6

"STABILIZED, YES!" by COOL FOR YOU: a Political Message

This track is a contribution to an active political agenda.

> *I want to use "the political" not as an identity but as a lens through which to look at the world and, more importantly, at oneself.* (Kirchenbauer in Hearte 2018, 56)

COOL FOR YOU is the pseudonym of Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist Vika Kirchenbauer, who is engaged in video art, writing, and the production of electronic music.[2] Born in 1983, Kirchenbauer grew up in a village in the Black Forest, a region in Southern Germany. As a teenager, she began taking music lessons. She was raised in a humble home and thus had to finance the classes herself. She learned—or taught herself—keyboard, guitar, bass, and drums. At that time, music had a twofold meaning to her: first, it represented a possible way out of her village, which she increasingly perceived as parochial, especially from the perspective of a genderqueer person. Second, since she had financed her musical equipment and classes herself, music was something that she had been able to build on her own, and hence was of great importance to her. Having moved to Berlin in her early twenties, Kirchenbauer joined a band which she eventually quit to focus on her solo projects.

Kirchenbauer is an example of a 21st century laptop producer working in experimental electronica. Her electronic compositions

2 Unless otherwise stated, this chapter is based on email conversations that took place between February 15, 2017 and May 2, 2018, one interview via Skype on February 22, 2017, and two conversations at Vika Kirchenbauer's apartment in Berlin on January 24 and on April 9, 2018.

blend dry rhythms with sharp, repitched and fragmented vocal samples from Sacred Harp tunes, a U.S. religious folk tradition. This analysis will focus on the processing of these samples. Kirchenbauer makes music mostly in her apartment, using limited equipment: a laptop, a monitor screen, and an Akai MPC (Music Production Controller)—a digital sampling drum machine and MIDI sequencer. At least at the time of my research, she was able to make a living from her artistic projects. However, her musical activities only constituted a small part of this income. Before the release of her second EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT*, which is the main focus of this analysis, she generated almost no income from musical projects. Kirchenbauer handles both music production and live bookings on her own. For distribution, she collaborates with the Berlin-based label Creamcake. In August and September 2015, she participated in an artist residency at the Struts Gallery & Faucet Media Arts Centre in Sackville, Canada.[3] There, in large part, she developed the Sacred Harp-oriented sampling approach that she was still employing during my research.

I came across her second EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT* through a short review in the music magazine *The Wire*. The author's mention of the sample-based character of the tracks immediately caught my attention: "From religion and community, to mental health and colonialism, the violence of the gaze as an act of social control is powerfully felt and then deconstructed via heavily distorted a cappella samples" (Kretowicz 2017). I was interested in the EP because the review indicated a close connection between sampling and political themes. Moreover, the producer describes her artistic goals as political, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter illustrates. The following passage from her short biography on the video platform Vimeo further highlights this highly political self-concept:

> *In her work she explores opacity in relation to representation of the "othered" through ostensibly contradictory methods like exaggerated explicitness, oversharing and perversions of participatory culture. She examines the troublesome nature of "looking" and "being looked at" in larger contexts including labour within post-fordism and the experience economy, modern drone warfare and its insistence on unilateral staring, the power relationships of psychiatry, performer/spectator relations, participatory culture, contemporary art display and institutional representation of otherness as well as the everyday life experience of ambiguously gendered individuals.* *(Kirchenbauer 2018)*

This overt commitment to a political direction in her artistic work distinguishes Kirchenbauer from the other case studies presented in this book. In short, it is the examination of power relations

3 See Hearte 2018 for a conversation with Kirchenbauer in the context of this artist residency.

that plays an important role in Kirchenbauer's art and the motivations behind it. As such, I was interested in analyzing how this political self-concept manifests in one of the tracks from her EP, and how she has used the production technique of sampling to reach these artistic goals.

I have chosen the last track of the EP, "STABILIZED, YES!" for this case study.[4] I was interested in this track because Kirchenbauer cuts up the sampled material much more extensively than in previous productions, meaning that the listener can hardly recognize the original source. However, as this analysis will show, the sampling process itself is highly visible.

The EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT* was released on the Berlin-based label Creamcake on February 2, 2017, and was distributed through the online music platforms Bandcamp and SoundCloud. On the latter, the track reached a total of almost 2,800 plays, 59 likes, and 4 reposts in almost two years (as of June 2019).[5]

Background: Sacred Harp

On the EP *MOOD MANAGEMENT*—including the track "STABILIZED, YES!"—Vika Kirchenbauer sampled external musical source material from a single corpus. She worked exclusively with recordings from Sacred Harp singing, a rural choral tradition that emerged from the Southern U.S. in the middle of the 19th century. The name of this choral practice is derived from the tunebook *The Sacred Harp*, first published by Benjamin Franklin White and Elisha James King in 1844. The religious hymns and anthems contained in this constitutive collection of the tradition are notated in the characteristic U.S. shape-note style.

→ Figure 6.1

Vika Kirchenbauer worked exclusively with recordings from Sacred Harp singing, a rural choral tradition that emerged from the Southern U.S. in the middle of the 19th century.

Sacred Harp singers are non-professionals (Marini 2003, 74), and they sing a cappella. The tunes are only "performed" in regular meetings—so-called "conventions"—and, in principle, recordings are not made. Stephen Marini explains that Sacred Harp singing "is not 'public' in the usual sense because there is no audience at singings. Everyone sings" (86).

In the context of the following analysis, it is important to highlight some further historical aspects of this vocal tradition. First of all, it is entwined with colonial history. David Steel describes the creators of *The Sacred Harp* as being deeply rooted in the time of Jacksonian Democracy. In the Southern U.S.—particularly in the state of Georgia, where the first collectors of Sacred Harp tunes lived—this period was shaped not only by the countrywide implementation of universal white male suffrage, but also by violent land seizure from the native

4 The track is named after a chapter in the book *Airless Spaces* by feminist writer Shulamith Firestone (1998). In this book, the author writes about her personal experiences of being hospitalized in mental institutions.

5 The display of the plays has been disabled after June 2019.

people and the related westward expansion of settlers. The settlers arrived not only with their tunebooks in their luggage, but also with Black slaves to cultivate the "new" land. Steel summarizes the colonial grounds on which the tradition of Sacred Harp thrived: "Yet the economic prosperity that made the Sacred Harp possible was based on the rich lands of the Native Americans and the arduous labor of enslaved blacks" (Steel and Hulan 2010, 16).

There is a further way in which the tunes of Sacred Harp find their origins in a colonial setting. Although Steel emphasized that these tunes are "not identical to the congregational singing of eighteenth-century New England," he traced "fundamental characteristics" back to this era, including "a complex of musical skills learned in singing schools and an eclectic repertory of religious part-songs by European and American composers" (xi). The vocal traditions of colonial New England, in turn, had previously been imported to the U.S. by settlers from England (39–53).

Although rooted in sacral traditions, John Bealle (1997, xiii) emphasized that Sacred Harp is a "fundamentally nondenominational religious exercise." Hence, the evangelical tradition evolved outside of the dominant denominations of that time such as Methodism, Presbyterianism, and Baptism (Steel and Hulan 2010, 62–63). In place of the church, important sites for the evolution of Sacred Harp were religious but pan-denominational camp meetings, singing schools, and the aforementioned singing gatherings.

The history of Sacred Harp reveals further entanglements with issues regarding power relations—as we will see, this is the crucial aspect in our subsequent analysis. Kiri Miller (2010, 14) has highlighted the discursive strategies by which the tradition was used to invent an idealized past ("the invention of the rural South") as a "means for self-definition through rich cultural heritage." By analyzing both its historical foundation and its status among present-day singers, Miller argued that Sacred Harp is related to some of the most persistent narratives and myths of U.S. society:

> *Both singers and scholars have invoked independence, egalitarianism, and resistance to mainstream convention as key characteristics of Sacred Harp practitioners and the styles represented in their tunebook. Like independent-minded frontiersmen, the story goes, this democratic and physically engaging singing moved from stodgy New England to a rougher but more liberated landscape. The history of shape-note singing reproduces a recurring narrative theme of American history, the westward push in search of freedom. It also articulates a central drama of American historiography: the productive tension of egalitarianism and rugged individualism. (16)*

Having evolved from a distinctly colonial context, the tradition went on to be used as a cultural legitimation and representation of the American project. Sacred Harp was also constructed as a

specifically white tradition by designating its tunes as "white spirituals" although there have always been African American Sacred Harp conventions (9–13). Such debates, among other factors, finally helped nurture a Sacred Harp revival in the U.S. in the second part of the 20th century (Bealle 1997, 188–244; Marini 2003, 82–85).

