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POSTMODERN ASPECTS OF ELECTRONIC AND MULTIMEDIA MUSIC

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ABSTRAK

Semangat modernisme dalam musik untuk melakukan sesuatu yang baru, menciptakan inovasi dan sebagainya kini menghadapi kendala karena perkembangan materi dalam musik baru menjadi semakin kecil. Berdasarkan fenomena ini, saat ini banyak komponis komponis mencari cara lain untuk mengembangkan lanskap musik mereka seperti melanggar batas-batas antara musik dan bentuk seni lainnya hingga melibatkan kecenderungan estetika Postmodern dalam karya-karya mereka. Saat ini banyak melanggar batas-batas mitos Modernisme seperti mematahkan oposisi biner antara budaya pop dan tinggi, dulu dan sekarang serta menjadikannya sebagai strategi lain untuk membuat musik dan juga untuk memberikan solusi alternatif atas “hibernasi” perkembangan materi dalam musik baru. Fenomena ini jelas muncul dalam musik elektronik dan multimedia di mana komponis menggunakan banyak kutipan audio dari budaya pop, menggunakan elemen pop art, dan juga menggunakan kutipan audio yang ada sebagai parodi dan lain sebagainya.

Kata kunci: *Musik Baru, Musik Elektronik dan Multimedia, Postmodernisme.*

ABSTRACT

Modernism spirit in the music of doing something new, create innovation and so on now facing an obstacle because material progression in new music become smaller and smaller. Based on this phenomenon, now composers find other ways to develop their musical landscapes such as breaking the boundaries between music and other arts form until involving Postmodern aesthetic tendencies in their works. Many composers now breaking the boundaries of Modernism myth such as breaking binary opposition between high and pop culture, past and present and make it as another strategy to make music and also to give an alternative solution to the “hibernation” of material progression in new music. These phenomena are clearly appear in electronic and multimedia music where composers using many existing audio quotations from pop culture, using pop art element, and also using an existing audio quotation as a parody.

Keywords: *Electronic and Multimedia Music, New Music, Postmodernism.*

INTRODUCTION

Postmodern is a period after Modernism that have some characteristics that differ from Modernism. According to Jürgen Habermas (1983:3), term “modern” itself was used since late 5th century to express consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new. If in Modernism something new, innovative, binary oppositions (in case of music is “high culture” and pop culture, old and new) become dominant characteristics of this period, than Postmodernism appears as the anti-thesis of those Modernism beliefs.

According to Fredric Jameson, there are two features of postmodernism. First, postmodernism emerged as a specific reaction against the established form of high modernism, against this or that dominant high modernisms which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network, and the foundations. The second feature of postmodernism is the effacement of some key boundaries or separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture. This is perhaps the most distressing development of all from an academic standpoint, which has traditionally had a vested interest in preserving a realm of high or elite culture against the surrounding environment of philistinism, schlock and kitsch (Jameson, 1983: 111).

In music, Claus Steffen Mahnkopf has a “similarity” explanation why

postmodern style emerged in music. He said that it was because postmodern no longer believes if modernism myth of something new, innovative, or in summary, “material progression” is possible anymore. Based on that “claim”, now postmodern composers then have a common “attitude” to negates the negation of medium (read: material¹ [in the case of music: sounds, pitches, rhythms, temporal organization]) and make all medium such as from pop culture, musical language from other cultures, musical languages from the past or quoting many styles are valid to use in their pieces.

We can see this negation process from period to period in Harry Lehmann’s theoretical model where he divides the negation elements into three parts: Works, Medium and Reflection. For example, in his theoretical model, we can see if in the classical modernity the negation of the art medium is happening and in the postmodern period, there is a cancellation of the negation of the art medium. In music, Mahnkopf “translate” those three elements become **Work** as the individual artistic product (read: a piece of music), Medium as the material such as pitches, rhythms, and **Reflection** as Semantic.

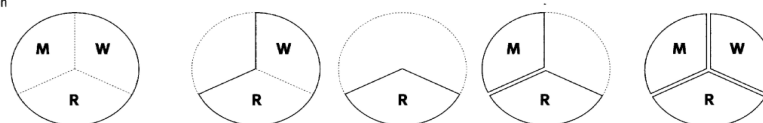
Through that theoretical model from Lehmann now we can see clearly if in the classical modernism in music composers did negation of the medium, for example, atonality negates tonality, noise material negates pitches. Furthermore, in

¹<http://www.claussteffenmahnkopf.de/pdfs/Mahnkopf-Musical-Modernity.-From-Classical-Modernity-up-to-the-Second-Modernity-Provisional-Considerations.pdf>, page 10.

