tempo of intensities in the text body itself. Jelinek does not just write about music and piece together music and nature within her text. Instead, she assembles a musical text. „Der Bach“ is very active and ripples at the first part of the sentence, but the verb „rieselt“ implies something slow and lovely. This, however, clashes with the next part of the sentence in which the rippling and bubbling forms a direction and goes into „den schnellen Satz hinein“. While the flow of the music/stream does not stop and is not fragmented, it is still funneled quite abruptly and unexpectedly into a very fast sentence. The sentence even affects the reader’s orientation to the physical text. Although not violent, the tempo of the physical sentence still feels rushed with two very short prepositions and an article as the words accelerate into the alliteration of „schnellen Satz,“ a phrase that both flows and then stops abruptly at the very metrical, evenly metered word „hinein.“ As Klemmer continues to watch Erika play, an ambivalent narrator (or perhaps even Klemmer) determines, “Das Fleisch gehorcht der inneren Bewegung durch Musik“ (67). The sentence currently under analysis emulates this observation. The flesh of the reader responds to the musical flow of this sentence. It moves, just as „der Bach,“ slowly at first and then, speeding up, crashes into the last preposition. Within the text and in the text body, this sentence becomes whirlwind of intensities felt directly and quite physically by the reader.

G. Text Body as Music

The musical text body pursues its postsignifying relation to the reader throughout the novel, even when the story doesn't revolve around musical happenings. When Erika lies to her mother about playing in a private chamber music concert--opting instead to venture out into a unscrupulous part of Vienna in the middle of the night--she goes on the search for a couple having sex. To reach her scopophilic goal, Erika treads lightly on a trash-laden field in the outskirts of the city and „...setzt regelmäßig wie ein Metronom Fuß vor Fuß“ (141). The reader brings their knowledge of a metronome to the text as they recognize the meaning of this simile. Erika treads methodically and without faltering like a metronome. This simile exists at the level of the text body, and the meaning of it is then created in the text after the reader comes to recognize what this simile means. Similes are a metonymic relationship, mirroring the workings of assemblage and its simultaneous, active relations. The paragraph continues, and a narrator explicates Erika's situation and the lie she told her mother without any mention of music. The next paragraph continues in the same manner, without any words that point to a relationship to music. However, the construction of the sentences themselves create something that goes beyond an intertextual reference. The paragraph begins to emulate the methodical beat of a metronome without mention of it. After the first three descriptive sentences of this paragraph, every sentence starts with “sie.” „Erika läßt sich eine Vorsicht walten. Sie macht sich leise und federleicht. Sie macht sich weich und schwerelos. Sie ist ganz Auge und Ohr“ (141). The paragraph continues on in this methodical manner, stretching the tempo at certain with longer sentences until finally, this pattern ends with the sentence, „Sie geht und geht und geht“ (142). After this, the methodical tempo abruptly crashes into a longer sentence with an entirely different subject and feel. The reader need not even recognize that this pattern is happening. Inevitably, the rate at which the

reader's eyes dart from word to word on the page is affected. The reader becomes accustomed to the way the sentences are structured as they physically sink into the tempo set by the text, which creates the physical sensation of Erika's metronomic gait.

While it may seem that the musical relationship between the reader and text body is then passive in nature and able to exist without the recognition of the reader, the depth of this relationship once again depends on the reader and the active observations they are able (and willing) to make. Jelinek constructs a musical text body whose intensities *can* be passively taken in to understand the text. When the reader notices certain aspects of the physical text body, however, they see a piece of music riddled with subtle intratextual and intertextual references that beg the reader to, in a Bellmer-esque way, disarticulate them. The sentence right before the aforementioned paragraph abruptly crashes into non-metered text body. A narrator lets the reader know that, „Sie [Erika] geht und geht und geht (142) “. Not only does the sentence firmly establish an even, metered tempo—making the crash into unmetered text all the more apparent—but it emulates a structure found often in the text body and analyzed in this essay: „Es rinnt und rinnt und rinnt und rinnt (46) “. This structure appears when Erika engages in acts of self-harm. While it refers to blood flowing, it also possesses a metered, even tempo established by the repetition of „rinnt”. In this same way, this sentence that comes much later in the novel establishes a tempo. It becomes a variation of the previous statement and showcases the placement of language on a continuum, as something oriented toward change instead of stasis (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 99). These two sentences do not have any connection within the textual plot, and the reader can completely overlook this purely structural connection and continuum while still experiencing the metered tempo of the text body. However, when reflecting on the text body as a whole, the astute reader will pick up on the many sentences