Sample Source

The Sacred Harp recording which was processed by Vika Kirchenbauer as a sample in her track "STABILIZED, YES!" is 33 seconds in length. Kirchenbauer downloaded an entire folder of Sacred Harp recordings from the 1950s from the internet. In our interviews, she was not sure from which platform she had downloaded them.[6] She told me that her attention was directed to the tradition in general and these recordings in particular by an acquaintance of hers who sings in a Sacred Harp convention in Berlin.

The sample file is a recording of the tune "Columbiana." Listed as number 56t, this tune first appeared in the *Sacred Harp* tunebook in the version from 1850 (Steel and Hulan 2010, 185). The score in Figure 6.1 presents two verses, praising the ordinance of the communion or the Lord's Supper, one of the central acts of worship in the Christian church. While the author of the text remains unknown according to the printed score below, Steel mentions John Newton as the possible author and 1779 as the potential year of origin. Following Richard Hulan, Newton was a British evangelical author, responsible for some of the "older hymns" in the collection (63).

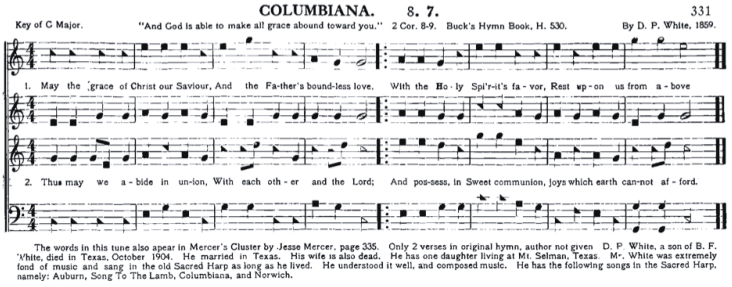

Figure 6.1: Tune 56t "Columbiana" from Original Sacred Harp, "James Edition" (James 1911)

The audio file Kirchenbauer used as a source only contains a performance of the second verse. Moreover, the recording lacks two crucial parts of Sacred Harp singing: each song usually starts with the so-called pitching—the joining in of all singers to the key tone—followed by solmization, where a first cycle is sung with the syllables fa, sol, la, and mi (Marini 2003, 69–70). The absence of both pitching and solmization indicates that the recording is only a fragment of the original performance.

As other authors have already pointed out, the harmony of

6 Kirchenbauer mentioned a few possibilities though. However, they are not disclosed here on request of the producer.

shape-note tunes is in many ways inconsistent with the rules of the part-writing tradition in European art music.[7] According to Robert Kelley (2009, 4), the abundance of "dispersed harmony," the use of chords with incomplete triads,[8] and the "use of gapped scales" are "prevalent feature[s] of shape-note music." The first three parts (treble, alto, and tenor) use the pentatonic scale (C – D – E – G – A) with D appearing in the tenor only. (The tenor carries the main melody in all shape-note tunes.) The bass part finally adds the fourth scale degree (F in bar 7) while the seventh is completely missing. According to Kelley, "non-pentatonic" scale degrees (numbers 4 and 7 in the major scale) should be avoided or at least "used sparingly" in shape-note harmony.

In summary, the tradition of Sacred Harp has produced a distinct harmony that differs from its European predecessors. This is a crucial argument for Kirchenbauer in explaining her choice of the material below.

The tradition of Sacred Harp has produced a distinct harmony that differs from its European predecessors.

Sample Processing

In "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer processed a total of 10 different sample-clips (numbered below as 1–10). When a larger sample is cut into smaller pieces to process it in the new composition, I refer to these snippets as "sample-clips" across all of the case studies.[9] These sample-clips are repeated a number of times throughout the track. In total, there are 461 audio clips that all stem from the Columbiana recording. Some of the sample-clips are further subdivided (subsequently marked as a and b). Figure 6.2 shows an excerpt of the waveform of the Columbiana recording and the respective sample-clips. The figure displays which parts of the original sample were extracted by the producer. The sample-clips are numbered according to the order of their appearance in the final track. Figure 6.3, finally, illustrates the sample-clips' locations on the score of the original tune. The red boxes indicate the sample-clips.

7 It is reasonable to compare the Sacred Harp tradition with the tradition of European harmony in order to reach a rough understanding of the harmonic characteristics of the sample. The danger of such an approach is to conceive the part-writing tradition of European art music as a superior model. That would not be my aim at all. As Kelley (2009, 2) rightly claims, one should instead define "the idiom of shape-note harmony in its own terms."

8 In the present example predominantly missing thirds, for example all chords in bar 5, but also a missing fifth on the downbeat of bar 4.

9 I do not use "microsamples" as this term designates a particular practice of sampling whereby sampling material is cut into even smaller snippets than in my examples (see Harkins 2010b).

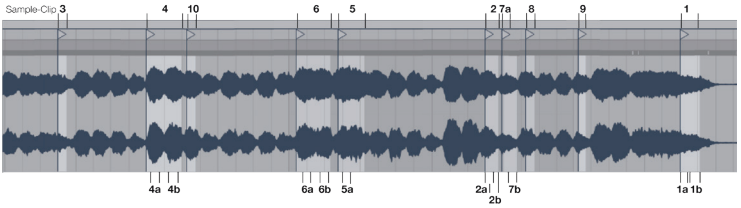

Figure 6.2: Sample-clip extraction from the Columbiana recording (screenshots from Live)

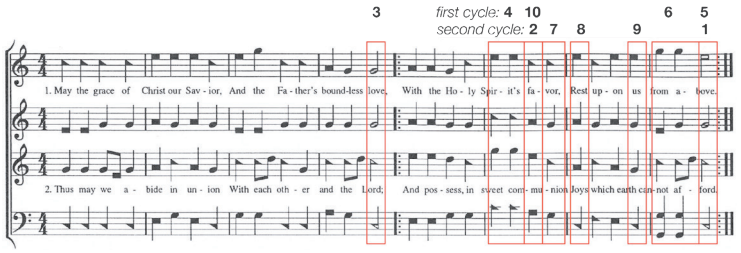

Figure 6.3: Sample-clips extracted from "Columbiana" (Sacred Harp Bremen 2019)

It is obvious that Kirchenbauer has only used the second part of the tune, beginning with the last beat of bar 4 (syllable "Lord," sample-clip 3) and ending with the last note (syllable "-ford," sample-clip 1). The stacking of two numbers (10/2 and 5/1) unfolds from the repetition of the last four bars. The clips 4, 10, 6, and 5 stem from the first cycle and the clips 2, 7, 8, 9, and 1 from its repetition. Table 6.1 provides an overview of all sample-clips.

Sample-Clip	Appearance	Length	Position (Score)	Syllable Lyrics	Chord (score)	Num	Chord (Track)	Predominant Note(s)
1	4	1/4	Bar 8, Beat 3	-ford	C	I	F♯	**A♯**–C♯
1a	24	1/8						A♯–C♯
1b	81	1/8						**A♯**–C♯
2	4	3/16	6, 3	-mu-	am	ii	d♯m	**A♯**–D♯
2a	20	1/8						**A♯**–D♯
2b	16	1/8						A♯–D♯
3	64	1/8	4, 3	Lord	C^5	I	$F♯^5$	**C♯**
4	3	1/2	6, 1-2	sweet co-	C	I	F♯	**C♯**
4a	24	1/8	6, 1	sweet				
4b	24	1/8	6, 2	co-				
5	6	3/8	8, 3	-ford	C	I	F♯	**A♯**–C♯
5a	68	1/8						
6	3	1/2	8, 1-2	-not af-	C/G^5	$I^{6/4}/V$	F♯–$C♯^5$	**C♯**–G♯
6a	24	1/8	8, 1	-not	C	$I^{6/4}$	F♯	**C♯**
6b	24	1/8	8, 2	af-	C^5	$I^{6/4}/V$	F♯–$C♯^5$	**C♯**–G♯
7a	8	1/8	6, 4	-nion	C^5	$I^{6/4}$	$F♯^5$	**C♯**–G♯
7b	24	1/8						**C♯**
8	8	1/8	7, 1	Joys	am	ii^6	d♯m	**A♯**
9	8	1/8	7, 4	can-	C	I	F♯	**C♯**
10	24	1/8	6, 3	-mu-	am	ii	d♯m	**A♯**
Total	461							

Table 6.1: Sample-clips processed in "STABILIZED, YES!"

