

**‘Jouer fantasmatiquement de mon corps unifié’:  
Music, Writing and Affect in Barthes’s  
*L’Obvie et l’obtus***

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In his essay entitled ‘Is Music Criticism Criticism?’ Malcolm Bowie asked how one can write about music and in particular about its affective complexities. Music ‘being its own language and its own metalanguage’, it does not seem to need words, and, he reminds us, the best analysis of a piece of music may well be another piece of music.<sup>1</sup> In that sense, the creative writer, rather than the theorist, is perhaps the better candidate for writing about music. For as Bowie further argues: ‘good criticism is an art of translation [...] Literature, and criticism in its wake, are all to do with meaning on the move, in transit, in transformation from moment to moment inside a signifying flux’ (p. 72). Similarly, Roland Barthes, in a radio interview with Claude Maupomé, reflected on why writing on music has always represented a special challenge. Music, Barthes explains, may be approached by critical discourses drawing on sociology, musicology, and aesthetics but none capture what is fundamentally unspeakable: the embodied quality of musical experience.

C’est le corps qui est vraiment engagé dans ce contact avec la musique, c’est peut-être à cause de cela que l’on a beaucoup de mal à centrer une réflexion sur la musique. Le corps, on ne sait pas comment en parler; c’est ce qui manque au langage; c’est ce qui manque à la parole, c’est une sorte de béance qui défaille, fait défaut à l’expression, aux codes de langue. Ce qui nous paraît central dans la musique, c’est le plaisir, au sens très large et complexe du terme. Ce plaisir n’est pas traductible, on ne peut pas le traduire dans un autre système de signes que lui-même, [...] Il y a ce manque fondamental dans la musique à partir du moment où elle essaie de rejoindre notre langage articulé. [...] Elle est directement liée au plaisir, à la jouissance et par la-même échappe au dire.<sup>2</sup>

In truth, it is the body that is engaged in the musical encounter and it is precisely for that reason that it is very difficult to focus a reflection on music. One does not know how to talk about the body; it points to a failure of language, a sort of gap which fails to find expression in language and its codes. What I find crucial in music is pleasure, in its extended and complex sense. Pleasure can't be translated in any other system of signs than itself [...] There is this fundamental gap within music from the moment it seeks to attain our articulated language. [...] Music is directly linked to music and enjoyment (*jouissance*) and therefore can't be captured by language.

Barthes thus highlights how music defeats critical discourses because, firstly, it is a non-representational, abstract and self-referential art form and, secondly, because music pertains to the realm of the body and pleasure, which both fail to translate into articulated language. Music, like the body and pleasure, points to the limits of language and translation. If, as Bowie argues, the creative writer is better placed to provide a metaphoric language to talk about the pleasure and emotional complexities of musical experience, Barthes's essays may well showcase a creative response to the challenges of speaking of and giving meaning to the 'béance' or the limits of language. Mostly drawing on his own musicianship, they foreground how music is an experience that pertains to the realm of the body and its affects and thus provides a metaphor for the embodied nature of writing.

For Barthes, music indeed serves as an analogy, a model that writing should strive for: 'peut-être que c'est cela la valeur de la musique: d'être une bonne métaphore' / 'perhaps that is the value of music, then: to be a good metaphor'.<sup>3</sup> In *La Préparation du roman*, the series of lectures Barthes gave at the Collège de France between 1978 and 1980, music does indeed form a constant metaphor for his novelistic project: 'Il faut toujours penser l'Écriture en termes de musique' / 'One should always think of writing in terms of music',<sup>4</sup> he noted, before concluding his last session with a wish 'to write a work in C Major' (p. 384), thus hinting at Schoenberg's famous assertion that even the avant-garde can still write a piece in C Major. As Peter Dayan has pointed out, Barthes can be situated in a certain modernist tradition dating back to the nineteenth century, which had Baudelaire and Mallarmé as prime proponents and 'uses music to define literature and literature to define music'.<sup>5</sup> 'All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music':

referring back to Walter Pater, Dayan explains how music is an ideal for literature to strive for because matter and form are indistinguishable.<sup>6</sup> Critics have therefore explored how musical metaphors in Barthes's writing point to new ways of thinking about the production of meaning and the reader-text relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst endorsing that music offers an ideal that writing should strive for, my line of argument will be different. I will show how music, as 'a good metaphor', allows Barthes to complicate key notions of his critical apparatus such as *signifiante*. *Signifiante* indeed defines the production of meaning within the reader-writer relationship, thus becoming in turn a metaphor for ethical inter-subjective relations. Barthes compellingly brings to the fore how the musical experience is a bodily and muscular affair and tellingly the section dedicated to music in *L'Obvie et l'obtus* is entitled 'Le Corps de la musique' (Music's body). I will further argue that Barthes's essays on music – and music as a metaphor – offer fertile ground to work out the ways in which affect and the body feed into the creative process and the formation of subjectivity. Barthes ceaselessly reminds us in his essays that music, as a time-bound exercise, harks back to our bodily condition. 'Mais dans la musique, champ de *signifiante* et non système de signes, le référent inoubliable car le référent, ici, c'est le corps' / 'But, in music, a field of *signifying* and not a system of signs, the referent is unforgettable, for here the referent is the body' (OO, p. 273/RF, p. 308). Criticism therefore gives him the opportunity to write metaphorically about the secrecy into which the body is locked. Barthes, otherwise better known as the author of 'the death of the author', seems here to operate a reversal: the author is revived in his full corporeality. What is more, he is no longer a dispersed and self-divided figure but harmoniously unified. 'Car *chanter*, au sens romantique, c'est cela: jouir fantasmatiquement de mon corps unifié' / 'For *to sing*, in the Romantic sense, is this: fantasmatically to enjoy a unified body' (OO, p. 255/RF, p. 288). Focusing mainly on the essays published in *L'Obvie et l'obtus*, this essay will address several questions. How has Barthes's amateur practice inflected his writing? 'Par la musique, nous comprenons mieux le Texte comme signifiante' / 'By music, we better understand the Text as signifying [Signifiante]' (OO, p. 277/RF, p. 312), he concludes in 'Rasch', his essay on Schumann. How and what type of meaning does music bring about? How does listening or playing music open up new routes to conceptualise ethical relationships? How does music redefine the role of the body and affect in the constitution of subjectivity? What can music tell us about the process

of working-through emotions and affect, and in what ways may it be consoling?

## Barthes's Piano: Reading, Interpreting, Writing

Barthes wrote about music perhaps more as a practitioner than as the knowledgeable music-lover he also was. Tellingly, many of his essays attempt to understand the elusive articulation between music and meaning and how emotional meaning is conveyed through the musician's body. Barthes' reflections on the practices associated with his own musicianship shaped and echo his intellectual journey as a writer and literary critic. And as his essays on music foreground the role of the body, my aim will be to trace how they shed new light on crucial notions and concepts such as, the reader, the production of meaning through *signifiante* as well as his predilection for the fragmentary form.