throughout the novel that are structurally the same as the initial one involving self-harm. Just like sonata form's three main sections--exposition, development, and recapitulation--this particular sentence structure in the text body is introduced early on in the novel and then reemerges in various ways throughout the text body.¹² The structure feels familiar to the reader, even if they are not cognizant of it, for as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write, "Every statement includes its variations" (98), and thus every variation of the statement afterward will remain familiar. But when the reader does recognize the structure outwardly, they are able to look at the assemblage whole of the piece and observe the ways in which these structural intra-references maintain the text's musical tempo on a continuum of various intensities.

While there is an obvious intra-textual reference to these episodes of self-harm, there is also a nod towards yet another passage earlier within the novel. Erika manages to slip away one evening to yet another unscrupulous part of Vienna to watch a peep show. After she watches a woman undress for a multitude of men encaged within their small, rented rooms, Erika decides to leave. As another man takes her spot to continue watching, "Sie geht nach Hause. [...] sie geht und geht, ganz mechanisch, genauso wie sie vorhin geschaut und geschaut hat" (Jelinek, 2005, 59). Just as Jelinek describes Erika's metronomic gait in the previous passage, the passage here describes Erika in a similar vein. However, instead of comparing Erika to a metronome in this variation, her gait is described as mechanical. Placing Erika in a similar scopophilic situation, Jelinek draws a connection between the methodical tick of the metronome in which Erika "geht und geht und geht" and the description of the mechanical manner in which Erika walks. Furthermore, the rest of the paragraph sets a methodical tempo akin to that of a machine or metronome. The passage emulates what Erika does as she walks and "...zieht dahin. Nichts ist zerissen, nichts hat abgefärbt. Nichts ist ausgebleicht. Nichts hat sie erreicht. Nichts, was vorher

nicht da war, ist jetzt da, und nichts, was vorher nicht da war, ist inzwischen gekommen“ (59). Mechanically, each sentence starts with „nichts” and has a very metered tempo. A strength of the German language, the last sentence, although long, is also metered in its use of relative clauses separated by commas that evenly break up the tempo of the reader’s pace. Thus, this passage not only suggests a similar sentence structure within the text body but also a similar variation of musical affect felt by the reader, even if unconsciously. Additionally, the textual description of Erika’s metronomic and mechanical gait emulated in the tempo of the text body draws parallels between music, text, and machine. There is little difference between the “mechanical” tempo of this text passage and the metronomic tempo set by the passage later in the novel. Both are metered and create an even, walking pace while reading. While the later passage’s grammatical subject is more personal and directly related to Erika rather than the “nichts” that is the mechanical sentences’ grammatical subject, both passages share the same relationship to the reader in their similar tempos. What, then, is the difference between music, text, and machine? Art and industry? Thoughts and feelings ordered into a certain form and the logical order and functions of a machine? At the level of the text body and in their relationship to the reader, these things so often separated become inseparable and the text remains fluidly intra- and inter-medial. The text body thus underscores the dynamic postsignifying regime that exists within the signifying regime and vice versa (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, 117).

Finally, just like the recapitulation, or last section of a sonata, all the text body’s forms and tempos and the text’s inter-and intra-medial textual references resurface together at the end of the novel. After Klemmer violently rapes Erika, she attempts to see him once more. Yet when she arrives at the technical school where Klemmer studies, she sees him laughing in the middle of a group of students, arm around another girl. In the middle of her pain, Erika only watches the

gaiety. She “[...]schaut zu,” emulating the voyeurism she brings to the peep show and the field on the outskirts of the city (Jelinek, 2005, 284). The group makes its way inside one of the buildings, and Erika pulls out a kitchen knife from her bag, stabbing herself in the shoulder. After performing again an act of self-harm, she turns around and “...geht und geht. Ihr Rücken wärmt sich durch Sonne auf. Blut sickert aus ihr heraus... Erika weiß die Richtung, in die sie gehen muß. Sie geht nach Hause. Sie geht und beschleunigt langsam ihren Schritt” (285). The reader encounters the sentence structure, “Sie geht und geht” for the last time. This is also, coincidentally, the last time they encounter Erika. Contrary to the first time this structure appears, however, this episode of self-harm does not emulate the same structure. The blood here does not run. It is not quick or powerful. Rather, it oozes slowly from her shoulder as she walks home.