The second column displays how often the respective clips were used in the track and the third column shows their length. The track is set at 120 beats per minute and most of the samples correspond to an eighth note (0.25 seconds) while a few are longer, such as sample-clips 4 and 6, which correspond to a half note (1 second). Columns 4 to 6 refer to the score of the tune in terms of position, syllable from the lyrics, and chord. Column 7 denotes the respective scale degrees using Roman numeral analysis.

The harmonic analysis is a bit trickier, however. As is usual in Sacred Harp singing, the tunes are not necessarily sung in the notated key. At the beginning of each tune the so-called "pitcher" tries to find a key which is comfortable for all singers (Marini 2003, 69–70). In our case, the tune is notated in C but finally performed in A. Additionally, for "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer raised the pitch of all samples by nine semitones. Hence, the processed samples can finally be heard in F♯.

Column 8 shows the chords in their transposed versions. The last column indicates which notes of the respective chords appear dominant. By means of frequency analysis, the notes highlighted in bold have been identified as the loudest ones; if there is no bold note, both notes reach a similar loudness.

As we can draw from the table, the predominant note is never the root note but mostly the fifth, and only in a few cases the third (sample-clips 1, 1b, 5 and 5a). In one case (7a), there is even a prominent note (G♯) which is not part of the noted chord (F♯5) at all. There are various plausible explanations for this. First, G♯ is the second overtone of the chord's fifth, C♯. Second, the articulated syllable "-nion," sung by individual voices, results in a range of formant frequencies. The third possible reason is the singing practice of Sacred Harp itself. Marini reports that "Sacred Harp singers are [not only] not trained in the conservatory sense" (Marini 2003, 74) but they also "sing at full volume and extreme range" (92). In his anthropological study of Sacred Harp singing sessions, Marini vividly describes the characteristic Sacred Harp sound:

> *These people do not produce the round tone and vibrato typical of white church choirs. They produce a flat, piercing vocal tone without vibrato. (…) [A]ll brought with a full-throated force that sometimes shades over into pure shout. (…) Often they will sing their harmonies slightly flat or sharp, lending an archaic modal sound to the ensemble. And they deliver all of this with a laser-like chest tone quality that could shatter glass. (73)*

The practice of Sacred Harp produces intonations which are not accurate in the manner one is accustomed to hearing from a professionally trained choir. Accordingly, the timbre can substantially differ between various excerpts of the same chord, or between different chords that are notated identically on the score.

The last figure in this section shows a transcript of "STABILIZED, YES!" (Figure 6.4). I decided to use rhythmic notation as the display format, because all sample-clips correspond to the length of either sixteenth, eighth, quarter, or half notes. Moreover, the Live project is strictly quantized. Each note thus represents a separate sample-clip. The numbers in boxes indicate the respective sample-clips in use. The transcript should be read as an orientation guide for the formal structure of the processing of the sample-clips. It does not represent a full transcript of the track. For example, the layers of percussion are not displayed here.

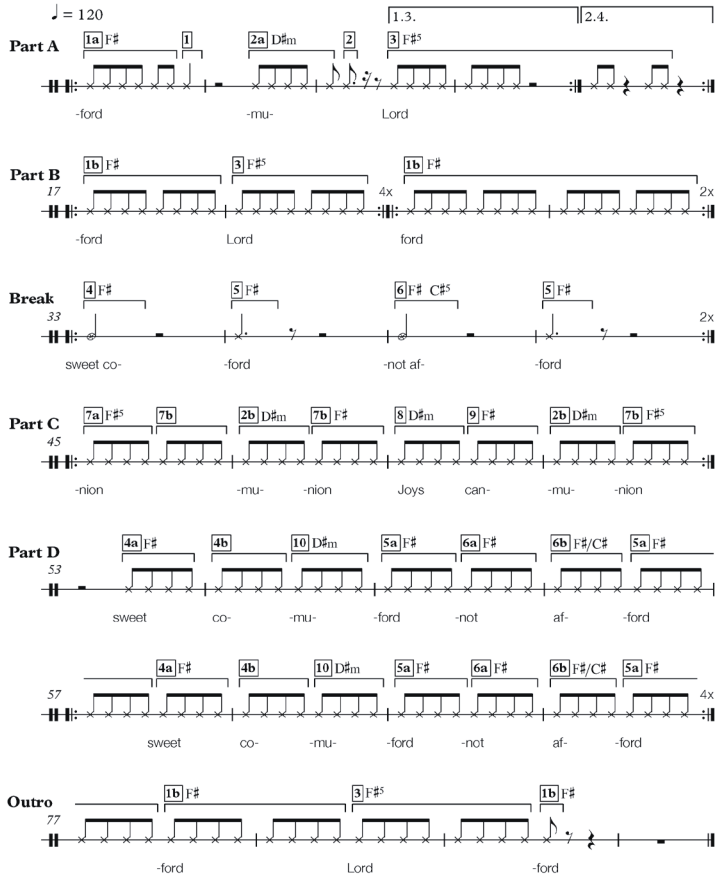

Figure 6.4: Transcript of the sample processing in "STABILIZED, YES!"

This overview reveals a sampling practice which I call "extended chopping." The term "chopping" is used in hip hop to indicate the "altering [of] a sample phrase by dividing it into smaller segments and reconfiguring them in a different order" (Schloss 2014 [2004], 106). In "STABILIZED, YES!" Kirchenbauer arranges a total of ten sample-clips. A comparison of Figure 6.2 and Figure 6.3 above demonstrates the complete reorganization of the sample-clips in the transcript. This reorganization becomes particularly apparent when considering the respective syllables from the original Sacred Harp

This overview reveals a sampling practice which I call "extended chopping."

tunes. The semantic meaning of these syllables is not relevant.[10] Beyond the characteristic sound aesthetics of Sacred Harp singing, the syllables create a sense of variation between different sample-clips, even though the clips do not vary substantially in tonal content. Kirchenbauer experiments with these subtle variations between the sample-clips. This playing with different textures becomes obvious in parts C and D of the track.

In one of our interviews, I asked Kirchenbauer to show me how she extracted the sample-clips from the source material. She demonstrated a process shaped by trial and error: she played the full sample, triggering it with the mouse in different positions in quick succession. She was looking for sample-clips that pleased her. Having found a potential sample-clip, she selected it and moved it to an empty audio track within the DAW, Live. Eventually, a range of working material was assembled in this audio track for the further process of composition. This process of selection was thus mainly led by intuition, and it is clear that the semantic meaning of the lyrics was not significant.

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Before deciding to copy the respective sample-clips to the section of the DAW project where the track's arrangement was emerging, Kirchenbauer further experimented with different pitches and lengths. She paid special attention to the sample-clips remaining loopable, since she aimed to repeat these bits in short succession later. Beyond slicing and pitching (up nine semitones), Kirchenbauer did not apply further effects to the sample. During the production process, she experimented with some reverb, but decided not to use it because the effect blurred the rhythmic concision of the track: "At some point I guess I tried out some reverb. But maybe the rhythmic quality seemed to get a little bit lost."[11]

The track begins with the last chord of the original Sacred Harp tune (sample-clip 1a) and ends quite abruptly with the same chord (1b). The ending is the only moment in the track where one of the short samples is played only once without any further repetition. The track stops on the third beat of bar 79 without concluding the full four-bar circle one bar later. In our conversations, Kirchenbauer reflected on this abrupt stop and connected it, albeit vaguely, with the intended function of the track as the closing piece in future live performances:

> *I think it just worked. I can't remember what I was thinking or planning to do here. I don't know when I made the*

10 The analysis of the syllables shows one meaningful combination: In the break (bars 35/36 and 43/44) and in part D (bars 55/56, 59/60, etc.) the words "not afford" become visible. In the context of the producer's intended message behind the track—which is analyzed subsequently —these words could become meaningful in the sense of not affording colonialism. However, this has to be considered as coincidence rather than conscious authorial intention.