Peter Dayan has claimed that, for Barthes, if music produces meaning as a sensuous phenomenon, it does so in the tradition of Mallarmé, that is to say, it does so obliquely: meaning is most brilliantly manifest in music 'dans le déplacement, la substitution, *bref*, en fin de compte, *l'absence*' / 'in displacement, in substitution, i.e. ultimately, in *absence*' (OO, p. 253/RF, p. 286). Rather than following the Mallarmean lead, my argument will seek to unravel how the musician's body produces meaning, which, I shall argue, is irreducible to semiological interpretations.

La musique que l'on joue relève d'une activité peu auditive, surtout manuelle (donc, en un sens beaucoup plus sensuelle); c'est la musique que vous et moi pouvons jouer (tout théâtre, toute sensations hystériques éloignés); c'est une musique musculaire; le sens auditif n'y a qu'une part de sanction: c'est comme si le corps entendait – et non pas l'âme; cette musique ne se joue pas par cœur; attablé au clavier ou au pupitre, le corps commande, conduit, coordonne, il lui faut transcrire lui-même ce qu'il lit; il fabrique du son et du sens; il est scripteur et non récepteur, capteur. (OO, p. 231)

The music you play depends not so much on an auditive as on a manual (hence more sensuous) activity; it is the music

you and I can play, alone or among friends, with no audience but its participants (i.e. with no risk of theatre, no hysterical temptation); it is a muscular music; in it the auditive sense has only a degree of sanction: as if the body was listening - and not 'the soul'; this music is not played 'by heart': confronting the keyboard or the music stand, the body proposes, leads, co-ordinates, the body itself must transcribe what it reads, it fabricates sound and sense: it is the scribe, not the receiver; the decoder. (RF, p. 261)

What matters here to Barthes is the physicality of playing music: it is manual, sensuous, muscular, tactile and, as such, it redistributes physiological functions, with the whole body and its skin surface, rather than just the ear, becoming an auditory organ. Throughout, Barthes insists on the tactile: hearing is to respond to the touch of sound waves. It is no longer the soul or the psyche – 'âme' – that makes sense of musical experience but the body itself. Barthes insists that sight-reading rather than playing by heart brings a new dimension to the body: as the practitioner reads, he transforms abstract signs into bodily movements. Rather than being a passive interpreter, he creates sound and meaning, and Barthes uses the verb *fabriquer* in order to insist on the physical and tangible aspect of the musician's craftsmanship. In that he goes against the grain of the Platonic tradition which sees music as essentially a spiritual experience.<sup>8</sup>

One can see how Barthes's practice of sight-reading informed his theory of reading, as his seminal article 'La Mort de l'auteur' demoted the author as the agent of meaning and promoted the reader in an active role. In the above quotation, sight-reading and playing the piano engages the body, placing the reader in the position not only of an interpreter but also of a creator – 'fabriquer de la musique' and the making of music is a process that very much engages the body. In order to better understand what role music played in Barthes's life and in particular how it inflected his own creative criticism, I shall preface my argument with a short biographical detour. Piano was very much part of his family life when he grew up in his grandparents' house in the provincial town of Bayonne.

Ma tante était professeur de piano, j'ai entendu là de cet instrument toute la journée (même les gammes ne m'ennuyaient pas) et moi-même, dès que le piano était libre, je m'y mettais pour déchiffrer; j'ai composé de petites pièces bien avant d'écrire.

My aunt was a piano teacher and I heard that instrument played there all day (even scales did not bore me) and, as soon as the piano was free, I myself sat down at it and picked my way through some music. I composed little long before I could write.<sup>9</sup>

One of Barthes's compositions can be found in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* with a caption specifying, 'graphic bliss: before painting, music', as if to insist that music was an inaugural experience.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, reading music is a process of 'deciphering', as the French term for sight-reading suggests, and composing is a playful game of manipulating rules involving tonality, rhythm and harmony. One can see how Barthes's practice of music may have predisposed him in his early career towards the formalist thinking of structuralism and semiology: sight-reading is an act of decoding and composing a formalist game of re-arranging notes.

Music also has special emotional meaning for Barthes as it is linked to the feminine and the sensuous. The piano created a special link between Barthes and the female branch of his family, in particular his aunt, who taught him piano and, his grand-mother, whose Schumann scores bearing her fingering annotations he inherited.

Sur *l'Album de Jeunesse* de Schumann, c'est une autre écriture, plus libre, plus empanachée: c'est celle de ma grand-mère, qui enfant sans doute, avait marqué des doigtés; ces coups de crayon ont plus de cent ans, attestant la continuité scrupuleuse d'une culture musicale.<sup>11</sup>

On Schumann's *Album for the Young*, the hand-writing is different, more free and more ornate. It is my grand-mother's, who as a child had marked down the fingering. These pencilled mark-ups are more than a hundred years old, thus bearing testimony to the scrupulous continuity of musical culture. (My translation.)

The musical scores passed down the lineage bear the traces of the grand-mother's interpretation. Music thus comes to represent the continuity of generations. Barthes's love for Beethoven, Schubert and above all Schumann, stems from this teenage exposure to their music. Piano playing, and Schumann's music in particular, is not only associated with the playfulness of reading, playing and composing. It is also a practice associated with a childhood spent in an essentially feminine household,

Barthes's father having died in the war a few months after he was born. Barthes unashamedly identifies with the composer – 'le vrai pianiste schumannien, c'est moi' / 'The true Schumannian pianist – c'est moi' (OO, p. 260/RF, p. 295) – because, like him, he entertained a privileged relationship with the mother. 'C'est une musique [...] continûment réfugiée dans l'ombre de la mère' / 'This is a music [...] continually taking refuge in the luminous shadow of the Mother' (OO, p. 263/RF, p. 298).

What is more, Barthes's predilection for fragmentary writing, often associated with his taste for the Japanese haiku, may be traced back to his playing of Schumann. In 'Rasch' Barthes explains how Schumann's fragmentary compositions are interrupted by *intermezzi* (OO, p. 266). These interruptions represented for him Schumann's tormented inner division between Florestan, the embodiment of his passionate, voluble side, and Eusebius, his dreamy, melancholy side, a division Barthes recognises within himself in the guise of a double impulse, 'la pulsion à la critique, et la pulsion lyrique' / 'the impulse towards criticism and the impulse towards lyricism'.<sup>12</sup> Schumann's impulse-driven body constantly interrupts his own composition; rather than building towards a musical sentence or narrative, it forms, according to Barthes, a series of explosive images, 'des incisions rythmées de la préhistoire' / 'the rhythmic incisions from prehistory' (OO, p. 267/RF, p. 302). Tellingly, Barthes compares his own fragmentary writing to Schumann's *intermezzi*.