Another text structure repeats after Erika performs the last act of self-harm to which the reader is privy. Erika goes home, just as she did on the bus with her instruments, after the peep show, and after being discovered spying on the couple in the field. Just as always, Erika knows the way she must go: “nach Hause.” While it seems the recapitulation of these inter- and intramedial structures and themes are the same, the last sentence shows otherwise. Even the reader who does not recognize the structural references within the text is surprised that instead of another variation of the metered-tempo structure, the affect of which the reader settles into and has come to expect, the last sentence ends, “Sie geht und beschleunigt langsam ihren Schritt” (285). The verb “beschleunigt” takes over for the expected repetition of “geht,”. Longer and slower to read, this verb is accompanied by the adjective “langsam,” which is accordingly also slower to read. The tempo of the text body in relation to the reader, then, actually slows down. Yet this is contradictory to the pace of Erika in the text, who gradually accelerates her step.

Separating her actions within the text from the text body, Erika finally separates herself from text and text body, walking right off of the page and leaving the reader and their relationship to the novel behind. She herself becomes a presignifying regime just as Deleuze and Guattari describe it, a line of flight that “detaches from the irradiating circular network and sets to work on its own account, starts running a straight line, as though swept into an open passage” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 121).

However, *Die Klavierspielerin* calls the reader to view Erika’s flight with caution to avoid recreating a despotic system. Earlier in the text, a narrator, blurring perspective in narrative voice, shares part of the interaction between Erika and Klemmer while Klemmer reads Erika’s masochistic letter:

Hat sie [Erika] dies vom Fernsehen entliehen, daß man nie das Ganze sieht, immer nur kleine Ausschnitte, jeder für sich aber eine ganze Welt? Den jeweiligen Ausschnitt liefert der Regisseur, den Rest liefert der Eigene Kopf. Erika haßt Menschen, die nicht denkend fernsehen. Man profitiert vor allem, wenn man sich öffnet (Jelinek, 2005, 226).

The text invites the reader to see it as fragment. Looking back at the text and text body, the reader--not able to see “das Ganze,” the entirety of everything that has happened or the complete ending of what will happen to Erika--must look at small “Ausschnitte” provided in the relationship established between text, text body, Erika, and themselves. This is the process of honoring the text and form a volatile, dynamic Erika rife with contradictions and multiplicities. And although there are multiple, productive ways to read and interpret this text, my critical description of the intermedial relationships within and without *Die Klavierspielerin* seems to be, at the very least, a system of pragmatics that aligns itself with the ones outlined in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In his translator’s introduction to Deleuze and Guattari’s work, Brian Massumi (1987) introduces this pragmatic system. It’s goal, he writes, “...is the invention of concepts that do not

add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that either you enter or you don't, but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying" (xv). In her creation of a volatile, dynamic musical text, *Die Klavierspielerin* invites the reader to come at the text with the same energy and potential to take their crowbar and pry.

NOTES

¹ See also Sutarzewicz and Hadasz (2010a) "Zwischen Mutterherrschsucht Und Notenkorsett: Eine Destruktive Mutter-Tochter-Beziehung Am Beispiel Von Elfriede Jelineks Klavierspielerin" p. 226 and Dickson (2007) "Her Mother's Daughter: Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Klavierspielerin* as a Study in Self-Disgust" p. 5.

² „...Erzähler wechselt vom Kommentar zur Rollenprosa, so dass man nie ganz sicher weiß, ob es sich um einen außenstehenden, ironisierenden Betrachter handelt oder um jemanden, der selbst involviert ist?“ (Naduvvari, 2006, 245).

³ See also Wright (1991, 185) “An Aesthetics of disgust: Elfriede Jelinek’s *Die Klavierspielerin*” for further discussion of complications associated with search for character and singular narrative voice within *Die Klavierspielerin*.

⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari, the word “becoming” refers to a process of change within an assemblage. One part of an assemblage changes and thus changes the value of another part of the assemblage. Both parts are then removed from their original function and thus create new relationships and affects (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 255-258).