11 Own translation. Original quote: "Genau, ich hab' dann auch ein bisschen Reverb ausprobiert scheinbar irgendwann. Aber dann ist vielleicht ein bisschen das Rhythmische daran verloren gegangen.

track, I think it was before I had a live show, and I think I made the ending like this because I find this quite good as a final track when playing live. That there's quite a sudden crescendo in the track and there's quite a lot going on towards the end, also quite loud and intense, and that everything then ends quite abruptly. Ok, I think I probably made this because I thought this could work quite well as a final track for a live set.[12]

At 24 bars, part D is the longest part of the track and can thus be considered its climax. A few further elements support this view, such as the intensifying of dynamics which Kirchenbauer refers to in the quote above. In both part C and part D, the sample-clips change in quicker succession than before (every half bar), and in part D all sample-clips are taken from louder sections of the main sample (sample-clips 4a, 4b, 5a, 6a, 6b, and 10), as shown in Figure 6.2. In contrast, the outro processes material from the beginning of the track (numbers 1b and 3) and returns to softer dynamics.

This analysis completely ignores the percussion sections of the track since the producer focused on the sampling elements first before turning her attention to the beats. Moreover, Kirchenbauer composed these beats on her MPC without listening to the audio track containing the sample. The beat sections are thus not relevant to our description and interpretation of the processing of the Sacred Harp material.

Sample Visibility and Sampling Reasons

(a) Sampling Reasons

The SSR below visualizes the significance of the three approaches—contextual, material, and procedural—for this case study. Within the first approach I identify three perspectives as relevant: active, neutral, and personal. Before addressing each of them, I want to outline why Sacred Harp tunes are so attractive to the producer in general. In fact, nearly all tracks so far released under Kirchenbauer's COOL FOR YOU pseudonym contain samples from the downloaded folder of Sacred Harp tunes. I consider there to be four essential factors: firstly, there is a history of colonization inherent in the source material; secondly, it is "white" religious music; thirdly, the tunes sound "mildly 'exotic' to the Western ear"; and finally, the recordings contain a broad range of dissonances. In

→ Figure 6.5

12 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, das hat einfach funktioniert. Ich kann mich nicht erinnern, was ich da vorhatte oder gedacht hatte. Ich weiss nicht, wann ich den Track gemacht hab', ich glaube, bevor ich so eine Live-Performance hatte und ich glaube, ich hab' das Ende wahrscheinlich auch so gemacht, weil ich das als letzten Track, wenn ich live spiele, so ganz gut finde. Dass es relativ abrupt einfach so ein Crescendo gibt und da ist ziemlich viel los gegen Ende, auch ziemlich laut und krass, dass es dann auch relativ abrupt aufhört. Also, ich glaube, ich hab' das wahrscheinlich schon so gemacht, weil ich dachte, das könnte als letzter Track von einem Liveset ganz gut funktionieren."

the following quote, Kirchenbauer elaborated on the first three of these aspects:

> *Sacred Harp isn't really from the U.S. South but originated in New England before the first collection of songs was compiled in 1844. Many of the songs find their earliest roots in early 18th century England though and came to North America through settlers. What's interesting to me is that the harmony structures that characterize the songs appear to sound mildly "exotic" to the Western ear (i.e. as the fourth and fifth are emphasized rather than the thirds). This prompted me to speculate upon harmonies as colonizers, given that music has been largely used not only by missionaries but also within state and economic colonialism. If the West perceives "world music" as "authentic" and "untouched," that blatantly ignores centuries of colonial history and (mutual) influences and relationalities. The economic setups and ties that now let the West consume music from places that seem remote are in their current form unthinkable outside the history of colonialism, its power structures and violence. These thoughts led me to researching and working mostly with these samples of (predominantly) white protestant music that I use recordings [of] from the 1950s.*

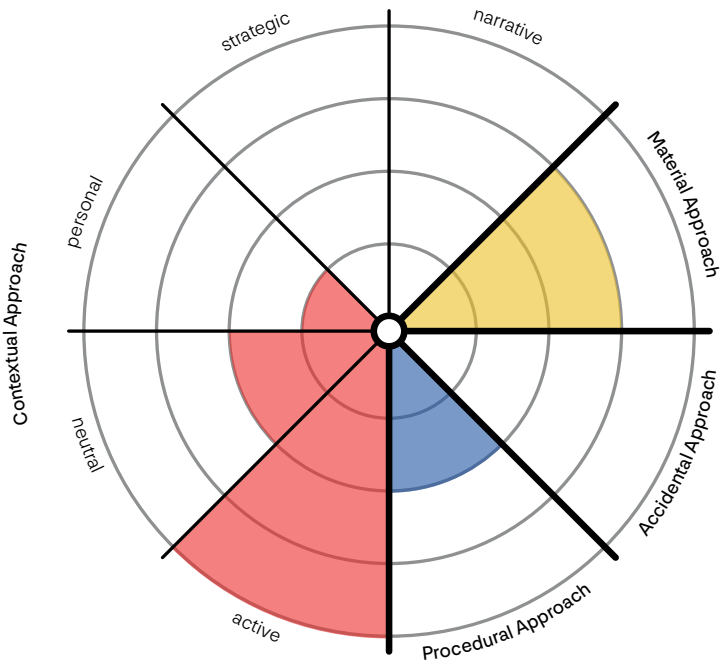

Figure 6.5: SSR: reasons for sampling in "STABILIZED, YES!

In this quotation, Kirchenbauer repeats some of the contextual information on the Sacred Harp tradition introduced earlier, con-

firming that the tradition's colonial background was essential.[13] Kirchenbauer always emphasized that she is primarily interested in the political history of the sampled material and not in the singing individuals and their relation to God. According to Kirchenbauer, her sampling practice should not be considered as a critique of belief. However, Kirchenbauer legitimizes her use of the material by stressing that it is "(predominantly) white protestant music." Although considering herself as distanced from church and religion, she feels a cultural closeness to Christianity. This made it acceptable for her to sample this material, in contrast to other samples from more remote or minoritarian cultures such as "world music material," in her own words:

Kirchenbauer always emphasized that she is primarily interested in the political history of the sampled material and not in the singing individuals and their relation to God.

> *I think it is a different structure of power, a different relation of dominance. Sure, it is some sort of appropriation—I wouldn't equate that with when white people sample any "world music" material, that's a different structure of power I think. (…) Even if I don't have a close relationship to religion, nevertheless, on the one hand I was raised and socialized in a Christian context and, on the other, I think that in our culture, Christian religions have some sort of cultural and political influence which is quite important. So I can justify it to myself differently, and I wouldn't equate someone appropriating material from marginalized groups with someone appropriating material from a culture or a set of beliefs which are more dominant in society, and to which are ascribed a different degree of power.*[14]

The third aspect is the "mildly 'exotic'" impression of Sacred Harp tunes on "the Western ear." My analysis of Sacred Harmony, given above, slightly differs from that given by Kirchenbauer in the quotation above. Where Kirchenbauer mentions an emphasis

13 In "STABILIZED, YES!" colonial ties to England are not least present through the author of the lyrics, John Newton (1725–1807), who as I previously mentioned was British. Newton's biography is particularly interesting. Having worked as a slave ship captain for a long time, he changed his view and became a prominent supporter of the abolitionist movement that called for the end of slavery (Aitken 2007). Another of Newton's songs, "Amazing Grace," became widely popular later, even among Black civil rights movements. The colonial route of Newton's text "Columbiana" across the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993) and back is a vivid example of what Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt has theorized as the postcolonial heritage of popular music (Ismaiel-Wendt 2011a). However, this was not a reason why Kirchenbauer chose the tune in question, as she paid no attention to the lyrics, and was not aware of their author. Furthermore, the lyrics are only barely comprehensible in the source recording.

14 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, es ist eine andere Machtstruktur, ein anderes Dominanzverhältnis. Natürlich ist es eine Form von Aneignung—ich würde die nicht gleichsetzen wollen, damit wenn weisse Leute irgendwelches 'Weltmusikmaterial' sampeln, das ist eine andere Machtstruktur glaube ich. (…) auch wenn ich kein enges Verhältnis zu Religion habe, trotzdem in einem christlichen Kontext aufgewachsen bin oder christlich sozialisiert bin zum einen, zum anderen glaube ich, dass vor allem christliche Religionen in unserem Kulturkreis eine Form von kulturellem und politischem Einfluss hat, der schon auch bedeutend ist. So dass ich da dann das anders vor mir rechtfertigen kann und es nicht gleichsetzen würde, ob man Material aneignet von marginalisierten Gruppen oder ob man Material aneignet von einer Kultur oder einem Glauben, der gesellschaftlich dominanter ist, dem eine andere Macht zugeschrieben ist."

on fourths and fifths, I suggest that incomplete triads are one of the harmony's central elements. However, beyond the exact differences, it is important that the harmonies *can be* or *are* perceived as exotic. (The same aesthetic perception is made by many people who believe in medieval ties to Sacred Harp music; Miller 2010, 4). In this way, Kirchenbauer wants to challenge notions of authenticity that are widespread in discourses on "world music." According to her, sounds that are marketed as seemingly "authentic," such as these hymns of Sacred Harp, bear a history of colonial encounter.