Si le fragment est comme l'idée musicale d'un cycle (*Bonne Chanson, Dichterliebe*): chaque œuvre se suffit, et cependant n'est jamais que l'interstice des ses voisines. L'œuvre n'est faite que de hors-texte. Schumann [...] appelait le fragment "intermezzo".

Yes the fragment is like the musical idea of a song cycle (*Bonne Chanson, Dichterliebe*): each piece is self-sufficient and yet is never anything but the interstice of its neighbours: the work consists no more than an inset, an hors-texte. The man who has best understood the aesthetics of the fragment (before Webern) is perhaps Schumann; he called the fragment an intermezzo.<sup>13</sup>

Barthes here points out how Schumann's *intermezzi*, like his own fragments, betray a disjunctive syntax. This invites questions about the

meaning of these interruptions and the interstices, referred to as ‘hors-texte’. Barthes then attempts an answer as he further defines the ideal fragment, which he opposes to ‘développement’, i.e. the continuity of narrative, as ‘une haute condensation de musique, [...] quelque chose d’articulé et de chanté, une diction: là devrait régner le *timbre*’ / ‘a high condensation of music [...] something articulated and sung: here is where timbre should reign’.<sup>14</sup> Barthes’s definition is tautological in a sense – the writerly fragment is ultimately what brings out timbre, the almost incalculable *je ne sais quoi* that makes a voice unique. More importantly, Barthes points out how Romantic fragmentary music corresponds to what was called *Fantasie*: ‘Fantasieren: à la fois imaginer et improviser: bref fantasmer, c’est-à-dire produire du romanesque sans construire du roman’ / ‘Fantasieren: at once to imagine and improvise: in short, to hallucinate, i.e., to produce the novelistic without constructing a novel’ (OO, p. 257/RF, p. 291). The clashing of fragments thus creates a line of flight for daydreaming; it invites the listener to spin his own narrative without there being a novel. This process resonates with Barthes’s ultimate project of writing a ‘Novel’, what he called ‘la tierce forme’, which like Proust’s masterpiece would be both essayistic and novelistic, impersonal yet affect-driven.<sup>15</sup>

Barthes was also a singer, which, according to his own saying, very much influenced his writing. In his twenties, while studying at the Sorbonne, he decided to take singing lessons with the then notorious Swiss Baritone, Charles Panzera, together with his friend, and arguably lover, Michel Delacroix.<sup>16</sup> Sadly, these sessions were not to last as both young men suffered from tuberculosis and Barthes was eventually sent to a sanatorium in 1942. In a radio interview given in 1976, Barthes looked back on these formative years with Panzera, confessing that the master taught him much more than music: ‘il m’a appris ce qui a fait ensuite l’objet essentiel de mon travail, c’est à dire le texte, la textualité’ / ‘he taught me what thereafter became the main focus of my work, the text and textuality’.<sup>17</sup> Barthes further explained that Panzera and Brecht represented two father figures. The former instilled into him the pleasures of diction, in particular of the French *mélodie*, and the *phrasé*, that is, the pronunciation of language transmuting and blending into musical phrasing. The latter, Brecht, upheld in him the importance of the distancing effect. Barthes’s ideal of singing combined what both figures represented: the poetry of language executed with a certain restraint. For Barthes, Panzera’s singing embodies ‘un espace de plaisir, de jouissance, lieu où le langage travaille pour rien’ / ‘a space of pleasure,



of enjoyment, a site where the language works upon itself for nothing' (OO, p. 243/RF, p. 275), thus echoing his notion of *signifiance*, defined as 'le sens en tant qu'il se produit sensuellement' / 'meaning insofar as it is sensuously produced'.<sup>18</sup> In several interviews Barthes remembered fondly these singing sessions and the Lied, and Schubert's *Winterreise* in particular, remain indelibly attached to this happy spell, sadly curtailed by illness.

Barthes has repeatedly stated how his own critical writing is affect-driven. Playing the piano and singing the Lied, beyond the erotic and affective overtones these practices carry for Barthes – family life, the symbiotic bond with his mother, the erotic relationship with his lover, the platonic love for the teacher<sup>19</sup> – have had defining influence over his own writing and the conceptual critical framework that defines the relation between reader and text with his notion of *signifiance*, his affect-driven criticism, his taste for the fragmentary writing.

### *Musica Practica:* Perfect Pitch and Musical Connections

For Barthes the amateur musician, music is an emotionally charged subject, associated with eroticism, love, the passing of generations. Rooted in personal experience, the essays collected in *L'Obvie et l'obtus* understandably feature the body and affect as unifying themes. Why this turn to the corporeality of the act of listening, playing music and singing? If the value of music is to be a good metaphor, what does it say about embodied nature of writing? How does the relationship between listener and music echo and complicate the relationship between reader and text, and ultimately provide a metaphor for interpersonal relations?

'Ecoute', the opening essay, reflects on various forms of listening, ranging from the deciphering of a simple message to the complex hermeneutics involved in the musical experience and the psychoanalytical encounter. Throughout, however, Barthes reminds us how hearing is a primal, instinctual sense, key to spatio-temporal evaluation and the flight and fight reaction, while insisting all along on the corporeality of the speaking voice and the listening body. In evolutionary terms, our auditory capacity seems to have freed itself from authority and has become extraordinarily agile, culminating with our ability to read the desire of others, as it evolved over the ages from

spellbound religious listening through to the free-floating attention of the psychoanalyst and the discontinuous, associative, passive-active listening involved in the musical experience. To reach that point of hermeneutic refinement, the listening subject has renounced looking out for a signified for its refraction in a chain of signifiers, a key process Barthes calls *signifiance*. And the musical experience, whether as a listener or practitioner, develops just that: the ability to enjoy identifying musical motifs, phrasing, counterpoint in a time-bound exercise of retrospective deciphering. This free-floating and associative form of listening is epitomised in the telephone conversation, Barthes argues, which links two people in an 'ideal intersubjectivity'. To further account for that interpersonal encounter, Barthes invokes Ulysses and the song of the sirens whom he needs to avoid: it is a parable for the impossibility of listening fully, the necessary obliqueness and belatedness that good listening commands.

Barthes thus sketches out an ethics of listening that he elaborates upon in *Musica Practica*. Barthes deplors the progressive disappearance of amateur music performed alone, as a duet, by a chamber or fully fledged orchestra. If over the centuries music-playing took place according to rituals that evolved from the aristocratic salon to the bourgeois drawing room, it also offered modes of sociability and interaction that passive consumption of music does no longer. Importantly, music as praxis, Barthes insists, engages the body rather than the 'soul'; it is muscular, sensuous and tactile. Barthes links the waning of amateur music to the advent of Beethoven's virtuoso demands on the interpreter who must be professional. However, Beethoven's music redeems this loss of amateur praxis by a new kind of praxis, as it invites the listener to actively (re)compose and rewrite what he hears into his own meaningful score.