⁵ For a larger discussion on everyday fascism and Jelinek’s critique of everyday fascism in Vienna within *Die Klavierspielerin*, see Schlipphacke (2010) *Nostalgia After Nazism* pp. 65-122.

⁶ In works like *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1995) Deleuze critiques Bergson and Merleau-Ponty, seemingly opposed to existential phenomenology. However, there has been a body of recent research connecting the works of Merleau-Ponty to Deleuze. Much of this research works specifically with Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the flesh. While Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari claim that the notion of flesh is still caught in a hierarchical relationship, Jack Reynolds and Jon Rolfe (2006) argue for a reading of Merleau-Ponty that resists this notion. Flesh, they argue, is Merleau-Ponty’s way of providing “an analysis of the transcendental as a condition for actual experience” (241). The flesh is not a Kantian object aligned with sense but rather an expression of being that involves differences articulated in the same way, just like Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of univocity of being or smooth spaces (241). And although Merleau-Ponty’s works are still intertwined with notions of Western philosophy Deleuze critiques, Reynolds and Rolfe argue that Merleau-Ponty resists a purely Kantian reading. He instead only occasionally resorts back to such notions, something that Reynolds and Rolfe argue all philosophers face. Actively trying to avoid detached Kantian notions of Western philosophy “...is a difficulty that Deleuze and Guattari themselves note in their final work and one we must all vigilantly confront. It is ultimately this plane of immanence, this attempt to make thought and life intertwine, that both philosophers set as the horizons of philosophical activity” (248).

⁷ In keeping with Jelinek’s usage of Volk within *Die Klavierspielerin*, I choose to use this loaded word imbued with the undertone of fascism within the same context.

⁸ Refer to Swinkin’s “An Account of Emotional Specificity in Classic-Romantic Music” (2012) for an analysis of emotional expression in Classical and Romantic music.

⁹ See, for example, *Die Klavierspielerin* p. 90-91.

¹⁰ See Buchanan (1997) for a discussion on the relation of BwO to physical and mental health (81-84).

¹¹ “Der Sessel der Lehrerin wird etwas nach vorne gerückt, tief taucht der Schraubzieher ein und holt einen letzten Rest Inhalt aus dem Wiener Liederfürsten, der heute rein klavierlich zu Wort kommt“ (Jelinek, 2005, 117).

¹² This structure appears again later in the text during a rehearsal for an upcoming student concert. Klemmer makes his sexual desire for his teacher clear, and a narrator describes them and the game that they play with each other, “Zusammen sind sie verpuppt wie Zwillinginsekten im Kokon. Ihre spinnwebartigen Hüllen aus Ehrgeiz, Ehrgeiz, Ehrgeiz und Ehrgeiz ruhen schwerlos, mürb auf den beiden Skeletten ihrer körperlichen Wünsche und Träume“ (Jelinek, 2005, 171).

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VITA

NAME: Erin Gizewski

EDUCATION: B.A., Major: German, Minor: Music, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI, 2016

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL, 2018
 Writing Center Tutor, Brainard Writing Center at Carthage College, 2013-2016
 German Tutor, Carthage College, 2013- 2016

HONORS: Humboldt Universität zu Berlin Exchange Scholarship, 2019
 Max Kade Travel Grant, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2018
 Fruman and Marion Jacobson “Bridges” Fund Award, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2018
 Robert Kauf Memorial Scholarship Award for Excellence in Graduate Research, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2018
 Max Kade Fellow, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2017-2018

CONFERENCES: “Beyond Detective Work: The Necessity of Going Beyond the Psychoanalytical Method in Sigmund Freud’s ‘Der Moses des Michelangelos’” presented at Kentucky Foreign Language Conference at University of Kentucky: April 19-21, 2018
 “Beyond Detective Work: The Necessity of Going Beyond the Psychoanalytical Method in Sigmund Freud’s ‘Der Moses des Michelangelos’” presented at In/Between Conference at University of Illinois at Chicago: April 12th-13th, 2018
 “Verfremdung zu einem Zweck: Gedichten von Johann Wolfgang von Goethe und Bertolt Brecht,” poster presentation given at Celebration of Scholars, Carthage College: April 2014