Kirchenbauer wants to challenge notions of authenticity that are widespread in discourses on "world music."

The fourth aspect is finally connected with the distinct non-professional singing style of Sacred Harp and the presence of a broad range of dissonances in the music:

> *Because Sacred Harp is very amateurish and people mostly aren't hitting the same note, if I then isolate something very small and if I repeat that or if I stretch that, this basically leads to such a dissonant chord, just because people are not hitting the same note, even though they want to. And it is relatively rare to have material like that; because all other choirs, which are somehow more professional, hit the same note. (…) That you can build such a chord, that is unintended, from such a small microsample shows a little bit the dissonance also of community and of doing something together. I find this quite interesting and the material is pretty good for that.*[15]

Having outlined these four aspects of Kirchenbauer's interest in the Sacred Harp material, I will now continue to discuss further reasons behind her sampling practice, as indicated in the SSR. The most prominent category within the contextual approach—reasons that are connected to extra-musical aspects—is the active perspective. Conceiving the tradition of Sacred Harp as strongly connected to colonial history and power relations, Kirchenbauer regards harmonies as a colonizing and thus also violent force. Similarly, Kofi Agawu (2016) has argued that tonality has acted as a "colonizing force" in Africa, verbalizing that which Kirchenbauer reflects in her musical productions. Accordingly, the central aim behind COOL FOR YOU is to "decompose harmonies as colonisers." She explained this intention not only in the quote above but also in

→ Figure 6.5

15 Own translation. Original quote: "Dadurch, dass dieses Sacred-Harp eben sehr amateurisch ist und die Leute meistens nie den gleichen Ton treffen, wenn ich dann was ganz kleines isoliere und das wiederhole oder stretche, ergibt sich darin dann eigentlich so ein dissonanter Akkord, einfach nur dadurch, dass die Leute nicht den gleichen Ton treffen, aber eigentlich den gleichen Ton treffen wollen und das ist relativ selten, dass man das als Material hat; weil eigentlich alle anderen Chöre, die irgendwie professioneller sind, treffen halt den gleichen Ton. (…) Und dass man aus einem so kleinen Microsample eigentlich so ein Akkord machen kann, der nicht intendiert ist, der diese Dissonanz auch von Community und zusammen irgendwas machen auch so ein bisschen zeigt. Das finde ich eigentlich ganz interessant und dafür ist das Material wiederum total gut."

her short description of the project as well as in the liner notes of her two EPs. By extensively chopping and pitching the Sacred Harp material, as I have demonstrated above with regards to the present track, Kirchenbauer literally "decomposes" these "colonial" harmonies: "It's kind of a violent interference to something that is static and kind of finished," she explains. In summary, this is an intention with a clearly active perspective behind it.

Beyond this principal intention of an active critique, I have further identified personal and neutral perspectives. Both are connected and thus difficult to distinguish. In general, Kirchenbauer is highly interested in the material and its context. Her interest not only lies in the historical and political aspects of Sacred Harp but also in aesthetics and issues of community. I will focus on the latter now, before discussing the former in the below section on the producer's attitude. I have already mentioned Kirchenbauer's interest in the dissonances present in Sacred Harp singing practice and their relation to community. The whole *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP debates "ideas of community," as one can read on SoundCloud:

The central aim behind COOL FOR YOU is to "decompose harmonies as colonisers."

> *For MOOD MANAGEMENT, COOL FOR YOU continues this interest in the preconditions of a colonial confluence in music, and complicates ideas of community, as being predicated on the exclusion of one person in favour of another. In doing so, Kirchenbauer carries the skittering drums and submerged vocals of her sound into a dimension that revels in its own distortions. (Creamcake 2017a)*

Obviously, the tradition of Sacred Harp singing serves as an ideal example with which to discuss this topic. Steel emphasizes Sacred Harp as "a community musical and social event" (Steel and Hulan 2010, xi) and Marini offers a similar description:

> *Singings supplied an intergenerational community meeting place, an arena for courtship, an entertainment and performance center, and a site for the rehearsal of cultural values and practices. Sacred Harp singing joined the family, the school, the church, and the town in defining a seamless community bound together by sacred ties of common beliefs and institutions. (Marini 2003, 88)*[16]

Focusing on the early history of Sacred Harp as outlined above, the musical tradition has always thrived on a strong feeling of community that was based on the exclusion of others (Native Americans and Black slaves). Kirchenbauer is particularly interested in conflictual processes, such as social exclusion, *within* communities. She perceives such processes as "dissonances of community and of doing something together." The musical dissonances of the collective practice of Sacred Harp thus represent similar collective

16 Interestingly, the lyrics of the Columbiana tune are praising the Lord's Supper, one of the most important moments in Protestant liturgy to celebrate community. Again, this goes beyond the intention of the producer as mentioned in n12.

experiences. In one of our conversations, I suggested that this interest might be linked with her own biography and personal experiences. She confirmed my assumption:

> *Because I have always worked a lot, also in queer subculture, where I can definitely see somehow a shared desire for community, but also, to some extent, I am appalled by the form some discussions take, or by how big the differences are.*[17]

A further indicator that this subject is of greater and, crucially, personal importance to Kirchenbauer is her appearance at a music festival in Germany in October 2018. There, she participated in a panel discussion and referred to personal experiences with mechanisms of social exclusion in seemingly queer safer spaces (Eichwalder 2018). I therefore argue that these personal experiences of inclusion and exclusion in subcultural communities might have been a minor, yet real, motivation behind Kirchenbauer's decision to address the subject on the *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP, and to choose Sacred Harp tunes as a sampling corpus.

All intentions and motivations that I have discussed so far could probably be applied to an analysis of every track by COOL FOR YOU. I have not yet explored why the producer chose the Columbiana recording in particular, rather than any other Sacred Harp tune. As the lyrics were not relevant in the process of selection, it was rather a matter of aesthetics. That is why the SSR gives a bigger share to the "material approach." In retrospect, it turned out to be challenging to identify the parameters influencing the selection of the "Columbiana" tune: "I think there is some sense of aesthetic choice to it that kind of makes it hard to explain," Kirchenbauer said. When reflecting on the process and on how she generally selects samples from her Sacred Harp folder, she mentioned a few factors that allowed her to at least approximate the process of selection. As a first step, she usually checks the quality of each file:

> *A lot of the older recordings are like too poor in quality to be worked with. So, whenever I time-stretch them or do any kind of heavier pitching to them, there is too much digital noise that is not super interesting to me. The first step is checking the quality of the source material, if it's even usable at all or if it's bad, if there are still qualities to it that are interesting.*

The process then differs from case to case. Sometimes she finds interesting "melodies or harmonies" or, on the contrary, she quickly detects that the material is not useful for her purposes: "I notice quite quickly, if the rhythm is too fast or if it's too heavily

17 Own translation. Original quote: "Dadurch, dass ich immer viel gearbeitet habe, aber auch in queerer Subkultur, wo ich schon auch irgendwie eine geteilte Sehnsucht nach Gemeinschaftlichkeit sehe, aber auch teilweise erschreckt bin von der Diskussionskultur oder dem, wie gross halt auch die Differenzen sind."

yelled and too stompy, that there's nothing I can do."[18] Kirchenbauer summarizes the consideration of these aspects—such as rhythm, tempo, and the aesthetics of the voices—as the search for a particular "atmosphere." She explained that she sometimes recognizes a certain "type of atmosphere" in the tunes that she's not "interested in." She further specified what kind of atmosphere she is looking for:

> *Some of [the tunes] are pretty fast and they are more kind of rhythmic in the nature that they are sung. Yeah, those would be instances where it doesn't really work for the kind of aesthetics I want to evoke, and I'm more interested in that kind of hypnotic, advanced, transcendental, religious madness.*

Once the "Columbiana" recording had successfully passed the quality check, Kirchenbauer evidently found this specific atmosphere in it. The tempo might have fit her ideas (at around 110 bpm, the tempo of the recording almost correlates with the final track's 120 bpm), and there are not too many dissonances or yelling voices. However, these are only two aspects among others that might have influenced Kirchenbauer's decision to work with the Columbiana recording. It becomes clear that, although Kirchenbauer's sampling approach is dominated by the context of the sampled material, the selection of particular samples is led by aesthetic considerations.