Tellingly, in 'L'Art bourgeois vocal', Barthes rejected a certain kind of singing which is overly didactic and dramatic in the ways it expresses emotion. The essential flaw of Bourgeois art is not so much to impose emotions but the representation of emotions; by dint of dramatization it becomes a caricature that kills both word and music as well as their unique combination. Music, just like literature, Barthes continues, must tend towards abstraction, 'une certaine algèbre' / 'a certain algebra', which is not incompatible with sensuous enjoyment. This freedom of *jouissance* is precisely what bourgeois art denies the listener, who is reduced to a passive consumer: 'il [l'art bourgeois] veut toujours prendre ses consommateurs pour des naïfs à qui il faut mâcher

le travail et surindiquer l'intention de peur qu'elle ne soit suffisamment saisie' / 'it [bourgeois art] always wants to treat its consumers as naive customers for whom it must chew up the work and overindicate the intention, lest they be insufficiently gripped'.<sup>20</sup> Unlike Theodor Adorno, Barthes does not *per se* operate the same opposition between low and high culture – for instance what fascinates him in the Romantic Lied is that it is once elitist and popular (OO, p. 258/RF, p. 292). Yet, like Adorno, he believes that certain forms of music – low brow, popular music for Adorno, bourgeois interpretation offered by singers such as Gérard Souzay, for instance – impose a standardized aesthetic and emotional response which reduces the listener to a mere consumer. This standardization is to be deplored as it allows for religious, ideological, political or nationalistic manipulation.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, Barthes foregrounds how Beethoven's complexity lifts the listener from a passive position, as the latter is invited to join in with the practitioner who reads and interprets Beethoven's score in order to recompose it:

De même la lecture du texte moderne ne consiste pas à recevoir, à connaître ou à ressentir ce texte mais à l'écrire à nouveau, à traverser son écriture d'une nouvelle inscription, de même lire Beethoven, c'est *opérer* sa musique, l'attirer dans une *praxis* inconnue. [...] Composer, c'est du moins tendentiellement, *donner à faire*, non pas donner à entendre, mais donner à écrire: le lieu moderne de la musique n'est pas la salle, mais la scène où les musiciens transmigrent, dans un jeu souvent éblouissant, d'une source sonore à une autre: c'est nous qui jouons. (OO, pp. 234-35)

Just as the reading of the modern text [...] does not consist in receiving, in knowing, or in feeling this text, but in writing it anew, in traversing its writing by a new inscription, in the same way, to read Beethoven is to perform, *to operate* his music, to lure it into an unknown praxis. [...] To compose is, at least by tendency, to offer for doing, not to offer for hearing but for writing: the modern site of music is not the concert hall but the stage where the musicians transmigrate, in an often dazzling interplay, from one auditive source to another: it is we who are playing, still vicariously, it is true. (RF, p. 265)

The couple reader/listener is put on a par with the couple author/interpreter. The reader writes, like the listener composes. More than a participative role, the onus is on the listener to take charge of the composition. If music is a good metaphor and carries meaning beyond the remit of its own art, it is because it sketches out the possibility of an ethical relation between music and listener, freed from ideological grids. It enjoins the listener to enter an unknown praxis ('une *praxis* inconnue'). Yet, what does this unknown quantity yield? The answer may well be found in 'La Musique, la voix, la langue', which defines music as a quality of language, which encapsulates what remains unsaid and unarticulated.

Dans le non-dit, viennent se loger la jouissance, la tendresse, la délicatesse, le comblement, toutes les valeurs de l'Imaginaire le plus délicat. La musique est à la fois l'exprimé et l'implicite du texte : ce qui est à la fois en dehors du sens et du non-sens, à plein dans la *signifiance* [...] La musique, comme la *signifiance* – ne relève d'aucun discours, mais seulement d'un discours de la valeur, de l'éloge: d'un discours amoureux: toute relation « réussie » - réussie en ce qu'elle parvient à dire l'implicite sans l'articuler, à passer outre l'articulation sans tomber dans la censure du désir ou la sublimation de l'indicible – une telle relation peut être dite à juste titre *musicale*. (OO, p. 252)

In the unspoken appears pleasure, tenderness, delicacy, fulfillment, all values of the most delicate image-repertoire. Music is both what is expressed and implicit in the text: what is pronounced (submitted to inflections) but is not articulated: what is at once outside meaning and non-meaning, fulfilled in that *signifying* [*signifiance*] [...] Music, like signifying [*signifiance*], derives from no metalanguage but only from a discourse of value, of praise: from a lover's discourse. Every 'successful' relationship – successful in that it manages to say the implicit without articulating it, to pass over articulation without falling into the censorship of desire or the sublimation of the unspeakable – such relation is rightly called musical. Perhaps a thing is valid only by its metaphoric power; perhaps that is the value of music then: to be a good metaphor. (RF, pp. 284-85)

Why is this relation ethical? Music confronts the listener and practitioner alike with the unknown quantity of the implicit, that which can't be

articulated in language and yet is meaningful. The interstices of music – and the text – allow for hosting what Barthes insistently calls ‘*délicatesse*’ (delicacy), which is associated with the sensuous tactile quality of music. And likewise, the digressive structure of Barthes sentences, with multiple columns and dashes, mimics the structure of a fugue in its attempt to tease out the slippery notion of *signifiance* as it escapes language. The erotic and the ethical are ultimately conjoined in what cannot be captured by language: a relationship that is ‘réussie’, successful, is necessarily musical, beyond words. Music metaphors that convey a successful relationship crop up time and again in Barthes’s late writing. Let us remind that it is through Schumann’s *Gesang der Frühe* that Barthes is able to commemorate and commune with his mother in *La Chambre claire*. Schuman’s music allows him to reconnect him with his mother because it expresses, just as Vinteuil’s sonata in *La Recherche*, the ‘very essence’ of his grief for his mother but also ideas that are ‘impenetrable to human intelligence’.<sup>22</sup> For as Martha Nussbaum argues, if music has a dreamlike quality, it nevertheless has the capacity to reconnect us most precisely with our emotions: ‘Music is not vaguer than literature: indeed the suggestion is that it may have a more direct and powerful access to the depths of our emotions just in virtue of its “otherness”’.<sup>23</sup> Nussbaum does not suggest that music is the unconscious. Rather its opaqueness, its resistance to discursive meaning, its ‘otherness’, which imitates the opaqueness and otherness of the unconscious, allow us to be better aware of the elusiveness of our emotional life. And for that reason too, music expresses more precisely the emotional quality of a relationship, its incalculable affective content.