Figure 1. Theoretical Model

Social history	19th modernity: tradition	1st modernity: industrial modernity			2nd modernity: reflexive modernization
Art history	Modern Age (<i>Neuzeit</i>) (Renaissance through Romanticism)	classical modernism	avant-garde	post-modernism	reflexive modernism
Phase of modernization	constitutional phase	phase of progressive differentiation			phase of reflection
Orientation of art	content-aesthetic (<i>inhaltästhetisch</i>)	material-aesthetic (<i>materialästhetisch</i>)			Gehalt-aesthetic (<i>gehaltsästhetisch</i>)
Gains in autonomy	system autonomy social autonomy of the art system; autonomy of the firmly-bonded components of work, medium and reflection	autonomy of the firmly-coupled components of work and reflection	autonomy of reflection	autonomy of the medium	autonomy of the work
Possibilities of negation	no negation of art possible within the art system; evolution takes place only through stylistic change	abstract negation of the art medium	abstract negation of the work of art	cancellation of the negation of the art medium	cancellation of the negation of the work of art, medium & reflection are different components of art

W = work, M = medium, R = reflection



Harry Lehmann's Theoretical Model of Constitutional Phase of Art System (2006:14).

postmodernist compositional works such as in Alfred Schnittke's piece Symphony No.1, composer cancel the negation of medium (read: material) and use all material from old styles or pop music styles (read: musical work refers outside of itself, the material is taken from other music) as point of references.

In Alfred Schnittke piece Symphony No.1 the characteristic of his music is very heteronomous like we play ten radio station at the same time. Much extravagance in the term of stylisation. In this piece, Schnittke quote many styles from Jazz to music from the past that we known as music from the Romantic period such as Beethoven Symphony No. 5 Movement 4. Apart from collage way that mostly we have known as postmodern aesthetic in term of *pastiche* and *parody*, we also have other aesthetic criteria in postmodern such as *camp*, *kitsch* and so on,

These "tendencies" that postmodernism offer maybe looks like

a "banal" solution to answer the end of modernism innovation in music. However, on the other hand, postmodern tendencies can break boundaries and open another horizon and other possibilities such as breaking the boundaries between high culture and pop culture, breaking the boundaries of new music to the "classical" sound and make it more colorful. We can see these cases through some examples such as Plunderphonic, Vaporwave and the use of pop music and pop art elements in electronic and multimedia music.

In this paper, I would like to discuss how new music, especially in the field of electronic and multimedia music contain, postmodern aesthetic characteristics such as *parody* aspect in Johannes Kreidler piece, quotation but also distortion of pop music aspects in John Oswald piece or in Vaporwave movement and also pop art style in visual part of Marko Ciciliani's multimedia music piece.

DISCUSSION

Postmodern Aesthetic Characteristics.

I have mentioned that some postmodern aesthetic characteristics can be related to a new music phenomenon, especially in the field of electronic and multimedia music. In this chapter, I will explain some of the postmodern aesthetic characteristics such as *pastiche*, *kitsch*, *parody*, *camp*.

1.1 Pastiche

Pastiche is a stylistic mimicry. Pastiche: is a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum (Jameson, 1983: 115). I consider this imitation of dead style as a quotation of previous styles or music by previous composers where its imitation is neutral without ulterior motive, satirical impulse and mocking the original

1.2 Parody

Parody is like pastiche in the term of imitation or quoting styles. Nevertheless, in parody, we can find ulterior motive plus its satirical impulse, mocking the original and also this aspect provides a medium to mocking the great modernist.

2.3 Kitsch

According to Yasraf Amir Piliang (1994:111), in the art *kitsch* identified as “low taste”, or every type of *pseudo art* that cheap and without taste. These criterias are manifested in the weakness of its aesthetic criteria or aesthetic level.

1.4 Camp

There's several points of Camp characteristics that written by Susan Sontag (1964) such as:

- The Hallmark of Camp is the spirit of extravagance.
- Camp is an art that proposes itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is “too much”.
- In naive, or pure, Camp, the essential element is seriousness, a seriousness that fails.
- Pure Camp is always naive. Camp which known itself to be Camp is usually satisfying.
- The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious.

Postmodern in music.