Although Kirchenbauer's sampling approach is dominated by the context of the sampled material, the selection of particular samples is led by aesthetic considerations.

Beyond contextual and material reasons, I have identified two procedural reasons behind Kirchenbauer's sampling practice. These address the question of general sampling motivations rather than the reasoning behind particular decisions. For Kirchenbauer, sampling also serves as a strategy of limitation. By radically focusing on a single corpus of sampling material, she limits the possibilities of musical production. She explained this when recalling how she started working with Sacred Harp tunes:

> *When I was working on my first record, I had a residency in Canada for five weeks and I thought, okay, let's have a look at this Sacred Harp stuff and let's see if I can do anything with it. I decided to work with it and if it didn't work, then I wouldn't continue. That was kind of my idea. And it really helps me to limit myself relatively rigorously. Because if I just listened to any kind of music and then saw what samples… I think I would miss a little bit a reason that*

18 Own translation. Original quote: "…ich merke relativ schnell, wenn der Rhythmus zu schnell ist oder es zu geschrien und stampfig ist, dass ich da nichts machen kann."

goes beyond the musical.[19]

On another occasion, she also underlined that she considers "a certain form of 'being limited' in producing [as] very interesting" and as "quite productive."[20] Kirchenbauer explained that she is trying to plunge as deep into the material as possible to see what can be done with it—at the time of my research this process was not yet complete. She consciously confronts the aesthetic particularities of the material, which are in this case quite challenging—thanks to its low sound quality and high levels of dissonance, to name just two aspects. It is key to her approach that she first defines, from a contextual point of view, what kind of material she wants to work with before selecting her samples according to aesthetic criteria: "I guess if those aesthetic questions came first then everything would sound quite different. There is this conceptual decision and then, of course, aesthetic questions arise."[21] In an era of limitless possibilities in music production, this approach offers a welcome alternative, and sampling provides a useful framework.

In an era of limitless possibilities in music production, sampling provides a useful framework.

There is another "procedural" reason for sampling: it allows Kirchenbauer to work on her own. In the past she was engaged in a few band projects, before deciding to continue working alone. She stresses the independence that she now enjoys regarding other musicians, technical gear, and places of production:

> *Basically, I am really glad to be working alone and to have found forms of production that allow me to be very, very independent and that let me produce with very limited means, where I don't need kind of a studio to record.*[22]

Sampling supports this workflow. Moreover, it allows the producer to circumvent personal limitations in terms of the ability to play an instrument or to sing. Several times, Kirchenbauer stressed that she regards her own singing voice as limited. After a few experiments, she was never confident with using it in her productions. Instead, she relies on vocal samples.

19 Own translation. Original quote: "Als ich die erste EP gemacht hab, hatte ich auch so eine Residency in Kanada für fünf Wochen und ich dachte, okay, ich gucke mal dieses Sacred-Harp-Zeug an und gucke, ob ich damit was machen kann und ich hatte mich halt entschieden, einfach nur damit zu arbeiten, wenn es irgendwie nicht klappt, dann halt nicht aber das war so ein bisschen mein Plan. Und mir hilft das auf jeden Fall, das relativ eng abzugrenzen. Weil, wenn ich einfach nur jegliche Form von Musik hören würde und dann irgendwie gucke, welche Samples… ich glaube, dann würde mir so ein bisschen der Grund fehlen, der über das Musikalische hinaus geht."

20 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, dass ich so eine gewisse Form von 'Limitiert-Sein' im Produzieren ganz interessant finde oder auch ganz produktiv finde."

21 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, wenn diese ästhetischen Fragen davorstehen würden, würde das alles ganz anders klingen. Es gibt halt diese konzeptionelle Entscheidung und dann stellen sich natürlich ästhetische Fragen."

22 Own translation. Original quote: "Aber eigentlich bin ich schon sehr froh damit, allein zu arbeiten, und Produktionsformen gefunden zu haben, wo ich sehr, sehr unabhängig bin und mit sehr wenigen Mitteln produzieren kann, wo ich nicht irgendwie ein Studio brauche, wo ich Aufnahmen machen muss."

(b) Attitude

The next step of this analysis is to focus on the producer's attitude towards the sampled material: an attitude that was ambivalent when she started to work with Sacred Harp tunes. Kirchenbauer confessed that she considered the tunes "completely strange, white religion nonsense."[23] Yet she also felt empathy with individual voices:

> *It still happens that with some individual voices that are really outstanding, that are totally off… I'm heavily interested in these people and I think, "Ok, they are dead now, but…" And I ask myself sometimes, "Who is this woman singing off-key with such confidence?" Things like that fascinate me.*[24]

Kirchenbauer recalled a mixture of fun and fascination in her initial approach to the material, which she found aesthetically appealing to work with. However, after having heard hundreds of these Sacred Harp songs over more than two years of working with the same corpus, her relationship to the material slowly shifted. As she told me, she lost some of her initial fascination for it, and thus the joy of working with it. Working with these tunes became more of a routine; the material increasingly lost its personal and human side. This shift in attitude might also, at least to some extent, explain her sampling approach in "STABILIZED, YES!" The track appears on the second COOL FOR YOU EP working with Sacred Harp tunes. While, in previous productions, the producer left larger parts of the sampled tunes intact, she has now completely and uncompromisingly shredded the material.

While, in previous productions, the producer left larger parts of the sampled tunes intact, she has now completely and uncompromisingly shredded the material.

From the previous discussion it becomes apparent that Kirchenbauer approaches the material critically. Her distance from religion and the church further supports this argument. However, she emphasized that this is always a twofold relationship:

> *You are working* on *something at the same time as you are working* with *something. Although I am somehow working* with *these samples with a critical attitude, I am nevertheless also working* with *them and my music then also sounds like them a bit. This is like, you're basically against it but at the same time also with it. So, it's a bit complex, which makes it even harder to grasp, because you can still find something that makes it exciting, interesting, or you consider it as beautiful, at the same time, you relate to it critically. And it basically opens up a position that isn't just*

23 Own translation. Original quote: "(…) total schräger, weisser Religions-Quatsch."

24 Own translation. Original quote: "Das gibts immer noch, das ich so zu einzelnen Stimmen, die so total herausragend, total schief sind… da interessiere ich mich auch total krass für die Leute, und denke 'ah die sind ja tot, aber…' Da frage ich mich dann manchmal, 'wer ist diese Frau, die irgendwie so selbstbewusst daneben singt?' Sowas fasziniert mich."

critical in the sense of, "I am working with it because I'm against it," but it is basically almost a third option between working affirmative-referentially or working critical-referentially.[25]

It is the tension between working affirmatively *and* at the same time critically with the sampling material that characterizes the sampling process in "STABILIZED, YES!" It is from this tension that the producer draws part of her artistic motivation. Where referential musical strategies are political, one is tempted to analyze them as largely either critical or affirmative. In contrast, this case study illustrates that the attitudes behind sampling processes can be multi-faceted and deserve precise examination to avoid hasty misinterpretation. Especially if, as in the present case, a predominantly critical approach is assumed in the first place.[26]

(c) Visibility

How visible is this sampling strategy? What information could potentially be received by the listener, and what remains concealed? The FOV summarizes the most relevant aspects. Accordingly, the present sampling strategy appears almost fully visible. Three faders are at their highest positions and one fader slightly below.

→ Figure 6.6

The sample-clips are perfectly audible (fader number 1); for the producer, the sampling material clearly refers to the Sacred Harp tradition and its colonial history (fader number 3); and Kirchenbauer proactively discusses her sampling material in public—see the interviews and promo texts cited above, relating to both of her EPs (fader number 5). The processing of the clips, with numerous short cuts, constant repetition, and pitch effects, further signals that a voice sample has been used (fader number 2). In the break (bars 33–44), the sample-clips are longer and thus reveal their sampled character. However, this fader is not at its highest position, because it remains unclear whether the producer has used voices from external sound material or recorded them herself (self-sampling).