In the *Discours amoureux*, musical metaphors are also used to describe affective relationships. They are, Barthes says, like a concert hall with dead corners where sound no longer circulates. Friendship for that matter would be ‘un espace de sonorité totale’ / ‘a space of full sonority’.<sup>24</sup> In many ways, Barthes places himself in the tradition of Proust, for whom music allows for the most potent form of emotional communication: ‘I wondered whether music might not be the unique example of what might have been – if the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas had not intervened – the means of communication of souls.’<sup>25</sup> Escaping the discursive nature of our daily interactions, it is better placed to capture the complexity and depth of communication between individuals. For Barthes too, music is the key metaphor to understand what a successful relationship is, namely the acceptance that its meaning cannot be pinned down and is beyond

words. Yet he gives this awareness an ethical dimension. A good relationship is a matter of pitch: 'Or la relation affective est une machine exacte; la coïncidence, la *justesse* au sens musical, y sont fondamentales' / 'Now, the affective relation is an exact machine; coincidence, *perfect pitch* in the musical sense are fundamental to it'.<sup>26</sup> Barthes plays with the double connotation of *justesse*, which is both ethical and musical. Music thus conjoins the ethical and the erotic in ways that have Levinasian undertones: it figures what remains other, elusive, the core mystery of the beloved that one has to renounce appropriating. In that, Barthes's meditation resonates with the work of Danielle Cohen-Lévinas. For her, the voice, like the face for Lévinas, is beyond comparison. And invoking the German cognates *stimme/stimmung* (the voice/harmony and tuning), she suggests that the voice has 'une vocation éthique' / 'an ethical vocation'.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Romantic Lied: Lyrical Self-expression and the Revival of the Subject**

The body plays an equally important role in Barthes's essays on the vocal arts. For Barthes, the music one plays as an amateur, what he terms *musica practica*, abides by a code according to which the musician performs music by listening to an internalised melody: 'selon ce code, l'image fantasmatique (c'est-à-dire corporelle) qui guidait l'exécutant était celle d'un chant (que l'on file intérieurement)' / 'according to this code, the fantasmatic (i.e. corporeal) image which guided the performer was that of a song (which one spins out within oneself)' (OO, p. 233/RF, p. 264). Singing thus appears as an Ur-form of *musica practica*, the body being an internalised instrument in which vocal cords resonate in the singer's mouth, head, and body. The Romantic Lied and music epitomise this internalised natural song of the body. 'Toute la musique romantique, qu'elle soit vocale ou instrumentale, dit ce chant du corps naturel; c'est une musique qui n'a de sens que si je puis la chanter en moi-même avec mon corps [...] Car *chanter*, au sens romantique, c'est cela : jouir fantasmatiquement de mon corps unifié' / 'All Romantic music, whether vocal or instrumental, utters this song of the natural body: it is a music which has a meaning only if I can always sing it [...] For *to sing*, in the romantic sense, is this: fantasmatically to enjoy my unified body' (OO, p. 255/RF, p. 288). Barthes thus sees lyrical self-

expression as a privileged outlet for affect, be it the pleasures of desire and love or the grief of bereavement, loss and death. He pointedly asks *what* in the body sings and promptly answers: ‘C’est tout ce qui retentit en moi, me fait peur ou me fait désir. Peu importe d’où me vient cette blessure ou cette joie: pour l’amoureux, comme pour l’enfant, c’est toujours l’affect du sujet perdu, abandonné, que chante le chant romantique’ / ‘It is everything that resounds in me, frightens me, or makes me desire. It matters little where this wound or this joy comes from: it is always the affect of the lost, abandoned subject that the romantic song sings’ (OO, p. 255/RF, p. 289). For Barthes, the Romantic song thus harks back to pre-linguistic affect, be it negative or positive, desire or fear, suffering or joy.

In what ways then is singing a privileged expression of affect? For Barthes, voice and the vocal arts epitomise the conjunction of the physiological and psychological, the biological and the artistic. He defines the singing voice as follows: ‘cet espace très précis où une langue rencontre une voix et laisse entendre, à qui sait y porter son écoute, ce qu’on appelle son « grain »: la voix n’est pas le souffle mais cette matérialité du corps surgie du gosier’ / ‘that very specific space in which a tongue encounters a voice and permits those who know how to listen to it to hear what we can call its “grain” – the singing voice is not the breath but that materiality of the body emerging from the throat’ (OO, p. 225/RF, p. 255). Barthes’s notion of ‘the grain of the voice’ embodies the physiology of a unique signature, inflection, timbre, tonality and rhythm all being manifestations of it. How does the grain of voice carry affect? Julia Kristeva has forcefully reminded us how affect, like moods, is situated at the crossroads of the body and language, ‘on the frontier between animality and symbol formation’: irreducible to verbal or other coded expression, affect corresponds to bodily encrypted energy that seeks to translate or transmute into something else.<sup>28</sup> She therefore proposes that creativity, and literature in particular, is ‘this adventure of the body and signs that bears witness to affect’.<sup>29</sup> Vocal arts, like affects, are at the crossroads of the body and art, and, accordingly, Barthes borrows the Kristevan concepts of pheno- and genotext in order to define *signifiance* as the constant tension between the coded expression in the vocal arts – ‘phénochant’ – and the physiological, affective, emotional underpinning that gives each interpretation its unique inflections – ‘génochant’.<sup>30</sup>

This interest in lyrical self-expression may come as a surprise from the author of ‘The Death of the Author’, as Barthes’s anti-

subjective positions in the 1970s and the so-called ‘*crise du sujet*’ went hand in hand with a rejection of lyricism. Lyricism was indeed seen as a naïve desire for self-expression, which takes for granted a transparent subject capable of self-knowledge.<sup>31</sup> It should be recalled that the notion of the ‘death of the author’ was described in terms of voice: ‘Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin [...] the neutral composite space where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing’.<sup>32</sup> Barthes thus describes how writing requires a preliminary process of self-effacement, ‘a prerequisite of impersonality’, in order to let literature speak in the author’s stead.