In music, postmodern characteristics are more diverse outside of postmodern aesthetic characteristics that I have mentioned above. Two examples of postmodern characteristics in music are from Claus Steffen Mahnkopf and Jonathan D Kramer. According to Mahnkopf, there are five basic characteristics of postmodern music²:

1. The postmodern musical work is hedonistic; it displays an enjoyment of its combinatorial imagination with a certain frivolous air unique to music; its reception occurs in the mode of pleasure.

²<http://www.claussteffenmahnkopf.de/pdfs/Mahnkopf-Musical-Modernity.-From-Classical-Modernity-up-to-the-Second-Modernity-Provisional-Considerations.pdf>, page 5.

2. The postmodern musical work is narrative; it presents a musical narrative, not a composition of sounds or structures.
3. The postmodern musical work is formally heteronomous, i.e., the difficult problem of form is solved, this being achieved through a strong connection to previously existing and functioning forms.
4. The postmodern musical work refers outside of itself; its material is taken from other music.
10. Consider technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music.
11. Embraces contradiction.
12. Distrust binary oppositions.
13. Includes fragmentations and discontinuities.
14. Encompasses pluralism and eclecticism.
15. Presents multiple meanings and multiple temporalities.
16. Locates meaning and even structure in listeners, more than in scores, performances or composers.

In another text by Jonathan D Kramer, he mentioned 16 characteristics in postmodern music (2013: 16). These characteristics are:

1. Postmodernism music is not simply repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension.
2. On some level and some way, ironic.
3. Does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and of the present.
4. Challenges barriers between “high” and “low” styles.
5. Show disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity.
6. Questions the mutual exclusivity of elitist and populist values.
7. Avoid totalizing forms.
8. Considers music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social and political contexts.
9. Include quotation of or references to the music of many traditions and cultures.

Based on those sixteenth characteristics which Kramer wrote, in my opinion those characteristics still can be reduced into Mahnkopf’s criterias of postmodern music that I mentioned before. For example, Kramer wrote in point 3 and 4 that postmodern music does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and the present and challenges barriers between “high” and “low” styles. In my opinion that two criterias from Kramer are the same as in Mahnkopf explanation in point 4 that I mentioned before.

Examples of postmodern aesthetic characteristics in electronic and multimedia music.

According to explanation about postmodern aesthetic characteristics from Fredric Jameson, Yasraf Amir Piliang, Susan Sontag and other specific explanations of postmodern characteristics in music from Claus Steffen Mahnkopf

and Jonathan D. Kramer, then I have some examples of these postmodern aesthetic characteristics phenomenon in electronic and multimedia music from quotation of existing audio recording of pop song with its different tendencies from quoting pop song as parody until quoting pop song as the medium of critic.

1.1 Parody and Camp aspect in Johannes Kreidler piece “Die inoffizille Darmstadt-Hymne 2010”.

In his video that was explaining about New Conceptualism, he played some of his pieces, and there is one piece that reminds me of postmodern aesthetic “*parody*”. I have mentioned before if the *parody* is defined as stylistic mimicry with satirical impulse, mock the original and this aspect also provide a medium to mocking the “great modernist”. In this piece I can hear Kreidler conscious or unconsciously, direct or indirectly mocking the symbol of “great modernist” in music, Brian Ferneyhough.

Through quotation techniques and “Band in a Box” software, he is rendering Brian Ferneyhough “String Quartet No. 2” played by Arditti String Quartet to become more “Jazzy” where “melodic motives” that taken from Ferneyhough’s string quartet piece now have chords progression accompaniment. This piece also very close to Camp because the whole point of Camp is to **dethrone** the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious.

1.2 Pop music quotation in Plunderphonic and Vaporwave.

Based on Fredrich Jameson statement that one of postmodern feature

is the effacement of the old distinction between high culture and popular culture, then we can find many examples of the synthesis of “high culture” representation in music with “popular” styles in the music field.

These examples are from Phillip Glass “Low Symphony” that quote David Bowie album “Low” and in electronic music fields such as Plunderphonic and Vaporwave styles. In Low Symphony, Phillip Glass quote two tracks of David Bowie album “Low”. These tracks are “Subterraneans” and “Warzawa” and make those tracks “bigger” to Orchestra formation. In the electronic music field, we have Plunderphonic and Vaporwave, Plunderphonic (Oswald, 1985) can be considered as composing by quoting one or more existing audio recording and altering them to make a new composition. John Oswald described it as a highly self-conscious practice that allows him to interrogate notions of originality, copyright, signature and “the death of the author”³.