25 Own translation. Original quote: "Dass man über oder zu was arbeitet und gleichzeitig auch mit etwas arbeitet. Also obwohl ich irgendwie kritisch in irgendeiner Form mit diesen Samples arbeite, arbeite ich trotzdem auch mit denen und meine Musik klingt halt nach denen auch so ein bisschen. Das ist so, dass man eigentlich dagegen ist, aber gleichzeitig auch mit. Und deshalb so ein bisschen komplex ist, was dann das auch so ein bisschen schwerer zu fassen macht, weil man findet trotzdem was darin, was man irgendwie spannend, interessant, oder auch schön findet, gleichzeitig bezieht man sich kritisch darüber und es macht eigentlich auch so eine Position auf, die nicht nur kritisch ist im Sinne von, 'ich arbeite dazu, weil ich dagegen bin', sondern es ist eigentlich fast so eine dritte Option zwischen affirmativ-referentiell arbeiten oder kritisch-referentiell arbeiten."

26 After the completion of my study, Kirchenbauer reflected on her approach to sampling Sacred Harp in an article for my publication *Sampling Politics Today* (Kirchenbauer 2020).

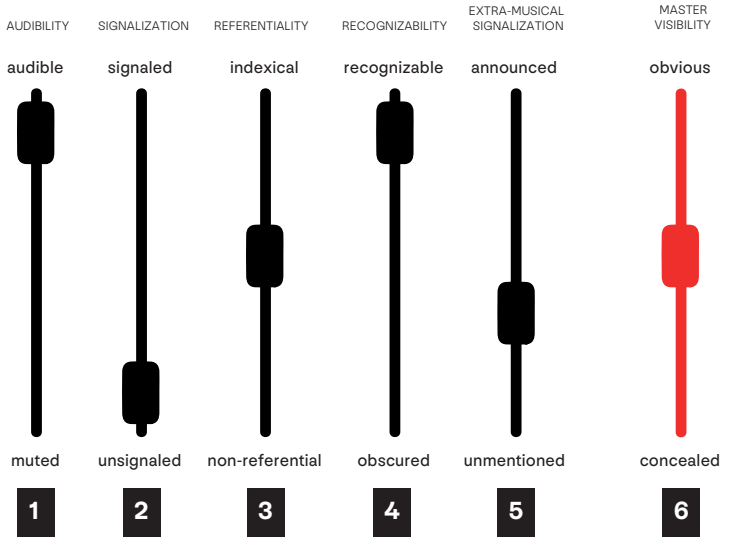

Figure 6.6: FOV: sample visibility in "STABILIZED, YES!"

The only fader that sits at a lower position is fader number 4, which indicates the degree of recognizability. Due to heavy manipulation, the sample-clips remain obscured. I doubt that anyone with specific knowledge of and experience in Sacred Harp singing would recognize the source without receiving additional information. However, since this is only an assumption which I could not verify, I positioned this fader slightly above zero.

The obscurity of the sample in terms of recognizability does not affect the overall visibility of this sampling strategy. This is mostly due to the extra-musical signalization of the sample. In conclusion, and drawing on the three general fields of sampling motives introduced earlier, I identify a communicational motive behind this sampling strategy. Hence, Kirchenbauer wanted to communicate something with her music by using sampling as a production method. This communicational motive is finally combined with a strong interest in the content of the sampling material.

→ Chapter 5, p 115

Conclusion and Prospect

Sampling as a technique allows me to engage with material in a critical manner. I'm not too interested in the mere creation of aesthetics but more in how a medium functions culturally and politically, so sampling lets me examine that in a way other modes of composition don't. It allows me to offer a more conceptual approach to music-making and to discuss how music is used and received, on a broader historical and political level, but also on a more personal affective level.

This quotation by the producer Vika Kirchenbauer illustrates the significance of the production technique of sampling in all tracks released through her electronic music project COOL FOR YOU, among them "STABILIZED, YES!" I identify six aspects that make sampling essential in this case study: the processed sampling material is (a) connected with particular extra-musical subjects; (b) external; (c) aesthetically interesting; (d) pre-recorded; (e) exclusive; and (f) it allows for the limitation of the composition process. Many of these aspects might not only apply to sampling, but also to other modes of musical borrowing such as quotation. However, in combination, these aspects can be addressed through sampling only. This case study exemplifies the potential of sampling as a compositional strategy and illustrates the possibility, through sampling sound material, of connecting and intertwining a broad range of levels of meaning.

(a) Context

The central aspect in the present case study might be the sampling material's linkage with various extra-musical subjects. For Kirchenbauer, processing these tunes means dealing with the historical-political context of Sacred Harp. Sampling allows her to work conceptually on the subject of colonial power relations (active and neutral perspectives in the SSR). Moreover, the sampling material enables a discussion on the subject of community (personal and neutral perspectives). This connection with extra-musical subjects is what the producer means by "a more conceptual approach," and this is what she aims for with her art in general.

The central aspect might be the sampling material's linkage with various extra-musical subjects.

See quotation at the beginning of this chapter.

The political potential of this sampling strategy becomes apparent: material that is politically and symbolically loaded (through its colonial context) is combined with a political intention. The result is a critique—or, in Kirchenbauer's own words, "the deconstruction"—of harmonies as a colonizing force. It is through what I call "extended chopping" that Kirchenbauer literally deconstructs her source material. Firstly, deconstruction here means total fragmentation of the source (cutting samples into pieces of 0.25 to 1 seconds in length), followed by a radical rearrangement of the sample-clips and their alienation (raising of pitch). This method is combined with a sharp sound aesthetic to evoke an impression of madness, in the producer's own words "craziness." In two emails exchanged with the mastering engineer for the *MOOD MANAGEMENT* EP, Kirchenbauer briefly commented on her conception of sound behind the track. She highlights the break in the middle of the track in particular:

> *In the last track there's also an annoying bit around 1:15 that just feels "cheap" and "un-eq'd"... again, I like that scratchiness and annoyance that goes through the whole*

sample use in that track.
My feeling is that some of the higher frequencies got shaved off and take some of the piercing quality off the melody sample track—it sounds more melodic, less punctuated crazy :)

By using the destructive potential of sampling in combination with sharp aesthetics, Kirchenbauer composes music as a political commentary.

By using the destructive potential of sampling in combination with sharp aesthetics, Kirchenbauer composes music as a political commentary. There is no need for her to involve comprehensible lyrics or, for example, a well-known protest sample, to achieve this. However, to reach a high degree of visibility and to ensure that the commentary can still be read, Kirchenbauer needs to communicate contextual information alongside her releases.

(b) Origin

The second aspect that makes sampling essential in this case reveals a tension of distance. On the one hand, the sampling material is clearly external. It derives from a religious U.S. tradition, while the producer is European and opposes religion in general and the Christian church in particular. On the other hand, it is crucial that the material is close to the producer's own position, at least to some degree. As I have argued, Kirchenbauer legitimates the use of the Sacred Harp material with reference to its origin in a white context and her own self-conception as being part of a Christian-influenced society. Hence, the sampling material simultaneously appears internal *and* external, as self *and* other. Kirchenbauer recognized this tension as a contradiction:

> *I think on a critical level I don't find it uninteresting that there are some contradictions. On the one hand, I heavily chop up the material and alter it so that the reference is not recognizable. On the other hand, it is important that there is this discursive, verbal layer in interviews and press releases, to make it visible.*[27]

However, this tension is not only an essential part of the sampling process but of the track itself as an artistic statement. As Kirchenbauer does not completely deconstruct her sample material, the tension survives the process of production. She keeps the voices audible and leaves the relative pitches intact—all sample-clips are equally transposed. In this way, she reveals her sources. The process of appropriation is unfinished, pointing to the producer's ongoing negotiation of her critical stance on the material.

The fact that the sampled material is external finally confers

27 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube so auf einer kritischen Ebene finde ich es nicht uninteressant, dass es so Widersprüche gibt. Zum einen zerhacke ich das Material so krass und verändere es, dass die Referenz nicht erkenntlich ist. Zum anderen ist es wichtig, dass es diese diskursive, verbale Ebene in Interviews und Pressetexten gibt, die das erst sichtbar macht."

another, rather utilitarian advantage: the producer can still use vocal recordings in spite of not feeling comfortable singing herself.