‘*Le Chant Romantique*’, however, tells another story: that of a voice that happily returns the author to a feeling of unity, rather than dispersal and self-division: ‘*Car chanter, au sens romantique, c’est cela: jouir fantasmatiquement de mon corps unifié*’ / ‘*For to sing, in the Romantic sense, is this: fantasmatically to enjoy a unified body*’ (OO 255/RF 288). Barthes seems here to operate a radical reversal in his thought, as the subject is joyfully revived in the pleasures of a self-possessed, unified and harmonious body. To what degree is this revival of a unified subject compatible with the dispersed subject of ‘The Death of the Author’? How does Barthes’s reversal redefine the subject in terms of body and affectivity? This is not to say that the Lied presents an edulcorated version of the subject. To the contrary: ‘it is always the affect of the lost, abandoned subject that the romantic song sings’ (RF, p. 289). The subject of the Lied, ‘an impassioned, introspective, social outcast’, is self-divided by love unrequited, an absent mother or looming death.<sup>33</sup> Schubert himself lost his mother at the age of fifteen; *Gretchen am spinnrade* tells of the harrowing pain of absence and hallucinated returns; *Der Tod und das Mädchen*, *Erlkönig* and several others tell of the fear of death while sadness and tears find their way into a whole of host of *Lieder*. The power of the Romantic Lied is precisely to capture the contradictory inflections of a divided subject and the physical manifestation of longing, desire and grief in multiple melodic lines while restoring a feeling of wholeness and unity.

Le « cœur » romantique, expression dans laquelle nous ne percevons plus avec dédain, qu’une métaphore édulcorée, est un organe fort, point extrême du corps intérieur où, tout à la fois et comme contradictoirement, le désir et la tendresse, la demande d’amour et l’appel de la jouissance, se mêlent violemment: quelque chose soulève mon corps, le gonfle, le tend, le porte au bord de l’explosion puis



mystérieusement le déprime et l'alanguit. Ce mouvement, c'est par dessous la ligne mélodique qu'il faut l'entendre; cette ligne est pure et, même au comble de la tristesse, elle dit toujours le bonheur du corps unifié; mais elle est prise dans un volume sonore qui souvent la complique et la contredit: une pulsion étouffée, marquée par des respirations, des modulations tonales, battements rythmiques, tout un gonflement mobile de la substance musicale, vient du corps de l'enfant, de l'amoureux, du sujet perdu. (OO, pp. 255-56)

The romantic 'heart', an expression in which we no longer perceive anything but an edulcorated metaphor, is a powerful organ, an extreme point of the interior body where, simultaneously and as though contradictorily, desire and tenderness, the claims of love and summons of pleasure, violently merge: something raises my body, swells it, bears it to the verge of explosion, and immediately, mysteriously, depresses it, weakens it. This movement must be perceived beneath the melodic line; this line is pure and, even at the climax of melancholy, always utters the euphoria of the unified body; but it is caught up in a phonic volume which often complicates and contradicts it: a stifled pulsion, marked by respirations, tonal and modal modulations, rhythmic throbbings, a mobile swelling of the entire musical substance comes from the separated body of the child, of the lover, of the lost subject. (RF, p. 289)

In Schubert's *Lieder*, the piano part contradicts and complicates the melody of the song. Barthes thus describes at length how Schubert's music follows the complex and contradictory bodily and affective movements of desire, longing, tenderness and the demand for love. The heart, long rejected as a bourgeois metaphor for easy sentimentality, becomes in this text a physiological organ that reacts and bears the imprints of pain and pleasure alike. Barthes's description, replete with sexual and erotic overtones, renders the ways in which Schubert's music expresses the urgency of desire, the inflections and contradictory physiological movements of pain, grief and pleasure that inhabit the impulse- and desire-driven body. A paradox emerges, however: even when expressing the grief of longing of the melancholy lover, the sadness caused by estrangement, even amidst the complexities of competing emotions and contradictory impulses, the song tells of the happiness of a

unified body.

How may we account for this paradoxical happiness? Is it the happiness of having found a language of immediacy that captures what words cannot encompass? Is it the return to a pre-linguistic form of self-expression? What the singing thus captures is a newly found adequacy between the complexities of contradictory emotions and silent bodily affect and their unified expression. In that respect, the song is consoling because it does away with what psychoanalyst Marie-France Castarède has termed 'la mélancholie du langage' (the melancholy of language), the inevitable hiatus between affect and its attempted, impossible rendering in language. 'Si la musique plaît universellement, ce n'est pas tant parce qu'elle est, selon l'expression galvaudée, un langage universel, mais plutôt parce qu'elle s'oppose à la mélancholie du langage et nous fournit une occasion unique de retrouver le bonheur d'avant les mots' / 'If music has this universal attraction, it is not so much because it is a universal language as the cliché has it, but much more because it counteracts the melancholy of language and is an opportunity to regain the happiness we knew before we spoke.'<sup>34</sup> Castarède here highlights how music is consoling, because it is an outlet for the impulse-driven and affective subject. What is at stake is not so much a process of sublimation – i.e. the channelling of the physical energy into an intellectual and immaterial art form – but rather the transformation of this energy, which during the process loses its edge.

This consoling process happens because Schubert's singing is like a homecoming of sorts: 'Dans sa masse, le lied romantique s'origine au cœur d'un lieu fini, intime, familier, qui est le corps du chanteur – et donc de l'auditeur' / For the most part, the romantic lied originates in the heart of a finite, collected, centered, intimate, familiar site, which is the singer's – and hence the listener's – body (OO, p. 255/RF, p. 288). When he talks of intimacy and familiarity, Barthes refers in part to the small-scale venues, be it the salons or the Schubertiade, in which the Lieder are traditionally performed. Beyond this social context, the music itself allows the singer to inhabit, take stock and possession of his own body. This is particularly so because, contrary to opera, which dramatises sexual differences with the virtuoso demands that stretch out the capacity of the different voices, the Lied operates within a restrained vocal range:

Dans le lied, au contraire, c'est la tessiture (ensemble des sons qui conviennent le mieux à une voix donnée): ici point de notes excessives, point de contre-ut, point de débordements dans l'aigu ou le grave, point de prouesses

physiologiques. La tessiture est l'espace modeste des sons que chacun de nous peut produire, et dans les limites duquel il peut fantasmer l'unité rassurante de son corps [...] c'est une musique qui n'a de sens que si je puis toujours la chanter en moi-même avec mon corps. (OO, p. 255)

It is the tessitura (the ensemble of sounds that best suit a given voice): here no excessive notes, no high C, no overflow or outburst into sharps or flats, no shrieks, no physiological prowess. The tessitura is the modest space of the sounds each of us can produce within the limits of which he can fantasize the reassuring unity of his body. All romantic music, whether vocal or instrumental, utters this song of the natural body: it is a music which has a meaning only if I can always sing it, in myself with body. (RF, p. 288.

Barthes thus brings to the fore how the Lied allows the singer, and the listener vicariously, to re-appropriate the natural limits of his own body. It is a homecoming of sorts when pre-linguistic affect and its verbal expression coincide, while the multiplicity of melodic lines figures the hesitations, contradictions, syncopations of a divided subject. It feels *Heimlich*, homely, even when it treats the *Unheimliche*, for Schubert's Lieder treat multiple aspects of the uncanny too.

