

# CHREIAI 1

An Electroacoustic Composition for Two-Channel Playback

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1996

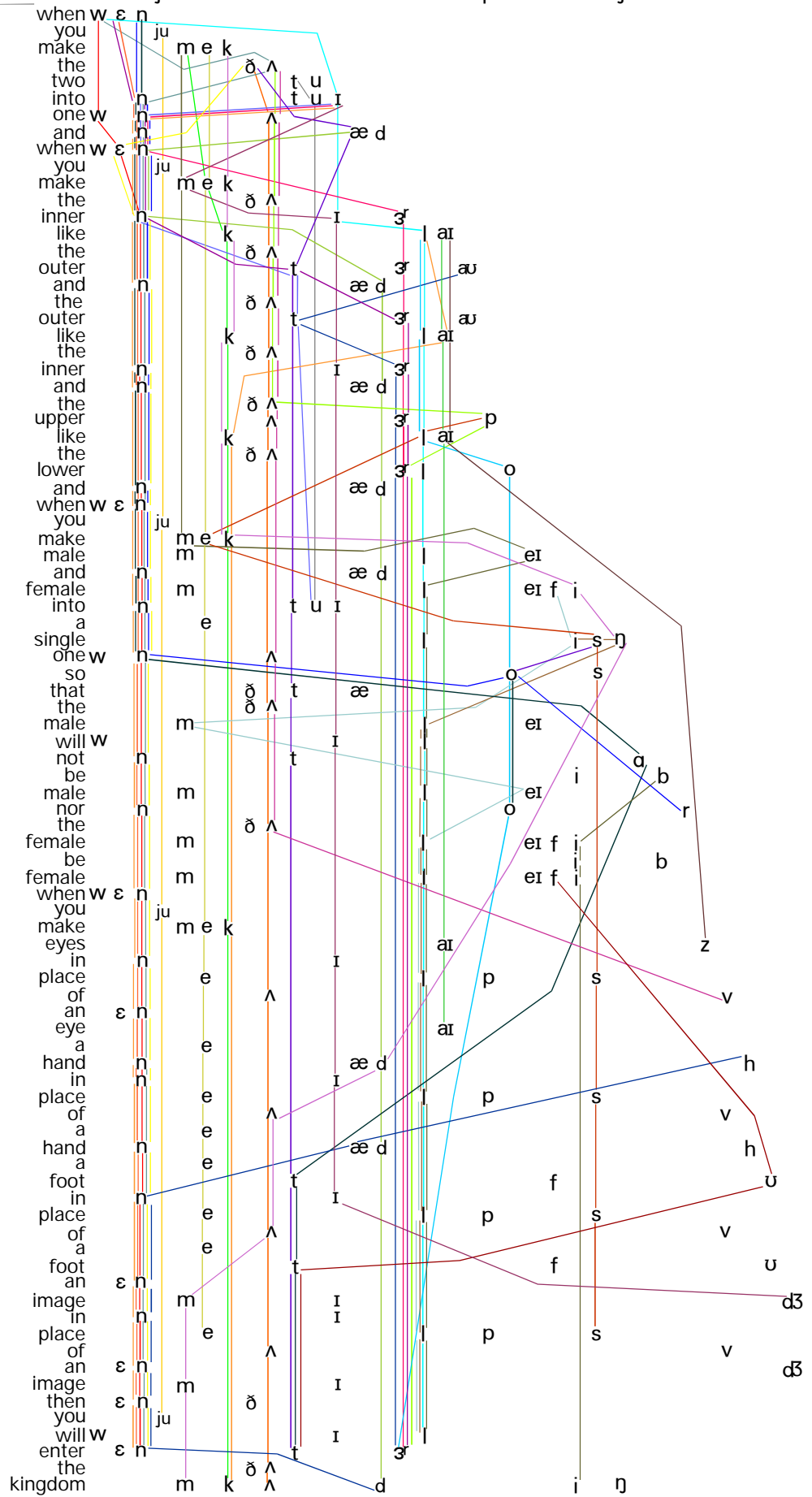
*Chreiai I* is an attempt at the cybernetic exegesis of a Gnostic text probably written between the second and fourth centuries AD. It is from the Gospel of Thomas as found amongst the Nag Hammadi scrolls discovered in Egypt in 1947. I worked with an English translation from the discovered Coptic version of what may have been originally composed in Greek or Aramaic. My interest was in using the computational power of the digital computer to perform audio manipulations of the text in a manner that might unpack its meaning through a rigorous and didactic analytical process. The text was chosen not because I understood its meaning but precisely because I did not. My hope has been to not merely elucidate deeper levels of linguistic code embedded in the text's grammar and syntax but more profoundly to slice open a receptacle of encoded thought enmeshed in the carrier wave of spoken language and thereby reveal something of what Terrence McKenna has called the "superconducting lens of translinguistic matter generated out of the body of each of us."

The composition began with the parsing of the text into a phonetic matrix. This analysis revealed embedded structural patterns over time that could be articulated by a variety of DSP transformations of the text and its constituent phonemes. Over the surface of these transforms, the original text is heard repeated 33 times, but with each repetition the text is "passed through" a FFT-based digital filter derived from one of the 33 phonemes comprising the text in their proper order of occurrence. In other words the entire composition is generated from a single reading of the text and its phonetic content, subjected to a set of rigorous transformations suggested by and found within the structure of the text itself.

The following score page shows a color-coded version of the phonetic matrix from which all sounds were derived. Time-stretched versions of individual phonemes and complete words were used to articulate the extension of structural aspects implied by the matrix. Multiple levels of DSP transformations were similarly derived based upon hierarchies of interconnection between phonemes as revealed by the analysis. The colored details in the matrix represent a structure that unfolds over the total duration of the composition with the arrow showing the direction of time relative to the matrix flowing from top to bottom. The list of words from which the analysis was derived is repeated 33 times while the sequence of phonemes, from which 33 separate FFT-based filters were constructed and sequentially applied to the text, is shown at the top in their order of appearance.

w ε n ju m e k ð λ t u I æ d ʒ l a r a u p o e i f i s ŋ a b r z v h u dʒ

X 33



14'45"