This existing audio recording quotation from pop music is clearly used in John Oswald piece such as “Dab” from Plunderphonic album. In his piece “Dab” he quote and deconstruct the pop music element from Michael Jackson song “Bad” to become something new. However, although the sound result is already different, we still can feel the Michael Jackson song “Bad” in it. Based on this existing audio quotation issue, Canadian

³<http://retromaniabysimonreynolds.blogspot.com/2014/09/remashed.html?m=1> (accessed November 17, 2019).

Recording Industry Associations, acting on behalf of its clients CBS and Michael Jackson, threatened Oswald with litigation. He was forced to destroy the master-tapes and all remaining CD's⁴.

Beside of Plunderphonic, the use of existing audio recording quotation in electronic music also happened in Vaporwave movement. Vaporwave quoting pop music and altering existing audio recording by slowing down the original tempo, etc. We can hear it the Machintos Plus's "リサフランク420 / 現代のコンピュー" where Machintos Plus quote Diana Ross song "It's Your Move".

If in Plunderphonic John Oswald did practice that allows him to interrogate notions of originality, copyright etc, in Vaporwave, they have kind of "political" message behind it. In 2013, Vice's Michelle Lhooq claimed that vaporwave had a deliberate affiliation with technocapitalism driven by a subversive political objective: undermining the iron grip of global capitalism by exposing the alienating emptiness underneath the sheen.⁵ This critic of capitalism is manifested in the use of the sampling of a pop song like Diana Ross song "It's Your Move" in Machintos Plus's "リサフランク 420 / 現代のコンピュー", the use of images marble floors, shopping malls, Classical Greek busts, and Japanese song titles.

⁴<http://retromaniabysimonreynolds.blogspot.com/2014/09/remashed.html?m=1> (accessed November 17, 2019).

⁵<https://www.documentjournal.com/2019/08/vaporwaves-little-known-roots-are-anti-capitalist-and-totally-punk/> (accessed November 17, 2019).

1.3 Pastiche, pop music and pop art aspects in Marko Ciciliani piece "Time Machine".

In multimedia music case, I find an example of this postmodern characteristic which the visual part is involving characteristic of pop art (read: comics). This piece is from Marko Ciciliani "Time Machine" for Sensor, Equipped Bass Clarinet, Live Electronic and Live Video that can be a good example. In this piece Marko quote some pop songs from many genres of pop music and he put this collage of pop music style as an introduction of this piece. The sound characteristic also can become an example of pastiche where the quotation style do not have any satirical impulses.

The dissolve of "high" and pop culture in this piece also not only appear in the sound aspect, but also appear in the visual part where "modern" grid and geometric visual elaborated with pop art where visual like comics often appear and blended with the geometric things. In this visual part, Marko put some comics images that have a story about a time machine, especially in the beginning of the piece before pop music quotation where all lyrics of those pop songs are "time machine" begin as an introduction.

CONCLUSION

If Harry Lehmann said "digital revolution" breaking the boundaries between New Music and the pop culture, life world, classical music, and other art forms, then we could say if postmodernism also breaking the modernism myth if something original, new, innovative is

a must and it is “prohibited” to use the past, material from other cultures and pop culture as “reference” because it’s not innovative and lack of “profundity”.

This postmodern phenomenon then allows composers to do other possibilities outside of pursuit innovation and material progression. Now, the past, the “other” and pop culture can be a point of reference and as a turning point of modernity aspects, also give an alternative solution to “hibernation” of material progression that becomes smaller and smaller in New Music. Popular culture quotation in postmodern tendencies also not only breaking the boundaries between high culture and pop culture, but also become a “subversive” medium such as in Vaporwave movement.

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Video examples:

- Johannes Kreidler “Die inofizzile Datmstadt-Hymne 2010. (https://youtu.be/T-kEs_RliiE). In minute 6’44”.

Plunderphonic: John Oswald “Dab”
(<https://youtu.be/8xIWLg-F0Ag>)

Vaporwave: Machintos Plus (<https://youtu.be/aQkPcPqTq4M>)

Alfred Schnittke “Symphony No.1”
(<https://youtu.be/QoaTVgvxm-M>)

Phillip Glass “Low Symphony” (<https://youtu.be/GC8OvRMgBDI>)