## Writing Up Affect or the Consolations of Music?

So what do Barthes's texts say about the role of the body in the processing of affect during the musical experience? Can music be equated with the unconscious? I will take my cue from Darian Leader's seminal article on music and psychoanalysis where he reflects on how Freud tapped into musical terminology to describe psychoanalytical processes and how understanding musical terms can therefore shed new light on psychological phenomena. As Leader notes, 'this convergence of conceptual terms from the theory of dreams and the theory of music has gone unnoticed'.<sup>35</sup> He is quick to show how Freud describes the mechanisms of dream work in musical terms. It may be helpful to recall how dreams are constructed around a 'phantasy', and, as Leader further explains, how Freud resorts to musical terminology in order to describe

how this 'phantasy' is composed' (*komponiert*), how its interpolation may be called up through allusion (*Anspielung*, i.e. to start playing a piece in German). The notion of secondary revision, that is, the way the dreamer's narration of his dream lays emphasis (*Akzent*, another musical term) on a specific aspect of the dream, is termed *Bearbeitung*, which also refers to a musical embellishment. The composition of the phantasy at the core of the dream is then further described in terms such as *Umkehrung* (reversal into the opposite) and *Verdichtung* (compression). Thus, music is not so much the unconscious as embodied by the dream; yet one can see how dreaming, as a fundamental expression of the unconscious, and more specifically the dreamer's appropriation of a dream through his narration of it, operates along similar lines as composing music.

Leader also proposes an interesting interpretation of *Durcharbeitung*, the German term for working-through, used by Freud in his article 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through'. *Durcharbeitung* in the sonata form corresponds to the development – after the introduction and before the conclusion – which elaborates and works through several variations of a same musical theme introduced earlier until all possibilities are exhausted. The sonata form thus relies on a tension between repetition and variation. Taking on board the musical connotations of *Durcharbeitung*, Leader reassesses not only the notion of working-through and what happens in between the interpretation of symptoms and their disappearance but also redefines what the ends and endings of psychoanalysis are. Like a musical piece, the psychoanalytical encounter is a time-bound process, in which symptoms are remembered, repeated and worked-through in various ways until they eventually wane. Leader also reminds how mourning, just like the process of working-through, demands of the mourner that he revisit each of all his memories of the lost object in order to sever the ties one by one. One can see again how both mourning and working-through consist in repeating with a difference. It is a form of *ars combinatoria* which becomes consoling, not so much because it gives an answer to the enigma of loss or trauma, but precisely it renounces meaning in favour of a new configuration – or *combinatoire* – of a problem. Enlisting Lévi-Strauss, Leader backs his argument that working-through in analysis or working-through one's memory in mourning ultimately is not about closure or an end point but rather the journey that consists in exhausting all the ways to revisit a trauma or a loss. Indeed, according to Lévi-Strauss, Leader argues, 'myth provides less an answer, in terms of meaning, than a new configuration

of the initial problem'.<sup>36</sup> If the sonata form, and musical terms more generally, helped Freud formulate a theory of the temporality of working-through and mourning, what can Schumann's *intermezzi*, a short form that precisely evades working-through themes and leitmotifs, tell us about the affective rather than the psychological and cognitive aspects of working through loss and trauma?

Since music is a valuable metaphor for Barthes, Schumann's piano music and the Lied offer fertile ground to explore how music can shed light on the ways in which affect feeds into creativity. In 'Aimer Schumann' and 'Rasch', Barthes is receptive to the visceral quality of Schumann's music – 'elle va dans le corps, dans les muscles, par les coups de son rythme, et comme dans les viscères, par la volupté de son mélós' / 'it goes into the body, into muscles by the beats of the rhythm, and somehow into the viscera by the voluptuous pleasure of its melos' (OO, p. 260/RF, p. 295). For him, it captures a suffering that is beyond words: Schumann's fear of becoming mad. Short and fragmentary – the famous Lied *Die Rose, Die Lilie, Die Taube, Die Sonne* is hardly longer than half a minute – Schumann's music tells of an impulse-driven body: 'le corps de Schumann ne tient pas en place [...] C'est un corps pulsionnel, qui se pousse et repousse, passe à autre chose – pense à autre chose; c'est un corps étourdi (grisé, distrait et ardent tout à la fois). D'où l'*envie* [...] de l'*intermezzo*' / 'The Schumannian body does not *stay in place* [...] This is a pulsional body, one which pushes itself back and forth, turns to something else, [...] this is a stunned body (intoxicated, distracted and at the same time ardent). Whence the *envy* [...] of the intermezzo' (OO, p. 266/RF, p. 300). For Barthes, Schumann's music is typically made of a succession of *intermezzi*, rather than the development (*Durcharbeitung*) characteristic of the sonata form. It is mere expenditure of energy. It is as if Schumann does not work through his imminent madness but rather acts out affect. More than his Lieder, where emotions are articulated in the lyrics, Schumann's *Kreisleiriana* tells the story of a body defeated by language. Barthes is indeed fascinated by the *quasi parlando*: 'c'est le mouvement de ce corps *qui va parler* [...] l'instrument (le piano) parle à la façon d'un muet qui fait lire sur son visage toute la puissance inarticulée de la parole' / 'this is the movement of the body *which is about to speak* [...] the instrument (the piano) speaks without saying anything, in the fashion of a mute who reveals on his face the inarticulate power of speech' (OO, p. 272/RF, pp. 306-07). The poignancy of Schumann's music resides in conveying the subject's desperate need to

articulate thoughts and feelings when precisely he is stuck in his inability to do so.

For Barthes, Schumann's music tells of the pre-linguistic body – that of a child still in a symbiotic ('fusionnelle') relation with his mother and that of an adult who has lost the capacity to articulate his emotions, whether blissfully or melancholically so. Barthes, the writer and critic, is faced with a conundrum, if not an aporia: finding words for bodily states, what he calls 'somathèmes' (somathemes). 'Faire boule' (to curl up into a ball), 'frapper' (to beat), 'to extend', 'to kick' are among the metaphors Barthes attempts to render them. Yet he admits: 'Ces figures du corps, qui sont figures musicales, je ne parviens pas toujours à les nommer' / 'These figures of the body, which are musical figures, I do not always manage to name' (OO, p. 272/RF, p. 307). Music is what struggles with the limits of language, with what words cannot say. In that, music may express the unconscious, what is confined to secrecy, must find expression yet cannot be articulated in language. For Barthes, the value of Schumann's music is to dramatise the solitude of a speechless subject and to give the listener a glimpse of what the realm of affects may be. If Schumann uses accordingly some coded mood annotations, such as *presto*, *animato*, Barthes recalls that he may well have been the first composer to use annotations in his mother tongue, German, to diversify and complicate the quality of these moods and emotions. *Aufgeregt*, *Innig*, *Rasch*, do not so much indicate mood or tempo but rather the ways mood and affect translate into a bodily state. Or more precisely, Schumann's music epitomises the body in all its states, whether it experiences the world without words, for better – in a state of elation – or worse – in a state nearing madness. Oscillating between meaning and non-meaning, Schumann's music tells the story of the subject caught between body and soul, between the joy and the pain of a state of wordlessness. For Barthes, Schumann's radicalism lies in dramatizing the conflicted subject striving to come to terms with the opacity of both the unconscious and affect that is locked in his body. Yet Schumann continues to respect the codes of tonality and melody, thus transmuting the predicament of his torn subject into a pristine song that gives the listener a glimpse into his own humble bodily existence. This is perhaps what Barthes called Schumann's aptitude for ethical transcendence ('transcendence éthique').<sup>37</sup> But if there is any form of transcendence for Barthes, it resides in the very physical activity of making music, the unique signature of the musician's bodily presence and the unique quality of the grain of his voice. This form of