(c) Aesthetics

Although the contextual approach is vital for this sampling strategy, as I have shown, the material approach plays a critical role too. It is crucial that the sampling material is aesthetically appealing. Here the most significant factor is the layering of various dissonances due to the involvement of non-educated singers in the recordings. In our conversations, Kirchenbauer further emphasized the "mildly exotic" harmonic structure of Sacred Harp tunes.

(d) Material Nature

All of these aspects—connection to extra-musical subjects, the tension of distance, and aesthetic appeal—could be equally achieved by sampling one's own recordings of a contemporary Sacred Harp convention. Sacred Harp conventions take place regularly, even in Berlin, where the producer lives. Furthermore, new recordings are potentially of much better quality than historical material from an archive. Kirchenbauer justified the use of prerecorded material mainly with her personal character and the privateness of the sampled tradition:

> *I think I really like the original material. The other thing with this Sacred Harp stuff is that actually the idea is not to record it, it is not meant to be public. Everyone sings along; there is no audience. Everyone who is there sings, it is not about performing live or reproducing or recording it. You can find a few things on YouTube from bigger conventions. But the motto of these very small groups is basically that it is about participation and not about performance or recording, it's about the moment. And I think I would feel a bit strange not being part of it and then coming in and announcing with a microphone, "Hey, can I record you?" if, for the people who are doing it, it's about something else. Yes, I think it's a possibility, definitely, but I think it wouldn't suit me. Or it would go against my character, I think.*[28]

28 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, ich mag das Originalmaterial schon ganz gerne. Das andere ist bei diesem Sacred-Harp-Zeug, dass halt eigentlich die Idee nicht ist, dass es aufgenommen wird, sondern das ist eben auch nicht für Publikum, sondern alle singen mit, es gibt kein Publikum; alle, die da sind singen und es geht halt nicht darum dass es so performt wird live oder dass es reproduziert oder aufgenommen ist; also man findet schon auf YouTube so ein paar Sachen, von so grösseren Konferenzen, aber das ist eigentlich so ein bisschen ein Motto auch von so auch diesen ganzen kleinen Gruppen, das es eben um Teilnahme geht und nicht um Performance oder Aufnahme, sondern um den Moment und ich glaube, ich würde mich ein bisschen schräg fühlen, ohne Teil davon zu sein und dann rein zu kommen, mit einem Mikro und zu sagen, 'Hey, könnte ich euch aufnehmen?', wenn es eigentlich für die Leute, die das machen, um etwas anderes geht. Ja, ich glaube, also es ist sicher eine Möglichkeit, aber ich glaube, es würde mir nicht so liegen. Oder es würde glaube ich auch meinem Charakter widerstreben."

When reading a draft of this book, Kirchenbauer added another thought on this problem. She wrote:

> *To record would also contain an aspect of documentation. But I can only occupy this position with difficulty. In most contexts I just stand out too much (ambiguity of gender for example), in such a way that I would become the object of the gaze rather than vice versa, and my presence would cause a situation to change more strongly than with other people.*[29]

This quotation illustrates that sampling is used to solve problems of access. It becomes obvious that this is a decision not only for reasons of convenience—which may be valid as well—but reflecting the position of the producer and the potential sound recordist and his/her interaction with their surroundings.

(e) Exclusiveness

Although the fifth aspect was not mentioned by Kirchenbauer, I assume that it has played a role: as far as I know, there are no other artists who use this material artistically. Furthermore, the tradition of Sacred Harp is not widely known in Europe. That makes the material exclusive and therefore more attractive, and offers a niche in which the artist can work on an independent artistic statement.

(f) Limitation

Finally, the constraint of a limited corpus of material allows the producer to reduce the limitless possibilities of musical production.

■

I have illustrated a sampling strategy that reveals seismographic substance—the way we can connect to world knowledge—on various levels. Through this analysis I have, among other aspects, discussed historical relationships (the postcolonial entanglement of music); negotiations of identity (social exclusion in genderqueer communities, the tension of distance); and the realities of music production for laptop producers (combining samples and drum machine beats into complex artistic statements). As Kirchenbauer mentioned in the quotation introducing this case study, she uses the political as "a lens through which to look at the world," and at her own personality (Kirchenbauer in Hearte 2018, 56).

29 Own translation. Original quote: "Ich glaube, da spielt auch ein Aspekt rein, der für mich etwas schwierig ist. Das Aufnehmen hätte etwas dokumentarisches, aber ich kann diese Position nur schwer einnehmen. Aus den meisten Kontexten falle ich einfach zu sehr raus (Geschlechtsuneindeutigkeit zum Beispiel), sodass ich eher das Objekt des Blickes werde als andersrum und sich durch meine Präsenz eine Situation stärker verändert als das bei anderen Leuten der Fall wäre."

However, the last of those aspects, the realities of laptop production, was present implicitly rather than explicitly addressed. More thorough anthropological fieldwork would be needed to gain further insights into the realities of the artist's production and living environment. This could, potentially, lead to a conception of sampling as an enabling and thus "democratic" tool for the expression of opinion.[30] I can identify several indicators which support this interpretation: by using sampling, Kirchenbauer does not need to rely on expensive technical equipment and external sites of production; she is independent from other musicians; and she can overcome personal limitations in music making.

Other questions that could be addressed by further studies relate to reception: how is the track and the underlying concept received by listeners? Are there discrepancies between the intention of the producer and the public's interpretations? Or, more generally: does popular music reach a broader audience when there is an extra-musical concept behind it? A critical perspective could even focus on discursive questions that remain absent from this analysis: what is the significance of Kirchenbauer sampling a recording from the 1950s Sacred Harp revival, which is itself based on particular discourses and constructions of a tradition (Miller 2010)? To which discourses does Kirchenbauer connect, and is she even reproducing them?

■

I close this chapter with a brief discussion of the reasons why the producer decided to contribute to this study. Kirchenbauer explained that she was first of all curious about my view of her music. She told me she is usually afraid of taking too much space when talking about her ideas and concepts without being explicitly asked about them. In my case, she could assume that there was someone who was interested in her music, who had a microphone, and who asked questions. These factors enabled her to reflect on her music without being afraid of annoying her conversational partner. She told me that she considered my interviews a good opportunity to further develop her own conceptual thoughts about her music. These considerations speak of an open and honest approach to my research, which I also experienced during our conversations.

Moreover, when I first requested a conversation, she regularly checked the website of the music platform Norient and considered it an interesting project. Hence, the non-academic activities of the researcher had a direct impact on access to the case study. On the other hand, she also had doubts about becoming a mere object of

30 I put the term democratic in quotation marks because I do not want to fuel mystifying conceptions of sampling. The application of sampling depends on the availability of technological tools. Sampling could only be described as democratic if these tools were accessible to all, which is obviously not the case.

knowledge production. That is why she refused to let me directly observe one of her production sessions: "That would be a bit 'zooey,' I would definitely feel like an object of science then."[31]

Out of all of the case studies, this analysis has offered the most detailed examination of its source material. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, the examined material contains many layers of meaning (compared with the chain sound in "Libres" for example). Each layer brings with it a different network of references, meanings, and thus possible links for further interpretation. Secondly, I could access various academic sources on the history, theory, and practice of Sacred Harp. For other tracks (e.g. "kenats" or "Perversas") this is not the case to the same extent. Thirdly, I could apply my own knowledge of both European musical traditions and the cultural context in which the producer lives (Germany). This provided a broader and more informed basis on which the analysis evolved.

These reasons illustrate both a limitation and an opportunity for the methodological approach of trackology. The opportunity is that this method leads to unexpected fields, topics, and subjects. In today's globally connected world we have to deal with unexpected and unfamiliar phenomena on a daily basis, and we need ways to make sense of them. This is also a limitation: it would be far beyond the scope of this book to examine each context in full detail. However, there is one possible solution to this problem. An expansion of the present study with further perspectives by other scholars, who could connect to different knowledge and academic sources and discourses, would substantially enhance the present analysis. The potential for such further perspectives is almost limitless.

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The following analysis of "kenats" now focuses on a sampling strategy that is less visible than COOL FOR YOU's "STABILIZED, YES!" But this case study will reveal an even more complex net of reasons for sampling. It will thus illustrate, in particular, how the SSR can be productively applied as a tool for analysis.

31 Own translation. Original quote: "...weil es ein bisschen zu 'zooig' wird, also da fühle ich mich dann wirklich als Objekt der Wissenschaft."