transcendence allows Barthes not only to reconnect with the complexities of his own self and the history it is grounded in but also with the emotions of others, to experience a form of lay compassion that he calls 'la délicatesse'.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Bowie, 'Is Music Criticism Criticism?', in *In(ter)discipline: New Languages for Criticism*, ed. by Gillian Beer, Malcolm Bowie, and Beate Julia Perrey (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Le Concert égoïste' (Emission Claude Maupomé), *France-Musique*, 15 January 1978.

<sup>3</sup> Roland Barthes, 'La Musique, la voix, la langue', in *L'Obvie et l'obtus* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), p. 246. Volume henceforth referred to as OO, followed by page numbers. Roland Barthes, 'Music, Voice, Language', in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 285. References to this volume will hereafter be given as RF, followed by page numbers.

<sup>4</sup> Roland Barthes, *La Préparation du roman I et II. Notes de cours et de séminaires au Collège de France, 1978-1979 et 1979-1980*, ed. by Nathalie Léger (Paris: Seuil/Imec, 2003), p. 321; *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980)*, ed. by Nathalie Léger, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) p. 304.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Dayan, *Writing Music Literature, from Sand via Debussy to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 131.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Dayan, 'La Musique et les lettres chez Barthes', *French Studies*, 42.3 (2003), 335-48.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy O'Meara, 'Atonality and Tonality: Musical Analogies in Roland Barthes's Lectures at the Collège de France', *Paragraph*, 31.1 (2008), 9-22. This article fleshes out the implications of tonality and atonality for the reader's engagement in the construction of meaning, in *La Préparation du roman* and *La Chambre claire*.

<sup>8</sup> It should be remembered that Plato uses the lyre to describe the body-mind relation, the body being the lyre, and the soul the intangible music made of rhythm and sound patterns produced by the instrument. (*Phaedo*, 85E-86D).

<sup>9</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Réponses', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Éric Marty, 5 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 2002), vol. III, p. 1024; 'Answers', in *'Simply a Particular Contemporary': Interviews, 1970-79*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2015), p. 5. References to the *Œuvres complètes* will henceforth be in the form of OC, followed by volume and page number.

<sup>10</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Piano-souvenir', in OC IV, p. 898-99.

<sup>12</sup> Barthes, 'Le Concert égoïste'.

<sup>13</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, in OC IV, p. 671; *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 94.



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- <sup>14</sup> Barthes, *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, p. 671; *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 94.
- <sup>15</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure', in *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), pp. 313-25.
- <sup>16</sup> See Marie Gil, *Roland Barthes. Au lieu de la vie* (Paris: Flammarion, 2012), pp. 118-23.
- <sup>17</sup> See [http://www.pileface.com/sollers/article.php?id\\_article=792](http://www.pileface.com/sollers/article.php?id_article=792). Accessed on 25 September 2017.
- <sup>18</sup> Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du Texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 97 ; *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 61.
- <sup>19</sup> 'J'ai moi-même un rapport amoureux à la voix de Panzéra [...] J'aime cette voix je l'ai aimée toute ma vie' / 'I myself have a lover's relation to Panz'ra's voice [...] I have loved it all my life' (OO, pp. 247-48/RF, p. 280).
- <sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, 'L'Art vocal bourgeois', in *Mythologies*, OC I, p. 667; 'The Bourgeois Art of Song', in *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), p. 119.
- <sup>21</sup> Theodor Adorno, 'On Popular Music', in *Essays on Music*, ed. by Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 289. In this essay, Adorno argues that 'structural standardization aims at standard reactions' and that standardization brings along pseudo-individualisation, by which he means 'endowing cultural mass production with the halo of free choice'.
- <sup>22</sup> Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Vintage Press, 1982), vol. I, pp. 379-80.
- <sup>23</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 265.
- <sup>24</sup> Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, in OC V, pp. 209-10; *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 167. Translation modified.
- <sup>25</sup> Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, vol. III, p. 260.
- <sup>26</sup> Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, pp. 209-10; *A Lover's Discourse*, pp. 167-68.
- <sup>27</sup> Danielle Cohen-Lévinas, *La Voix au-delà du chant: une fenêtre aux ombres* (Paris: Vrin, 2006), p. 22.
- <sup>28</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 22.
- <sup>29</sup> Kristeva, *Black Sun*, p. 22.
- <sup>30</sup> Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution du langage poétique. L'Avant-garde à la fin du XIXe siècle : Lautréamont et Mallarmé* (Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1985), p. 15.
- <sup>31</sup> See Martine Broda, *L'Amour du nom: essai sur le lyrisme et la lyrique amoureuse* (Paris: Corti, 1997), p. 16.

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<sup>32</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana/Collins, 1977), p. 142; 'La Mort de l'Auteur', in *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984), p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> See Malcolm Bowie, 'Song Man: On Lieder', in *Selected Essays of Malcolm Bowie: II: Song Man*, ed. by Alison Finch (Cambridge: Legenda, 2013), p. 4: 'This sorry figure travels alone, skirting the abyss, and is constantly threatened by hallucination and nightmare; his isolation is occasionally relieved by the presence or the promise of a female partner in whom moral virtue and physical charm are wondrously combined, but who can easily prove to be unkind and faithless, when she is not a mere delusional projection of the male subject's desire'.

<sup>34</sup> Marie-France Castarède, 'L'Enveloppe vocale', *Psychologie Clinique et Projective*, 7.1 (2001), 35.

<sup>35</sup> Darian Leader, 'Freud, Music and Working Through', in *Freud's Footnotes* (London: Faber, 2000), p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Leader, 'Freud, Music and Working Through', p. 110.

<sup>37</sup> Barthes, 'Le Concert égoïste'.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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